

COAS off to US on official visit

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir has left on Sunday for United States of America (USA) on his maiden official visit. During his visit, General Syed Asim Munir is scheduled to meet the senior military and other government officials of USA, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

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CTD officer martyred in Khuzdar IED blast

KHUZDAR (NNI): The station house officer (SHO) of the Khuzdar Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) was martyred in an explosion targeting his vehicle.

According to police, the incident took place on Ibrahim Road in Khuzdar when a vehicle of SHO CTD Khuzdar Muhammad Murad was targeted. A bomb had been fitted in the CTD official's vehicle, said police.

Police and security forces promptly arrived at the location of the incident along with the bomb disposal squad which was assessing the scale of the blast.

Martyred SHO's body has been shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital, said CTD police spokesperson.

Meanwhile, Balochistan Caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki condemned the incident and expressed his grief at the CTD official's martyrdom. Last month, the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) killed three terrorists associated with a banned outfit during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Balochistan's Khuzdar district.

The CTD spokesperson said that an IBO was conducted in Balochistan's Khuzdar district in which three terrorists of a banned outfit were killed.

A large cache of arms and explosive material was recovered from the terrorists. The CTD team recovered two sub-machine guns, pistol, hand grenades, magnetic IED and rounds during the IBO.

According to the CTD spokespersons, the terrorists were travelling on a motorcycle and opened fire at the officials who attempted to stop them near the Kank area.

Caretaker PM strongly condemns Khuzdar blast: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Sunday while strongly condemning a blast in Khuzdar, expressed his deep grief and sorrow over Shahadat of Counter-Terrorism Department, SHO Muhammad Murad.

The prime minister expressed his condolence with the bereaved family and prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. He also directed for provision of all possible medical treatment to

those injured in the incident. The caretaker prime minister said that such cowardly activities could not deter the high morale of the security forces. The entire nation paid tribute to those who had been sacrificing their lives in the fight against terrorism, he added.

Meanwhile, Funeral prayers of martyred police head constable Muhammad Ashraf Khan was offered at Peshawar Police Lines on Sunday.

Regional Police Officer (RPO) Bannu Division Qasim Ali Khan, District Police Officer (DPO) Bannu Iftikhar, police officials, personnel besides large number of local people attended the funeral prayers.

Head Constable Muhammad Ashraf deployed at Saddar police station Bannu was critically injured in firing of terrorists while performing duty during anti-polio vaccination campaign. He was shifted to Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar where he expired during treatment.

After funeral prayers, the body was sent to native town where the martyred would be laid with state honour.

In his message on the occasion, RPO Qasim Ali Khan said that officials like Muhammad Ashraf Khan were pride of police force who laid down their life in line of the duty for peace and stability of country and we would never forget their sacrifice. He further stated that the terrorists through such attacks could not decline of morale force and we would foil their all nefarious designs.

Khuzdar blast claiming CTD SHO's life condemnable: Sarfraz Bugti: Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior, Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has said that Khuzdar blast claiming life of CTD SHO is strongly condemnable.

Expressing deep grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of CTD SHO Muhammad Murad, he prayed for departed soul to rest in eternal peace and courage for bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with fortitude. Sarfraz Bugti said, "We stand with the family of the martyred police officer in this hour of sorrow." He said that the best medical facilities will be provided to the pedestrians injured in the blast.

Bilawal accuses Sharif family of trying to buy PIA

LOWER DIR (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has accused the Sharif family of attempting to buy the national airline, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), instead of selling it.

Addressing a public meeting in Lower Dir on Sunday, Bilawal said, "I have come to know that they are trying to buy PIA instead of selling it. I want to tell that we will not let Mian Sahib (Shehbaz Sharif) to buy PIA."

He criticized the exclusion of Lower Dir from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, saying that it was initially intended to start from backward and terror-affected areas. "President Asif Ali Zardari signed the CPEC agreement with the aim of starting this project from the backward and terror-affected areas, but unfortunately Lower Dir has been separated from this project," Bilawal said.

"Inshallah, on February 8, you will once again elect Pakistan People's Party, then we will once again pass the route of CPEC

through your path."

He questioned the PML-N's leadership, stating that everyone has the right to participate in the elections, but the people also have the right to ask what the person who failed 3 times will do for the fourth time.

"Bilawal Bhutto said that we have to do all the things that were promised to you by our elders, there is no attention towards the problems of the people in today's politics, people are drowning in the tsunami of inflation, it started with Imran Khan. During the period of , when the PML-N had the responsibility of finance, they failed and could not solve the problem of inflation. It is in theory."

He further alleged that there are people in the caretaker government and the federal government who belong to political parties, and that these individuals are hindering the process of selling PIA.

"Our caretaker governments have certain people who belong to political parties, there are also people in the federal government who belong to one or the other political party. Workers are

still handling the ministries, they have a special servant in the Ministry of Privatization. My PIA union is telling that they are not selling PIA but trying to buy PIA, I want to tell that we will not let Mian Sahib to buy PIA," Bilawal said. He expressed confidence that PPP, together with the PIA union, can arrange the development of the institution. Bilawal concluded his speech by criticizing Shehbaz Sharif's politics of disrespecting the vote and selection, and said that he would fight against such practices.

"Mian Sahib! Leave the politics of disrespecting the vote, end this hobby of selection, after being selected three times, get elected once, if you get selected for the fourth time, then I will agree, neither will the people. Together with the people, every selected I will fight." He further questioned Sharif's leadership, asking, "Who will shoot the arrow who has failed three times by becoming the prime minister for the fourth time? Mian Sahib met those who did good deeds."

Future of aesthetic physicians bright: Solangi

RAWALPINDI (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Sunday said that the future of aesthetic physicians was bright, everyone wants to look good.

Addressing a function organized by the Association of Aesthetic Physicians of Pakistan here, the minister congratulated the management for organizing the event.

He said that aesthetic physicians and their businesses had a prominent position in the health sciences because looking good was everyone's desire.

He said that the expansion of the scope of the Association of Aesthetic Physicians of Pakistan will significantly improve the

aesthetic health scenario in Pakistan and it will also benefit the people at the grassroots level.

He said that the mandate and duration of the caretaker government were limited, but it would try to address the complaints of the Aesthetic Physicians Association of Pakistan and provide it with all possible facilities within the legal framework.

Solangi rebuts social media reports about GB, vows legal action against rumour mongers: Caretaker Minister of Information and Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Sunday strongly rebutted different rumours circulating on social media regarding Gilgit-Baltistan.

The rumours suggested

that a proposal to hand over GB to another country for 50 years was under consideration. In a post on X formerly Twitter, the minister said there was no truth in such rumours.

He added that no such news was published by any newspaper.

Those spreading this fake news to achieve their nefarious designs would face legal action, the minister vowed.

Earlier, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting through its social media account also rejected the news as fake.

"Disseminating fake news is not only unethical and illegal but it is also disservice to the nation. It is the responsibility of everyone to reject irresponsible behaviour. Reject #FakeNews," it wrote on X.

PPP mulls seat adjustment with ANP in Karachi, KP

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leadership have contacted Awami National Party (ANP) on forming an electoral alliance and seat adjustment in Karachi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) for the upcoming general elections. Sources said on Sunday. Sources said that PPP has discussed seat adjustment with ANP on Karachi's two National Assembly (NA) seats.

Moreover, the two parties also discussed forming an electoral alliance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the upcoming elections.

PPP and ANP are likely to make a seat adjustment in Peshawar, Swabi, Charsadda, Malakand, Mardan, Karak, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan (DI Khan), say sources.

The latest development comes a day after ANP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) President Aimal Wali Khan met PPP Parliamentarians President Asif Ali Zardari and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at the Zardari House Islamabad.

They discussed on electoral alliance and seat adjustment in KP province for the forthcoming general elections. They discussed that both parties have strong vote bank in 20 constituencies in KP. They agreed on holding more meetings to mull over electoral alliance, sources said.

Court grants one-day physical remand of Fawad

LAHORE (NNI): A local court in Islamabad has granted a one-day physical remand of former federal information minister Fawad Chaudhry to the police in a fraud case.

Fawad Ch was presented in the Civil Judge First Class Ghulam Mustafa's court on Sunday.

During the hearing, the Anti-Corruption Establishment sought a seven-day physical remand of Fawad Ch to recover Rs3.5 million from the accused. The anti-corruption investigation team told the court that the accused, through his frontman - his cousin Faq Shiraz - paid a huge amount of money to get the NOC for a private housing society on Deena GT Road and clear the land. The amount is yet to be recovered.

Fawad's lawyer Faisal Chaudhry told the court that his client was implicated in a fabricated and baseless fraud case as the housing society owners did not lodge any complaint against him. He pleaded with the court to either discharge or accept the bail application of the accused.

After hearing the arguments from both sides, the civil judge granted a one-day physical remand of Fawad Ch and ordered the ACE to present the accused in the relevant court tomorrow (Monday).

The court announced the reserved decision.

Sanjrani accepts Shaukat Tarin's resignation

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Former Finance Minister Senator Shaukat Tarin resigned from the membership of the Upper House.

He presented his resignation to Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani in Dubai. The chairman accepted the resignation immediately.

It merits mention here that the Chairman Senate arrived in the United Arab Emirates from Iraq.

Earlier, Tarin had announced leaving politics and PTI on Friday. He got elected Senator on the PTI ticket in Dec 2021. Tarin said in a video message that he had made the decision after consulting his friends and family. He added that his health had not been well for the past two years.

Several other leaders have also parted ways with the PTI following May 9 — the day when the party workers ransacked state installations after the arrest of former party chairman.

French warship shoots down drones

PARIS (Reuters): A French warship operating in the Red Sea has shot down two drones that were launched at it from the Yemen coast, the defence ministry said on Sunday. It said the multipurpose frigate Languedoc had intercepted and destroyed a first drone at around 9:30 p.m. local French time on Saturday, and a second one around 11:30 p.m. at 110 km (68.35 miles) from the Yemen coast around Al Hudaydah.



KHAN YOUNIS: Smoke rises after Israeli strikes, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

Funeral prayer of Rehmat Shah Afridi offered

E.P Report

PESHAWAR: Funeral prayer of Rehmat Shah Afridi, Editor-in-Chief Frontier Post Peshawar was offered here on Sunday. Funeral prayer of the deceased was held at Hayatabad Peshawar and was attended by a large number of people, journalists, civil society members and well wishers. Rehmat Shah Afridi was later laid to rest at his ancestral graveyard. He passed away last night due to protected illness. The people are coming to his residence and offering Fateha.

APNS expresses grief over demise of Rehmat Shah: The APNS expresses profound grief over the sad demise of Mr. Rehmat Shah Afridi, a senior journalist and founder of Daily Frontier Post. Mrs. Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani, President and Sarmad Ali, Secretary General of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society in a joint statement have appreciated the contribution of Mr. Afridi in the promotion of English Journalism in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. They stated that under his leadership daily Frontier Post played a prominent role to

safeguard the freedom of press in the country. The APNS office bearers offered their condolence to the bereaved family and colleagues and prayed that Allah may rest the departed soul in eternal peace.


Minister mourns the loss of renowned journalist Rehmat Shah Afridi: Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakkhel, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Information and Public Relations, expresses profound sorrow and heartfelt condolences on the passing of the esteemed Rehmat Shah Afridi. A trailblazer in English journalism within the frontier region of Pakistan, Afridi's departure has created an irreplaceable void in the media landscape. As the founder Editor-in-Chief of The Frontier Post, his enduring legacy and significant contributions to media in the region will be remembered with deep respect. Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakkhel stated, "Rehmat Shah Afridi's impact on English journalism in the frontier region has been monumental. His vision and dedication as the

founder Editor-in-Chief of The Frontier Post have left an indelible mark on the industry." The thoughts and prayers of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister are with Afridi's family, particularly his four sons—Mahmood Ullah Afridi, Jilil Afridi, Bilal Afridi, and Ahmad Shah Afridi—during this difficult time.

The Minister extends his heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved family, wishing them strength and solace. May the soul of Rehmat Shah Afridi rest in eternal peace.

Meanwhile Former President Asif Zardari expressed regret over the demise of Frontier Post Chief Editor Rahmat Shah Afridi. Former President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari expressed condolences to Mehmoood Shah Afridi, Jilil Shah Afridi and Bilal Afridi on the death of their father. He said that Rahmat Shah Afridi's services to journalism are unforgettable. The former president prayed for Rahmat Shah Afridi's forgiveness and high status.

CONDOLENCE




APNS expresses profound grief over the sad demise of veteran publisher and senior colleague

Mr. Rehmat Shah Afridi

Founder of

Daily Frontier Post.

May Allah the Almighty rest his soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the family to bear the loss.



All Pakistan Newspapers Society

WASA to give 202 city water filtration plants on contract

LAHORE (APP): Water and Sanitation Authority (WASA) has decided to hire a private company to keep 202 water-filtration plants of the provincial metropolis operational. WASA official sources told APP on Sunday that a private company would be awarded a contract for the repair and maintenance of filtration plants.

A total of 202 non-operational water filtration plants installed in the Lahore city, would be given on contract for three years and private company would be responsible for the maintenance and repair work of the filtration plants. The WASA authorities would award contract of filtration-plants in two phases. In the first phase, The Wasa would pay Rs 18.5 million for the repair of 78 filtration plants in the city. In the second phase, the authority would pay Rs 26.88 million for the repair of 124 filtration plants in the city. The invitation of tenders by WASA is on the card.

Another 52 cases reported

LAHORE (APP): Another 52 cases of dengue fever were reported in various parts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. According to health department sources, a total of 14,815 confirmed dengue cases was recorded across 36 districts in Punjab this year. Lahore leading the unfortunate tally at 6,814 cases, followed by Rawalpindi with 2,649, Gujranwala with 1,567, Multan with 1,421, and Faisalabad with 889 cases.

Lahore, with an additional 32 cases, continues to grapple with the fever. Gujranwala has 4, Multan has 4, Faisalabad has 6 and Okara reports 2 cases. Meanwhile, Sialkot, Bahawalpur, Gujrat and Bahawalnagar each reported 1 case of dengue virus within 24 hours.

Currently, 44 dengue patients are undergoing treatment in various hospitals across Punjab, with 25 of them in Lahore district hospitals. Secretary of Health Punjab, Ali Jaan Khan, issued a compelling plea to citizens, urging them to maintain clean and dry surroundings as a preventive measure against dengue fever. He said that vigilance and proactive measures were crucial to contain the alarming spread of dengue in the province.

Dry weather likely to persist in Sindh

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department Sunday predicted dry weather in most parts of the Sindh province during the next 24 hours.

However, fog and smog is predicted in Jacobabad, Mohenjodaro, Sukkur, Larkana, Dadu, Ghotki and Padidan during the morning and night hours. The minimum temperature is forecast in the range of 13-15 degrees Centigrade in Karachi, 12-14 degrees Centigrade in Hyderabad, 07-09 degrees Centigrade in Sukkur, 12-14 degrees Centigrade in Thatta, 05-07 degrees Centigrade in Mohenjodaro, 08-10 degrees Centigrade in Dadu, 04-06 degrees Centigrade in Mithi and 07-09 degrees Centigrade in Nawabshah. Mainly, dry weather is likely to prevail in the province.

SC, HCs should allocate benches in consultation with senior judges: CM

KARACHI (NNI): Sindh Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar has said that being judges we may not have lived up to the expectations of the people and the colleagues and unfortunately, in recent years, relations between the bar and the bench have been strained.

"We must accept that the bar and the bench are both key stakeholders in the attainment of justice and democracy. Lack of coordination between the two not only affects them but also the entire system, therefore, we must work together to improve our relations and face all challenges together." This he said while speaking at the annual dinner of the Karachi Bar Association. The program was attended by Chief Justice Sindh High Court Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, Amir Saleem President Karachi Bar Association, Mumtaz Ali Mehdi Vice President, Waqar Alam General Secretary, Sabeh Mahmood Joint Secretary, and others.

At the outset, the interim CM congratulated Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi on assuming the position of

CM visits Bund Road project, reviews construction work

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited both packages of the Controlled Access Corridor Bund Road project, for two hours, here on Sunday. The CM conducted a detailed monitoring of the whole 3.7-km route from Saggian up to Niazi Chowk and from Babu Sabu up to Saggian. He reviewed ongoing construction activities on both packages and monitored construction activities of the side walls of Package 1 along with concrete laying work.

The CM reviewed the process of laying boulder frames at the side walls and expressed his satisfaction on the pace of work on Package 1. He ordered to speed up pace of work on Package 2 and issued directions to the contractor to complete the project within stipulated time period. The CM directed deputy commissioner to immediately clear encroachments on roads surrounding the project.

Talking to the media, he said that the Controlled Access Corridor Bund Road project was a mega project and 40 per cent work on Package-1 and 24 per cent work on Package-2 had been completed. The Bund Road project would be completed on time and the government would continue to update on its progress.

The CM said that he had talked to the prime minister regarding early completion of Imamia Colony flyover project. Hopefully, the Imamia Colony flyover project would be completed at the earliest. "I have also talked with the Prime Minister to overcome the shortage of

urea fertiliser. The Prime Minister has immediately issued directions to the federal ministers regarding urea fertiliser shortage," he said. Naqvi disclosed that 200,000 tonnes surplus urea fertiliser would reach at our sea port by Dec 20, which would end its shortage. It was our utmost strive to overcome the shortage of urea fertiliser soon.

Crackdown against urea fertiliser hoarders was ongoing, he announced. Prompt steps would be undertaken wherever urea fertiliser shortage occurs in the province, he remarked. A project has been launched for the international certification of free lancers. The Punjab government by spending 50- 60 dollars would get international certification of the free lancers.

Earlier, CM Naqvi was given a briefing on the progress being made on the project. On the whole, 24 percent work on the Package 2 project from Babu Sabu up to Saggian while 40 percent work on the Package 1 from Saggian up to Niazi Chowk has been completed. 33 out of 34 girders of Package 1, whereas 38 out of 51 girders of Package 2 have been completed. 3100 panels of Package 1 have been installed whereas 551 panels of Package 2 have been installed while 1900 panels are ready. Work on 9 subways linked with both the packages is ongoing simultaneously. 24 hours work is ongoing with swift pace on the project. Provincial ministers Amir Mir, Azfar Ali Nasir, Secretary Housing, Commissioner Lahore/ DG LDA, Deputy Commissioner, MD WASA and officials concerned were also present.

Punjab Transport deptt provides relief to rickshaws

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Transport department has provided relief to ensure fitness of rickshaws till January 2.

Official sources said on Sunday that it was a golden opportunity for rickshaw owners to get fitness of their rickshaws done and get immunity from fine.

Immunity from fine had been given till

January 2 and fine would be applicable once the relaxation date would end. Sources said that fitness of three wheelers should be obtained from vehicle inspection and certification system station. Punjab Transport Secretary Ahmad Javed Qazi said that the measure would help in controlling environmental pollution and smog.

LESCO detects 315 power pilferers in a day

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 315 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) on the 92nd day of grand anti-power theft campaign.

The LESCO spokesman told media here Sunday that the company has also submitted FIR applications against 315 electricity thieves, out of which 160 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while 12 accused have been arrested. Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations. The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft. The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them are also being brought to justice. On the 92nd consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added,

large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected. Among the seized connections were 16 commercial, 03 agricultural, one industrial and 295 domestic. All the power pilferers were charged with a total of 365,700 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 13,824 million.

Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he explained that LESCO charged detection units worth Rs 680,000 to an electricity pilferer in Saanda area of Lahore; Rs 409,480 detection bill to another customer stealing electricity in Saddar area of Depaapur Okara; Rs 266,539 fine to a power thief Bachhiyana area; and Rs 250,000 detection bill to a power thief in Township Lahore. During the 92 days of grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned, the LESCO detected pilferage on 34,391 power connections and submitted 34,002 FIR applications against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations out of which 32,804 FIRs have been registered, while 15,802 accused have so far been arrested by the police.

Desilting of 1,112 canals from Dec 26

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday directed the department concerned to start desilting of 1,112 canals in Punjab by December 26.

He directed this while presiding over a meeting to review the measures taken for desilting of canals and anti water theft measures here.

The desilting would continue till January 20. All divisional commissioners tasked to monitor the desilting process.

The CM directed the administrative officers to take stern action for controlling water theft in their respective districts. Caretaker Punjab Minister for Agriculture SM Tanvir and Divisional Commissioners virtually participated in the meeting.

added, "This polarization has reached a level where people's confidence in the Supreme Court has been affected, rather than reforming the composition of benches, which is the prerogative of the judiciary, parliament has had to intervene, therefore, I believe that not only the Supreme Court but all High Courts should exercise the power to allocate benches in consultation with senior judges." He said that this would not only improve the quality of decision-making but also reduce polarization and restore people's confidence in the judiciary.

Justice Baqar said that a delegation from the Karachi Bar Association met him - they highlighted several issues faced by the bar and requested assistance. He added that the Law Minister Omer Soomro submitted a summary requesting funds for the Karachi Bar and other bar associations. "After considering the size of the Karachi Bar Association and its issues, I decided to allocate additional funds to them," he said and hoped that these funds would help ease some of their problems.



LAHORE: People visit and enjoying flower show at Race Course Jillani Park.

Govt committed to implementing labour, trade laws: Ahmed Shah

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Minister for Information, Minority Affairs and Social Security Muhammad Ahmad Shah on Sunday said that the Sindh government was committed to strictly implementing labour and trade union laws.

While addressing a conference on "Domestic Child Labour in Pakistan" and the launching of a study on Domestic Child Labour in Pakistan by Chairperson Human Rights Commission Sindh, Iqbal Ahmed Detho at a hotel here.

The Conference was organized by Sindh Human Rights Commission in collaboration with FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG Pakistan (FES Pakistan). The Caretaker Minister said that civil society and every educated person had to play their role in discouraging and ending child labour.

He said that the Sindh government had taken a lead in the legislation to protect the rights of the downtrodden sections of the society to help them.

He said that funds had been

released by the Sindh government for the repair of all the schools that were destroyed during the floods in Sindh.

On this occasion, Consul General of Germany in Karachi Ruediger Lotz, Senator Taj Haider, Chairperson of Sindh Human Rights Commission Iqbal Ahmad Dethu, Secretary Labour Sindh Shariq Ahmed, Earlier, the representatives of various political parties and workers' organizations also shared their views during the first session of the conference.

Minister stresses healthy lifestyle for stroke prevention

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr. Javed Akram emphasized the crucial role of adopting a balanced and healthy lifestyle for preventing strokes.

In a special address at the 23rd International Workshop on Stroke Prevention, held at a local hotel, the minister congratulated the organisers for addressing the vital health concern.

Dr. Javed Akram underlined the significance of guidelines and case studies in the prevention of strokes, citing depression as the leading cause. He urged individuals to incorporate daily exercise into their routines, noting that regular exercise plays a key role in preventing strokes and heart attacks.

Wealthy work together to reduce poverty: DG NAB

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Chairman of National Accountability Bureau(NAB) Justice (R) Sohail Nasir on Sunday emphasized that all the wealthy people needed to work together to reduce poverty.

While addressing the seminar on "Jinnah's Vision for Eradication of Poverty" organized by Jinnah Iqbal South Asian Forum (JISAF)at Anjuman Faiz-ul-Islam complex, he said that there was a lack of self-accountability in our society, adding every poor person who has health and safety should consider why he is poor.

"Working hard can change the financial position so we all should work tirelessly to overcome our shorts", he added. Justice (R) Sohail Nasir on the occasion announced to bear

the expenses for the complete education of two children in the Jinnah Iqbal Education System and said that "we should do a lot of work for the promotion of education."

He paid tribute to the chairman of the forum, Rana Abdul Baqi, who every year distributes warm quilts and monthly rations to deserving families. Forum Chairman Rana Abdul Baqi, referring to the speeches of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in April 1943 and November 1944, said that the Quaid-e-Azam had declared that the new state of Pakistan would be a true welfare state with equal rights for all citizens.

"The new state will be based on the principles of Islamic social justice", he quoted the Quaid, adding that following the vision of the

father of the nation, JISAF distribute warm blankets in winter and one month's ration in the holy month of Ramzan to deserving families.

Colonel (Rtd) Bakhtiar Hakeem while speaking said that every Pakistani should ask himself every day what he has given to Pakistan today. Muzaffar Mehmood Qureshi said in his address that sharing the deprivations of the deprived people was a great virtue and "we need to imitate Rana Abdul Baqi."

Later, hundreds of warm quilts were distributed among the deserving families. Among others, Former Federal Secretary Muzaffar Mehmood Qureshi, Commodore (R) Shahid Nawaz, Colonel Bakhtiar Hakeem, Professor Dr Aqeela Asif, Dr. Sabahat and Arsalan Akbar Abbasi also addressed the seminar.

Despite efforts, smog continues to haunt authorities

LAHORE (APP): Unbridled growth, ill planned development projects and poor time management by the city authorities had led Lahore to endure another smoggy winter, once again maintaining its unfortunate position as the most polluted city during last week of November.

Even a smart lockdown for three days a week and ban on vehicular traffic on the Mall road on Sunday could not change the situation exposing millions of historic city residents to different pollution related diseases. Environmentalists and common people believe that untimely initiation of projects like Controlled Access Corridor on Bund Road, Shahdara, Akbar Chowk and Inamia Colony flyover and other construction work contributed to already injurious airborne dust particles.

The instances of lack of coordination among the city management is another dilemma aggravating the situation and resulting in futility of various measures taken by the caretaker government to effectively combat smog and worsening environmental conditions.

During this recent week, the air quality of the provincial metropolis was very unhealthy as the residents still await desired results from various police and civic authorities.

Although different agencies like Punjab Environment Protection Agency (EPA), Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC), Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA), Traffic Police, Horticulture department and Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) are on toes to combat this situation, yet the desired visible results were still awaited. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) claims to visit 6,297 industrial units finding most of them violating laws, sealing 1,011 units, lodging 469 FIRs and imposed over Rs 100 million fine collectively, yet the situation remains out of control.

"Besides this, the department also checked 16,815 vehicles in the city, of which 6,798 were issued challans besides impounding 706 for emitting excessive smoke," informed Director

General (DG-EPA) Zaheer Abbas Malik. "We have also established smog cell and smog control room, pre-smog and anti-smog squads, developed Eco-Watch App, established anti-smog committees in all districts, formed 12 special squads in Lahore district, converted brick-kilns to zigzag technology, installed emission control devices (ECD) and much more to combat smog," he stated.

Meanwhile, Lahore Waste Management Company's (LWMC) enforcement wing has also lodged 550 FIRs against individuals for violations in nine housing societies as part of last month's crackdown on offenses. "For burning waste in open, over 1,200 fines exceeding Rs. 2.2 million were issued," disclosed LWMC Chief Executive Officer Babar Sahib Din. "Our action is in line with the Local Government Act and Section 188 implemented for smog prevention. We have impounded more than 50 vehicles for illegal waste besides issuing over 1,453 warning notices on minor violations."

Babar mentioned to launching of tree plantation campaign by LWMC and Pak Mission Society under the banner of Child-Driven Climate Action Project and selecting 10 government and private schools in the city for this activity.

In efforts to control pollution, the Parks and Horticulture Authority also claims to embark on plantation campaign. "We are actively pursuing our targets to expand green cover of Lahore besides promoting cultural sports and raising awareness among youth to make them contribute for environmental protection," said Director General Muhammad Tahir Wattoo. The PDMA has declared smog a calamity and took action against the polluters by registering FIRs and imposing fine.

"We arrested seven people, imposed Rs 1.8 million fine and registered 21 FIRs for burning crops residue," informed spokesperson for Relief Commissioner and PDMA Mazhar Hussain.

He also mentioned to indiscriminate action against brick-kilns and

smoke emitting vehicle.

Meanwhile, Punjab Transport Company also took action against 18,000 polluting vehicles, 5,010 four-wheelers for using prohibited and unsafe fuel and 3,818 vehicles plying on roads without fitness certificate.

"Not a single vehicle was being spared over rules' violation," said Faiz Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer PTC. Even after listening to plausible claims of these authorities, the situation on ground tells the story otherwise wherein thousands of citizens are falling ill due to uncontrolled smog. Officials in health department state that major hospitals like Services Institute of Medical Sciences, Sir Gangaram Hospital, Mayo Hospital, Mian Munshi Hospital, Fatima Memorial Hospital, Ittefaq Hospital, Shalamar Hospital etc had received hundreds of patients with respiratory and lung diseases during this smoggy season.

Health experts have warned the ailing people to remain cautious of smog and air pollution as it intensifies already existing diseases especially in case of children and elderly people. Since the situation persists, there is need for better coordinated efforts among different provincial government organs for more accurate and aggressive measures.

The city masters will have to increase forest cover, promote electric vehicles and cleaner fuel, decrease transport burden, time management for development and ensure better cleanliness.

Since fog is a trans-boundary phenomenon wherein the pollutants also travel to Pakistan from Indian side and when it mixes with pollutants especially suspended particulate matter in the air, it creates thick smog that is highly injurious to human health. Therefore, the authorities must tackle this issue beyond routine measures.

There is also dire need to tighten noose around Baboos, enjoying facilities on common man's tax money, asking them to roam around their jurisdictions to check open burning of crops residue especially along M-3 and M-4.

Minister mourns loss of Rehmat Shah Afridi

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakkhel, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Information and Public Relations, expresses profound sorrow and heartfelt condolences on the passing of the esteemed Rehmat Shah Afridi.

A trailblazer in English journalism within the frontier region of Pakistan, Afridi's departure has created an irreplaceable void

in the media landscape. As the founder Editor-in-Chief of The Frontier Post, his enduring legacy and significant contributions to media in the region will be remembered with deep respect.

Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakkhel stated, "Rehmat Shah Afridi's impact on English journalism in the frontier region has been monumental. His vision and dedication as the founder Editor-in-Chief of The Frontier Post have left an indelible mark on the

industry."

The thoughts and prayers of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister are with Afridi's family, particularly his four sons — Mahmood Ullah Afridi, Jilil Afridi, Bilal Afridi and Ahmad Shah Afridi — during this difficult time. The Minister extends his heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved family, wishing them strength and solace. May the soul of Rehmat Shah Afridi rest in eternal peace.

Police foils arm smuggling F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Police has arrested alleged arms smuggler while recovered ammunition was recovered from secret cavities of the vehicle in the premises Badabghier police station.

Superintendent of Police Saddar Abdus Salam had deployed teams on intelligence reports regarding arms smuggling. Deputy Superintendent of Police Badabghier Ziaullah Khan ordered Station House Officer Nasir Farid for deployment to foil the bid.

The alleged smuggler identified as Ali Raza resident of Islamabad. Police recovered one rifle, 9 pistols and different caliber of bullets from the secret cavities of the vehicle.



PESHAWAR: Students of Balochistan Residential College Zhob meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor's House.

Substandard meat recovered in City

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority raids continue in Peshawar even on a holiday on Sunday. Food safety team conducted operations on Bacha Khan Chowk, Kohat Road and Peshawar Motorway Toll Plaza, Spokesman Food Authority told media men here. The food safety team suddenly raided the butchers in Bacha Khan Chowk.

The butchers flee from the sight of Butchery, Food Authority Officials,

spokesperson said, adding, the Butchers were selling substandard meat of young calves on the roadside in very poor sanitation conditions. The officials of the food authority recovered more than 1000 kg of meat caught and destroyed it with a case that has been registered against the accused, selling substandard meat.

Food safety teams also blockaded Peshawar Toll Plaza and Kohat Road and searched out vehicles to nib the culprits involved in selling

substandard meat. The spokesman of the Food Authority said that they have inspected milk tankers, fish, honey, chickens and other food items vehicles at Motorway Toll Plaza.

He said 100 liters of adulterated and non-standard milk was destroyed and heavy fines were also imposed. DG Halal Food Authority Shafiqullah Khan said they would ensure regular checking of milk tankers on entry points to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from other provinces.

Peshawar Motorway M1 closed

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Motorway M1 closed for all traffic from Peshawar to Rishkai due to heavy fog, an officials of Motorway Police told APP here on Sunday morning.

"The purpose of closing the motorway is to prevent accidents," said the motorway authorities.

The officials of the Motorway Police advised the people to avoid unnecessary travel during fog hours and ensure the use of fog lights during travel. "Motorway will be restored for traffic after fog reduction," Motorway officials added.



PESHAWAR: Secretary Zakat, Ushr, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Dr. Aneela Mahfooz addressing participants at a seminar.

Salma honored with 'Int'l Volunteer Award'

PESHAWAR (APP): A ceremony commemorating the "International Volunteer Day" took place in Peshawar, shining a spotlight on the outstanding accomplishments of Salma Rehmat, a dedicated Afghan refugee volunteer residing in Peshawar.

Recognized for her remarkable efforts in promoting girls' education and safeguarding hundreds of Afghan refugee children from child labor, Salma was honored with the prestigious Global Volunteer Impact Award by VSO's International Office UK.

The event, titled "VSO Volunteerism Impact Award 2023," was organized by the Voluntary Service Organization (VSO) at a local hotel in Peshawar on Sunday. Dignitaries such as Badar Munir Khan from Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees KP, officials from the Education Department Peshawar, Country Director VSO

Sehar Afshin, Program Officer Nida Sughra, PRDS Chief Executive Naimatullah, Tariq Hayat PM MYRP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Child Protection and Welfare Commission Head Ijaz Khan, Program Director of KP Commission on the Status of Women Amina Durrani, along with representatives of civil society and women volunteers, participated physically, while hundreds of volunteers and dignitaries from different international organizations joined the celebration through virtual platform.

Addressing the audience, VSO Country Director Sehar Afshin congratulated Salma Rehmat and emphasized the organization's commitment to promoting education for children, youth, and women empowerment through volunteer engagement in more than 24 countries of the world.

She highlighted the annual recognition of volunteers for their selfless contributions, with Salma receiving the esteemed Global Volunteer Impact Award in the education category this year. Participants learned about Salma's impactful role as a passionate advocate for education at Peshawar.

She serves as a true bridge between the host and refugee communities and supports the vulnerable

children by persuading the parents to refrain from involving their children in child labor.

She identifies out of school children, engage the basic learning activities in Catch-up learning center, established at Peshawar under Multi Year Resilience Programme, after each 4.5 months she enrolls the identified out of school children in formal government schools and continues her efforts to ensure their retention in the schools.

Regular meetings with local village support groups, parent-teacher councils, and school teachers further showcase her dedication towards Education.

Upon receiving the award, Salma expressed her gratitude for being recognized as an international education champion, dedicating the honor to all women working for the Noble cause of Education.

She stressed the collective responsibility to educate children, irrespective of their nationality, caste or creed and conveyed gratitude to the government of Pakistan, education department KP, CAR office KP, VSO, and PRDS for their true assistance and mentorship in her selfless educational efforts and for establishing catch-up learning program center in her locality.

Tatara police crackdown continued

PESHAWAR (APP): Three involved suspects were arrested while cracking down on professional criminals, an official of the Tatara Police Station, Hayatabad here.

The arrested suspects are residents of different areas of Peshawar who are involved in illegal arms, drug trafficking and other crimes, Police official said.

One number of Kalashnikovs and more than one kilogram of hashish have also been recovered from the possession of the arrested accused wherein cases have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigation has been started.

Hospital directed for compile record

PESHAWAR (APP): Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa issued a decision to compile a record of medical equipment of hospitals.

In this connection, the Health Deptt has issued a directive to all the hospitals to compile records of equipment currently in the hospital. A letter in this connection was issued by the Health Department to District Health Officers, MS and Hospital Directors.

The hospitals were directed to compile data of medical equipment that should be collected in hospitals across the province and compile all data related to passive and active machinery as well. The hospital administration will compile a complete record of the goods lying in the stores and after getting the details, the equipment will be given to the respective hospitals on the basis of need.

Medical supplies have been sent to hospitals where they are not needed, health department officials said. There are hospitals where medical equipment is in dire need, health department officials said.

public authority and justice. He furthermore asked to not come into deceiving tactics and fake promises and slogans and should reject politicians as they have betrayed them all the time.

The ATP chief noted that for 76 years, these parties had ruled the country, but they had not implemented its promises and deceived the nation every time with various slogans.

Shah said his party wants to make people powerful to save them from the cruel system, traditional politicians and opportunists. He added our party is a strong movement and public voice, and no one will press it.

Shah said his party has a complete economic plan to steer the country out of crisis. "Youth is the only hope for the country," he said, adding that 65 percent of the total population consists of youth and they are very capable.

He urged masses to support his party and become part of the movement for

While talking to various public meetings and delegations during his visit to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sunday he said rulers have deceived people, damaged and looted the country in the past.

We have brought a workable, constructive and positive plan wherein corruption, politics based on personality and personal interests and tug of war for power will be completely vanished. He said power will empower people by delegating power at direct grassroot level.

Our single mission is to authority and justice for people and there will be no compromise on it. Shah

said all political parties are running away from the general masses and want a palace, drawing room politics and government.

He said ATP stands with people for the last six years and it has given a viable plan and solution to government and opposition but these opportunist segments didn't come out from their personal interests.

The party leader said no concrete policy was crafted to tackle the increasing challenges to the country on internal and external fronts.

Youth banned to sell Naswar and cigarettes

PESHAWAR (APP): KP Police on Sunday announced that no youth would be allowed to sell either Naswar or Cigarettes in the markets and other localities and stern action would be taken if any violating the decision.

Police have decided to take action against these shopkeepers who use youth to sell cigarettes and Naswar in the streets and in the bazaars. Selling snuff and cigarettes to people under 18 years of age is illegal, Police said.

Initially, the shopkeeper will be fined Rs. 5000 on the spot, Police said. Shopkeepers who violate for the second time will be punished with three months imprisonment and a fine of Rs.100,000, police said.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Ghulam Ali listening problems of traders during his visit to Meena Bazaar.

Weather to be cold and dry

PESHAWAR (APP): The weather is likely to remain cold and dry in most of the districts of the province with light rain at some places in Chitral, the officials of the Meteorological Department said here Sunday.

There is a possibility of fog in the morning and evening in the districts of Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu and due to heavy fog the motorway M1 was also closed in order to precautionary measures to ensure public safety, the official said.

In Kalam, the mercury fell due to freezing temperatures and the temperature in Kalam is -4 degrees centigrade, the official said. The minimum temperature in Peshawar is 4 degrees Celsius while the maximum temperature is expected to be 23 degrees Celsius with Parachinar 1, Dir 1, Malam Jabba and Takhtbaih recording 3 degrees Celsius, Meteorological Department officials said.

169 air quality index recorded

PESHAWAR (APP): Air quality index of 169 was recorded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa here on Sunday with Traffic fumes from marble factories and others increasing air pollution in the air.

According to the Director General Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) school buses, old wagons, rickshaws and old taxis, factories cause pollution in the environment with 400,000 vehicles coming and going out in Peshawar city.

Citizens should be made aware of air pollution to take precautionary measures, DGEPA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said here. As a result of air pollution that increased cold, cough and chest diseases in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with a large number of people badly affected.

High air quality index increases chest, skin, eye and lung diseases, DGEPA said, adding people are advised to close their windows, wear masks outside to avoid dirty air outside.

Adil Hussain

Educational reforms in Pakistan have been the subject of debate from a long time. There is a record of continuous attempts and initiatives on behalf of the government and institutions to bring fruitful changes in the curriculum. But due to the absence of a broad vision no significant results have been achieved so far. Reforms in the existing curriculum are inevitable for creating a balance system that can fulfill the requirements of both the traditional as well as modern ages. But these reforms must be made in the light of the modern educational experiences that should not in any way undermine the legitimate interests of the citizens and the strength of the existing order.

Education is the only thing that empower a nation to change the destiny of the world. In almost every country, there are specific courses that are designed to provide its citizens with the necessary information about their sense of existence. This is important because when one does not know the fact that

where he has come from then how would he appreciate the way he is going ? The logic behind this is to create a class of citizens that can understand the structure and composition and the problem solution pattern of society in a more systematic way.

Pakistan is a highly diversified country with a rich and distinguished social, political, ethnic and historical backgrounds. The failure to recognize the diversities present between different ethnic groups is strengthening the communal sentiments in the country which ultimately give birth to more problems over time. In order to understand the extent of diversities and complexities, create a strong linkage with history and to find out solution to the multi dimensional problems of Pakistani society, there was no other option rather than the introduction of a special subject.

Intellectual superiority of a nation is directly proportional to its political dominance on the world. Though technological advancement and a strong economic position enabled the British to rule India for so many years but their

strong intellectual heritage helped them in consolidating their rule in the region.

The failure to design a well organized syllabus along with the incompetent faculty members are the factors that are responsible for this situation. Instead of building a strong intellectual society that can find out solution to our most outstanding problems and establish a balance relation between the state and its citizens, the course did nothing other than repeating the old version of society.

The proposal put forwarded a day earlier recommended the addition of a modified version with the title of " Ideology and constitutional development of Pakistan". While the name indicates the intensions of the new policy, the strategy is seem to be different. There is a possibility that the government may allow students from other departments of social sciences to apply for the Government posts of Pakistan Studies. The new policy will greatly put their present and future position at risk. The doors of new employment opportunities for the degree holders of Pakistan studies will be restricted

as their place would be taken by other students of social sciences.

Improvement is the essence of time. It is important to bring some crucial changes not only in the curriculum of Pakistan Studies but also in the whole education system of the country. But there are other ways also available for this initiative. If the government believe that the current syllabus is not much satisfactory then it should modify it by giving more weightage to the desired items it wants Like Ideology and Constitutional development, without changing the title of the curriculum.

Because the new titled course with its own requirements will put the already graduated, and currently enrolled students at risk. After seeing their position at risk, there is a possibility of strong resistance from those thousands of people who would directly be effected from this step. Changes in the contents, structure and composition is necessary rather than changing the title of the subject.

Presently, Pakistan is suffering from a number of serious problems, the only way to get out of this

uncertain situation is the designing of a well organized, advanced and objective education system that can enhance the level creativity and capabilities of the citizens so that they can find out solution to these problems and help Pakistan to grow stronger than ever. A more rationale and workable education system can only be established when all the stake holders and intellectuals are involved in this process of transformations.

A complete educational autonomy to the educational boards that are free from the unnecessary intervention of government or state authorities is prerequisites for the establishment of a comprehensive and objective education system. Policies for the general population should only be framed by those who understands the requirements of this class. Reforming the Education system is a very sensitive and complex issue. Any wrong action in this regard would have a far reaching consequences on the future of this nation. Therefore, a very careful procedure should need to be adopted for a better outcomes in the long run.



PESHAWAR: ANP Candidate for PK-81 Arsalan visiting free medical camp.



In brief

Body found in DIKhan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The dead body of an unidentified man was found on Grid Road, Dera Ismail Khan on Sunday. According to a Rescue 1122 spokesman, the emergency service received information about the presence of a body on the Grid Road. After this, the medical team of the Rescue 1122 reached the site and shifted the body to the Trauma Center. The identity of the body could not be ascertained yet.

Child dies, three injured

MULTAN (INP): A child died while three people were injured when hand grenade exploded in a warehouse at Shujabad road of Multan on Sunday. Rescue sources said that a hand grenade found in scrap exploded with big bang. As a result of explosion, a child died on the spot while three others sustained injuries. The body and injured were shifted to Nishtar Hospital Multan and police after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

12 criminals busted

SARGODHA (APP): The police launched a comprehensive crackdown on illegal weapon holders and drug pushers and nabbed 12 alleged criminals here on Sunday. Police said teams of different police stations raided various localities and arrested Naveed, Saleem, Arslan, Tahir, Wajid, Shams, Shahid, Arif, Rehman, Majid, Mubashir and Zain. Police recovered 1.8-kg hashish, nine pistols, five guns, three Kalashnikovs, four rounds, 490 bullets and cash in millions of rupees from them. An investigation is ongoing.

Man abducts, kills son-in-law

PASRUR (INP): A Saudi Arabia returned man abducted and killed his son-in-law for entering in court marriage with his daughter. According to details, 19-year-old Aiman Akhtar hailing from village Langay of Gujrat entered in friendship on online PUBG game with a labourer youth Husnain Ali, belonging to village Jassoran of Pasrur. The two lovebirds tied a knot on November 30, 2023 through court marriage. Aiman's father identified as Akhtar who was staying in Saudi Arabia soon after his return abducted Husnain Ali. A case of abduction was registered at Badiana police station and body of the kidnapped youth was recovered from jurisdiction of Mangwal police station in Gujrat. The body was handed over to heirs after legal formalities and police after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest the accused.

Lok Mela continued

SARGODHA (APP): A week-long Lok Mela, being organised by PHA in the city, continued on Sunday. PHA Director General Tauqeer Haider Kazmi said the Lok Mela was underway aimed at promoting regional culture and creating awareness among the young generation about rich history of the region. On the fourth day, fireworks, Ludi dance, acrobatics, gymnastic performance, agriculture and citrus exhibition were held at the Mela, he said. Later, the melodious performance of famous folk singer Nooran Lal was enjoyed by the people. The DG said that families and people of all ages coming in large numbers enjoyed 'desi' and fast food, swings and various stalls arranged by different departments and brands at the Mela.

IT entry test:

Governor praises youth participation

QUETTA (APP): Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar on Sunday said the IT industry has started work in the province at the public level and this will prove to be the forerunner of the information technology revolution. He expressed these views while seeing the huge number of male and female candidates participating in the entrance test. Governor said in the entry test, over 3000 candidates from Quetta City have been participated which boosted the feeling of happiness along with the

confidence that our youth are determined to face the challenges of the new era. He said the efforts of all Vice Chancellors of Balochistan Public Sector Universities and Chief Executive Officer of Ultrasoft system Asif Naeem in making the IT initiative program successful are commendable. The successful candidates in the entry test of the IT initiative program will be trained in "Artificial Intelligence, Web 3.0, Metaverse, Free AI and other courses. Laptops will also be distributed among

the top 100 outstanding candidates.

The Governor said that to provide employment to the youth of Balochistan and to connect them with modern technology, we had started IT training in September.

He said "It is a moment of pride and joy that today nearly 10,000 youths have registered themselves in this program. After completion of modern IT courses, the youth of the province will also be able to earn a handsome amount by sitting at home with the help of online offshore companies."

Rescue 1122 Abbottabad issues safety guidelines

ABBOTTABAD (APP): The District Emergency Officer Abbottabad, Muhammad Arif Khattak Sunday has issued important safety guidelines for the use of gas heaters to ensure the well-being of residents.

The guidelines were issued as every year gas leakage and other fire incidents claims dozens of life in inky two districts of Hazara region including Abbottabad and Mansehra during the winter season.

Emphasize the cleanliness of gas heaters and conduct regular checks for potential leaks. Ensure proper room ventilation by

keeping windows, doors, or ventilators slightly open.

Maintain a minimum distance of five feet between the heater and flammable objects. Never leave the heater unattended while it is operational, and securely turn it off when leaving the room or the house.

Advocate for limited use of gas heaters, encourage the use of warm clothing, and ensure heaters are turned off before bedtime. Be vigilant during gas load shedding times to avoid potential overfilling in rooms when gas is restored. Discourage using heaters for drying clothes; restrict their use solely for heating

purposes.

Highlight the health risks associated with continuous gas heater use, especially the production of harmful carbon monoxide gas. When using electric heaters, pay careful attention to wiring, sockets, and switch safety. Exercise caution when using coal or wood, ensuring proper disposal of ashes and maintaining fresh air circulation.

Thoroughly extinguish coal or wood embers before going to sleep. In case of a fire or any emergency, residents are urged to contact the Rescue 1122 helpline at 1122 for immediate assistance.

Govt to establish solid waste energy plant

QUETTA (APP): On the direction of Chief Minister Ali Mardan Khan Domki, the Balochistan government was making efforts to establish a solid waste energy plant on a public-private partnership basis in the provincial capital to generate electricity and bio-gas from domestic waste.

The Secretary of Local Government, Administrator of Quetta Metropolitan Corporation and District administration have been working to establish a solid waste energy plant in the city and reviewed various proposals regarding the project.

A feasibility study will be conducted regarding the waste supply, recycling and other factors of the solid waste energy plant.

The Metropolitan Corporation Quetta would conduct a survey and com-

pile data to provide waste to the plant daily so that the plant could run smoothly.

Talking to APP, Commissioner Quetta Division Muhammad Hamza Shfaqat said that the city has produced thousands of tons of waste daily, which can be used to meet energy and other needs, and the city will also remain clean.

He said projects like solid waste management plants and energy plants will make the city clean and free from garbage and it will also generate substantial revenue for the government. He said that a solid waste energy plant would enhance the energy production in Quetta as the city produces around 1.5 million tons of garbage annually.

Hamza said that around 100 megawatts of electricity can be generated annual-

ly by using this waste, adding the electricity generated from the solid waste energy plant can be supplied to local industries and business centres.

He further said that solid waste energy plants could reduce environmental pollution in the city by using it.

The commissioner said the government was committed to ensuring all facilities to the investors regarding the establishment of a solid waste energy plant in Quetta.

Hamza Shafqat said that the services of private companies should also be utilized for cleaning the city so that the city remains beautiful and clean. He added that a feasibility study and other steps regarding the set-up of a solid waste energy plant should be completed as soon as possible.

GCWUS starts plastic pollution management

SIALKOT (APP): Department of Environmental Science of the Govt College Women University Sialkot (GCWUS) has started plastic pollution management in the varsity.

Speaking on the occasion, GCWUS Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Zarin Fatima Rizvi said that plastic waste of the university would be used as ground leveling which would not only control the plastic waste but also avoid the cost of earth filling.

The GCWUS VC advised the students and

said the biggest challenge of the future was environmental pollution, and we all had to work to cope with this challenge, adding that students should reduce the use of plastic in homes.

She further said the filling of land with only one month plastic waste had been started. This would not only control pollution but also facilitate the achievement of quality development goals and the goal of zero waste campus would also be fulfilled.

Chairperson Department of Environmental Sciences

Dr. Adeel Mehmood said the varsity started this project on the special instructions of GCWUS Vice Chancellor.

All the plastic waste of the university would be pressed and soil would be added to it, on which grass would be grown later.

He said this would not only reduce the environmental pollution caused by plastic but also increase the beauty of the university with green grass. Heads of all educational and administrative departments were also present on the occasion.

Police arrest 218 drug peddlers in November

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The district police of Bahawalpur had taken 218 alleged drug peddlers into custody during the last month of November and recovered narcotics from their possession.

According to a police spokesman, following the vision of Inspector General Police (IGP) of Punjab, and under the supervision of District Police Officer (DPO) of Bahawalpur Syed Muhammad Abbas, several police teams conducted raids at dens during the last number.

He narrated that during the raids, the police parties took 218 alleged drug pushers into custody and recov-

ered narcotics from their possession. The recovered narcotics included over 84 kilograms of hashish, over one kilogram of heroin, over one mound of cannabis, and 6,453 liters of liquor.

The police of different police stations in Bahawalpur lodged FIRs against the accused and launched an investigation into the cases.

Funds for Bahawalpur Victoria Hospital issued

The Punjab government has issued the required funds for construction, repair, and renovation projects at Bahawal Victoria Hospital (one of the largest civil hospitals in the coun-

try) in Bahawalpur.

Official sources said that Secretary Communication and Works for South Punjab, Jawad Akram, visited Bahawal Victoria Hospital (BVH), where he inspected the ongoing work of construction, repair, and renovation at the Outdoor Department, TB Ward, Eye Ward, Gynae Ward, and others.

He was informed that the required funds for the ongoing projects of BVH had been released.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that ongoing development projects at BVH premises would be executed and completed within the stipulated time.



BANNU: RPO Qasim Ali Khan and DPO Bannu Ifukhar with others officials and relatives offering funeral prayers of Martyred Police officials Muhammad Ashraf.

Political parties urged for role in poll process

MARDAN (APP): President of non-governmental organization Saibaan Development Organization Mardan Muhammad Arif Sunday said that they should play their role effectively to ensure the participation of women in the political and electoral process.

Playing role to ensure participation in the political and electoral process, he expressed these views while addressing the ceremony of receiving the certificate from the District Election Commission Officer Zia-ul-Rahim at the Election Commission Office Mardan.

He said that political parties should ensure equal participation of women in the electoral process signifies women's empowerment and gender equality. When women participate in elections as voters, candidates, election organizers or party supporters, the electoral process becomes more inclusive and democracy is strengthened through this way after the participation of both men and women on equal terms.

Police arrest six drug dealers

CHARSADDA (INP): Police have arrested six individuals and seized a significant amount of narcotics in Charsadda on Sunday.

According to police, acting on the directives of District Police Officer Nazir Khan, DSP Shabqadar Gulshad Khan led the operation, with SHO Police Station Shabqadar Riaz Khan directly overseeing the arrests.

The apprehended individuals include Muhammad Jan, Amir Elahi, Arshad, Haliq Dad, Saleem Khan, and Noorbaz, all hailing from various localities in Charsadda.

During the operation, police recovered a total of 15 grams of ice and 2 kilograms and 416 grams of hashish, highlighting the scale of the drug trade targeted by the crackdown.

An investigation has been initiated by the authorities to delve deeper into the network and apprehend any remaining individuals involved in the illegal activities.

This successful operation marks a significant step in the fight against drug trafficking in Charsadda and signifies the commitment of law enforcement to tackle the issue head-on.

Two killed, four injured in firing

NEWSHERA (INP): Two people were killed and four others injured when armed men of rival groups opened fire on a car here late Saturday night, police said.

According to details, armed men ambushed a car carrying six family members on Pabbi-Chirat road in Nowshera while they were returning home after attending a wedding a ceremony.

As a result of firing, Shahid Nawaz and Tahir Ameen were killed on the spot while four others including two women sustained injuries. Attackers fled the scene.

The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities and police after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest the culprits.

Hashish, heroin and Ice recovered

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The district police have arrested six accused recovering 5620 gram hashish, 743 gram heroin, 431 gram Ice drug and illegal weapons along with ammunition from their possession during ongoing crackdown against anti-social elements across the district.

According to a police spokesman, the police have intensified actions against criminal elements following the directions of District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani.

As part of such actions, a team of City police Station led by SHO Arslan Khan Gandapur, while carrying out operations against drug dealers and criminals, arrested three accused named Muhammad Asad, Danyal and Arif recovering 3260 gram hashish, 408 grams of heroin, 371 grams of Ice drug and two 30-bore pistols along with ammunition from their possession.

Int'l human rights day observed in DIKhan: The

Similarly, a team of Cantt police station led by SHO Gulsher Khan arrested a drug dealer Muhammad Adil son of Rabnawaz and recovered 1500 gram hashish, 200 gram heroin and one 30-bore pistol along with five cartridges. The same police, in another action, arrested accused of attempt to murder case named Adil son of Munawar and recovered crime weapon 30-bore pistol from him.

Likewise, Paroa police station team led by SHO Bilal Khan arrested another drug dealer named Hamad Ali son of Zawar Hassan recovering 860 gram hashish, 135 gram heroin and 60 gram Ice drug from him. DPO Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani appreciated the performance of police and directed them to utilize all available resources to eradicate all type of crimes from the society.

Int'l human rights day observed in DIKhan: The

district administration on Sunday organized a rally in connection with the 'International Human Rights Day' being observed across the globe on December 10.

The rally, led by Assistant Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Muhammad Faseeh Ishaq Abbasi, was started at GPO Chowk and culminated at Topan-Wala Chowk.

The rally was also attended by Pakistan Worker Federation Bannu region Chairman Muhammad Rehman, Vice Chairman Qaiser Kamran, officers and staff of different government departments and people from different segments of society.

The participants of the rally were holding banners inscribed with different slogans supporting human rights. The speakers, while addressing the rally, stressed for prevention of violence against women and girls.

CTP imposes Rs135m fine over traffic violations

MULTAN (INP): City Traffic Police (CTP) has imposed over Rs 135 million fine by issuing challan tickets to 3,75,400 violators on traffic violations so far during the current fiscal year 2023.

The CTP has issued an enforcement report of the ongoing fiscal year in which action was taken on lane line violations, overloading, one-way violations, and other violations.

The CTP was taking all possible steps to control traffic accidents in the city and ensure the uninterrupted flow of traffic as per

directions of Additional IG Traffic Punjab Mirza Faran Baig.

A special crackdown was underway against non-helmeted motorcyclists as it has been observed that most of the road accident fatalities occurred due to head injuries due to the non-use of helmets.

City Traffic Police have impounded over 13,500 vehicles in different police stations during the current year, canceled the route permits of more than 40 vehicles, and issued challan tickets to over 150,000 violators sans helmets while

riding motorcycles. The CTP teams have also registered near about 2000 FIRs in various police stations under an ongoing drive against underage riders.

Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Muhammad Naeem Shahid has directed the traffic staff to launch a comprehensive crackdown against motorcyclists sans helmets and the Education Unit has been directed to visit various educational institutions, departments, and bus stands and make people aware of road safety rules.

Sewerage water irks citizens, damages homes

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): In a rallying display of unity, residents of Tibba Karimabad in Muzaffargarh voiced their grievances as sewage water breached homes, leading to the unfortunate demolition of two widows' residences.

The local citizens are faced with numerous problems due to sewerage water however Municipal Committee demonstrating negligence to resolve the issue, said Wazir Ahmed Mohana, while talking to media persons.

The residents, including widows Kaniz Mai and widow Mushtaq, faced not only the intrusion of sewage but also the collapse of their houses.

The protestors informed that the sewerage scheme was approved but alleged misappropriation was done which resulted in sewerage crises in the area.

The citizens demanded that Commissioner Dera Ghazi Khan and Deputy Commissioner Muzaffargarh to take notice and address the dire situation promptly.

Man crushes under train to death: A person was crushed under train to

death while crossing the railway track near Mehmood Kot railway station.

According to Rescue officials, a person was crossing railway track near Mehmood Kot and suddenly train crossing from there hit him.

As a result, he sustained injuries and died on the spot. Rescue staff reached the spot and covered the body with dead sheet. The heirs took the body to home after the legal action. The deceased was identified as 65 years old Sadiq Hussain s/o Ghulam Hasan resident of Qasba Mahmood Kot.

Arts Council pledges to safeguard, promote cultural

MULTAN (APP): President Board of Management Multan Arts Council Mian Amir Naseem Shaikh on Sunday said it was our shared responsibility for patronage and protection of cultural heritage.

In the maiden Board of Management Meeting here, Amir Naseem underscored the significance of passing on art and culture to the new generation.

During the meeting, the Board discussed vital issues, including a new code of conduct for the Arts Council Auditorium and strategies to address space constraints for parking.

To tackle rising expenses, they explored options to increase income and considered a feasibility report for implementing a solar system

to control electricity costs. Additional Commissioner Coordination Abdul Jabbar suggested various income-generating measures.

Multan Arts Council Director Dr. Riaz Hamdani proposed organizing the Multan Literary and Cultural Conference, while Rahat Bano advocated for ramps for disabled persons

and effective regional representation for civil awards.

The importance of installing a lift for the art gallery was emphasized by Farah Rehman, Zameer Hashmi, and Arif Khan Babar. The collaborative efforts of the Board reflect a commitment to nurturing and preserving Multan's rich cultural tapestry.

Six gangsters held

FAISALABAD (APP): Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested six dacoits of two gangs and recovered cash, other valuables and illegal weapons from their possession.

On a tip-off, a police team headed by SHO Sargodha Road police station Inspector Basharat Ali conducted raids and succeeded in arresting three members of Shamili gang including ring leader Shumail aka Shamaili who were wanted by police in more than 14 cases of dacoity, robbery and theft, etc.



Egyptians head to polls in election likely to give Sisi third term

CAIRO (AFP/APP): Polling stations opened on Sunday for Egyptians to vote in a presidential election overshadowed by war in neighbouring Gaza and with little doubt the incumbent Abdel Fattah al-Sisi will secure a third term.

In a country gripped by the most severe financial crisis in its recent history -- inflation has hovered near 40 percent after the currency lost half its value and drove up the cost of imports -- the economy is the crux of Egyptians' concerns.

Even before the current crisis, about two-thirds of the country's nearly 106 million people were living on or below the poverty line.

Before polls opened at 09:00 am (0700 GMT), dozens of voters had already crowded in front of a polling station in a central Cairo school amidst heavy security, an AFP correspondent reported.

Voting will take place from Sunday until Tuesday, between 9:00 am and 09:00 pm each day, with the official results announced on December 18.

In front of the Cairo polling station, posters bore messages to "get out and participate" while a DJ played nationalist songs.

Some 67 million people are eligible to vote, and all eyes will be on turnout after successive previous elections mustered low participation figures.

"Of course people need to partici-



pate, but let's be realistic: these elections are set for Sisi, because no one knows the other candidates," a voter in her fifties told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"Yes, there's inflation and things are hard, but we need someone capable of handling what's happening at the border," she added, referring to Egypt's border with Gaza.

Inflation is at 38.5 percent and food inflation 45.2 percent, official figures showed on Sunday, leaving Egyptians anxious.

Voter Fathi Ali, 79, said he "only

asks that the next president ensures full health insurance".

Despite Egypt's afflictions, a decade-long crackdown on dissent has eliminated any serious opposition to Sisi, the fifth president to emerge from within the ranks of the military since 1952.

Under his rule, Egypt has jailed thousands of political prisoners, and while a presidential pardons committee has freed around 1,000 in one year, rights groups say that three to four times that many were arrested over the same time period.

Cuba thwarts terrorist plot by S. Florida man who arrived by jetski

HAVANA (Reuters): Cuba said late on Saturday it had thwarted a terrorist plot hatched in neighboring south Florida, according to a report broadcast on state-run media, after a man allegedly arrived on the island by jetski to commit acts of violence.

The resulting investigation, which state-run media said was still underway, alleged the plot was tied to at least two groups, Nueva Nacion Cubana and La Nueva Nacion Cubana en Armas, which Cuba has labeled as terrorist entities.

Reuters was unable to contact either of the groups late on Saturday.

The report said one of the men it had arrested, who appeared on the

program but whose identity was unclear, was armed with several handguns, ammunition clips and ammo. The report alleged the man, a Cuban residing in Florida, had entered Cuba illegally on a jetski with a Florida registration, which he then abandoned in a mangrove swamp on the island's north coast before making his way overland to Cienfuegos, in south-central Cuba.

The man then attempted to recruit others to assist in committing acts of violence, arson and vandalism before his eventual arrest, according to the report. State-run media said several other Cubans, residing both in South Florida and in Cuba, were under

investigation for their involvement in the alleged plot.

The allegations comes just two days after Cuba published a list of more than 80 foreign nationals and entities it accuses of terrorism, including influencers, many long-time dissidents who reside in the United States and a candidate for mayor of Florida's Miami-Dade County. The two groups identified in Saturday's TV report appear on the list published by Cuba earlier this week, and are labeled as "criminal organizations based in the United States that organize, finance...and execute actions against the security of the Cuban state."

Venezuela and Guyana to meet on December 14 amid territorial dispute

SAO PAULO (Reuters): Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro will meet with Guyana President Mohamed Irfaan Ali on Thursday amid a territorial dispute between the two countries, according to a letter from the prime minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The announcement of the bilateral meeting came after Maduro spoke with Ralph Gonsalves, the prime minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, who also serves as president pro tempore of the Community of Latin American and

Caribbean States (CELAC), and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Saturday.

Tensions have been mounting in recent weeks between Venezuela and Guyana due to a long-running border dispute over Esequibo, an area in Guyana where massive discoveries of offshore oil and gas have been made.

Venezuela's government said the meeting "is in order to preserve our aspiration to maintain Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace." The Office of the President of Guyana con-

firmed Ali had agreed to the meeting, but added, "Guyana's land boundary is not up for discussion."

Last weekend, voters in Venezuela rejected the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) jurisdiction over the area, backing the creation of a new state.

Earlier on Saturday, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva spoke to Maduro and called for dialogue, saying it was important to avoid unilateral measures that could escalate the situation.

Lula, who has been invited to the Thursday

meeting as an observer, reiterated that Brazil is ready to support and follow dialogue initiatives, reinforcing a joint declaration by South American countries that was released earlier this week.

The United States and Brazil are consulting each other on the Venezuela-Guyana border dispute, the press office of the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia said. "We reaffirm the United States' unwavering support for Guyana's sovereignty," it said in a statement that said both governments want a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Over 300 Rohingya refugees stranded on Indonesian beaches

BANDA ACEH (AFP/APP): More than 300 Rohingya refugees, mostly women and children, were stranded on the coast of western Indonesia Sunday after being adrift at sea for weeks, the latest in the biggest wave of arrivals since 2015.

A group of 180 refugees from the persecuted Myanmar minority arrived by boat at 3:00 am local time (2000 GMT Saturday) on a beach in the Pidie regency of Aceh province.

Another boat carrying 135 refugees landed in neighbouring Aceh Besar regency hours later after being adrift at sea for more than a month.

The mostly Muslim Rohingya were the target of a 2017 crackdown by Myanmar's military that is the subject of a UN genocide probe. Around a million have fled to Bangladesh, and from there thousands risk their lives each year on long and expensive sea journeys to reach Malaysia or

Indonesia. "We had been in the sea for almost one month and 15 days. [...] We left on November 1st," 24-year-old refugee Muhammad Shohibul Islam told AFP. The refugees gathered on a plantation next to the shore, where they drank water given to them by locals. Some lay on the ground, trying to rest after their journey.

Police found stacks of United Nations refugee cards in a cardboard box brought by the refugees, an AFP journalist saw.

"We noticed that some of these refugees have refugee cards. So, let them be re-registered first by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration [before we act further]," local police chief Rolly Yuiza Away said by telephone.

The authorities kept the refugees on the shore where they landed, with mothers cradling their children, some of whom were naked,

in their arms. The local government in Pidie said earlier it would not take responsibility for providing the refugees with tents, or other basic needs. They said they would not "bear any expenses" and that no shelters were available.

Local authorities and residents have been rejecting the Rohingya, threatening to push them back to sea since more than 1,000 arrived last month.

On Wednesday, about 150 protesters in Sabang Island in Aceh clashed with police as they called for the Rohingya refugees to be relocated. "We continue to explain the situation to the people and ensure that they will not be burdened with the handling of refugees," said United Nations refugee agency protection associate Faisal Rahman.

He acknowledged that designated shelters were over capacity but said the agency and the Indonesian government were trying to find a place for the refugees. "The government

is working to provide shelter as the number of refugees arriving is very high," Rahman said.

President Joko Widodo said Friday that temporary relief would be provided for refugees "with a priority on the interests of the local community".

He accused a human trafficking network of being behind the rising number of Rohingya refugees reaching his country by boat, vowing to take strict action against the perpetrators. Indonesia is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention and says it is not compelled to take in refugees from Myanmar.

But neighbouring countries have also shut their doors, leaving the Rohingya with few other options. Rohingya refugees among the recent arrivals in Aceh said they fled escalating brutality in the camps in and around Cox's Bazar, which hold more than one million people and where gangs regularly abduct and torture residents for ransom.

Philippines, China trade accusations over South China Sea collision

BEIJING/MANILA (Reuters): The Philippines and China traded accusations on Sunday over a collision of their vessels near a disputed shoal in the South China Sea as tensions over claims in the vital waterway escalate. The Philippine coast guard accused China of firing water cannons and ramming resupply vessels and a coast guard ship, causing "serious engine damage" to one, while China's coast guard said the Philippine vessel intentionally rammed its ship.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion of annual ship-borne commerce, including parts claimed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 said China's claims had no legal basis.

Beijing and Manila have been playing cat-and-mouse around the uninhabited Second Thomas Shoal

in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone when the Philippines deploys resupply missions for Filipino soldiers living aboard an aging warship deliberately run aground in 1999 to protect Manila's maritime claims.

The shoal is part of what are known internationally as the Spratly Islands.

On Saturday, the Philippines accused China of "illegal and aggressive actions" by China for firing water cannon at a civilian-operated government fishing vessel, a move Beijing called legitimate "control measures".

In Sunday's incident, China's coast guard said in a statement that two Philippine vessels, ignoring repeated warnings, had "illegally entered the waters adjacent to Ren'ai Reef in the Nansha Islands without the approval of the Chinese government." It said the Uniaizah Mae 1 "made an unprofessional and danger-

ous sudden turn, intentionally ramming into China Coast Guard vessel 21556." It said the Philippine side bore full responsibility.

China Coast Guard spokesman Gan Yu called on the Philippines to stop its "provocative acts", saying China would continue to carry out "law-enforcement activities" in its waters. Philippine coast guard spokesperson Jay Tarrila posted on the social media platform X that the "ML Kalayaan suffered serious engine damage. Contrary to China Coast Guard disinformation, UMI rammed by CCG vessel."

A Philippine government task force condemned "China's latest unprovoked acts of coercion and dangerous maneuvers against a legitimate and routine" resupply mission. China's action "puts into question and significant doubt the sincerity of its calls for peaceful dialogue", it said in a statement.

The National Task Force-

West Philippine Sea said a coast guard ship was towing the Kalayaan back to Palawan province and that coast guard vessel BRP Cabra had "suffered damage to its mast after being directly targeted by the full strength of the water cannon". U.S. Ambassador to Manila MaryKay Carlson posted on X that China's "aggression undermines regional stability in defiance of a free and open Indo-Pacific".

Around 200 Philippine fishermen, youth leaders and civil society groups have joined a Christmas mission to the area, organised by the Atin Ito ("This is ours"), a civilian-led network asserting the country's rights in the South China Sea. The group said on Sunday they have decided to cut short the journey and returned to El Nido town in Palawan province after the captain said it was "unsafe" to continue "due to the dangerous maneuvers conducted by several Chinese vessels".

Zelensky going to Milei inauguration in Argentina

KYIV, UKRAINE (AFP/APP): Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky was traveling to the inauguration of Argentina's president-elect Javier Milei, Kyiv said Saturday.

The Ukrainian presidency said Zelensky was "on the way to Argentina to attend the inauguration of newly-elected President Javier Milei" due to take place Sunday.

A political outsider, Milei promised to uproot

Argentina's political establishment and stormed the elections in November.

Zelensky congratulated him, and both leaders spoke on the phone soon after Milei's election.

Zelensky then thanked Milei for his "clear support for Ukraine".

"This is well-noticed and appreciated by Ukrainians," Zelensky said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Milei's office published a statement after the call

saying he had "offered that Argentina could be the host of a summit between Ukraine and Latin America." Russia's ambassador to Argentina Dmitry Feoktistov is set to attend the ceremony, Russian state-run news agencies reported. The Kremlin had "noted several statements that Javier Milei made during the electoral campaign", spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "But we will focus on and judge him

mainly by the statements that he makes after the inauguration," Peskov added. Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated Milei for his victory, according to a Kremlin statement. Several other foreign leaders are set to attend the inauguration.

Spain's King Felipe VI, Hungary's Viktor Orban, Paraguay's Santiago Pena, Uruguay's Luis Lacalle Pou and Chile's Gabriel Boric are scheduled to attend.



Hong Kong holds district council elections

ANKARA (AA/APP): Voters headed to polling stations as Hong Kong's district council election began on Sunday.

Some 4.33 million registered voters can cast their votes at more than 600 polling stations from 8.30 a.m. (0030 GMT) to 10.30 p.m. to decide 88 of 470 seats in the new councils.

The city has amended its electoral laws for its legislature, reducing the number of directly elected candidates. Besides the directly elected district council

seats, the city's leader will appoint 179 councilors, and 2,532 members of district committees will decide another 176. Rural committee chairs will hold 27 ex officio seats.

The electoral overhaul followed the passage of a controversial national security law in 2020.

"During the voting process, we felt it was fast, and smooth, I also saw other residents voting at the polling station and our polling station colleagues were also very

professional and passionate," Chief Executive John Lee told reporters after casting his vote.

Authorities have encouraged people to vote, launching an intensive advertising campaign, organizing a weekend outdoor concert and providing HK\$20,000 (US\$2,560) in subsidies to individual centers for the elderly to help cover the cost of transporting residents to polling stations.

But critics said the absence of opposition

candidates and difficulty in understanding the changes to the election process could lower the turnout rate.

David Lok, chairman of the Electoral Affairs Commission, said he was confident the elections would be conducted in an open and fair manner, and that the polling and counting of votes would be smooth and completed within a reasonable time.

Hong Kong, the former British colony, was returned to China in 1997.

Gibraltar deal hinges on use of airport, says Spain's foreign minister

MADRID (Reuters): A deal over the post-Brexit status of the British territory of Gibraltar depends on agreement over use of the airport, Spain's foreign minister, Jose Manuel Albares, said in an interview published on Sunday.

The status of Gibraltar and how to police the border with Spain have been points of contention since Britain voted in 2016 to leave the European Union. The UK, Spain and the EU are due to hold further talks

on the matter on Wednesday.

Albares said that Spain has presented the UK with a proposal that includes free movement of people and goods, the removal of the physical border between Gibraltar and Spain and use of the airport. "It is up to the United Kingdom to decide whether it wants this or the simple application of European legislation," Albares told Spain's El Pais newspaper.

"To me it seems like

progress that flights can come from Spanish airports and other European countries, promoting tourism and relations. The airport has to be in the agreement."

Britain's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office did not respond immediately to an emailed request for comment on Sunday.

Gibraltar, an enclave at the southern tip of Spain, has been under British rule since the 18th century but was excluded from the

Brexit deal reached between Britain and the EU. Spain, Britain and the European Union agreed on Dec. 31, 2020, hours before Britain's full exit from the bloc, that Gibraltar would remain part of EU agreements, such as the Schengen Area, and Spain would police the port and the airport, pending a lasting solution.

Spain ceded the outpost, famed for its towering rock, to Britain in 1713 but has long called for its return.

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The legacy of late Rehmat Shah Afridi

The iconic journalist and founding father of The Frontier Post (TFP) Daily, Honourable Rehmat Shah Aridi departed this transient world after a short illness on Sunday. Mr Afridi was a true pioneer of English journalism in the KP, former North West Frontier Province, while he was one of the few Pakistanis who not only chose journalism as a profession but transformed it into a mission for the search and reporting of the truth and fearless support of justice in the community. He was an accomplished journalist, mentor, and spearhead in the field of journalism in the country. His dedication to truth, integrity, and storytelling has inspired countless newsmen, and writers, while his legacy will continue to resonate through his work and illuminating cradle of The Frontier Post Daily throughout the world in the coming years and decades.

Mr. Shah was a Bigwig in the field of journalism, and as the founder and Editor-in-Chief of The Frontier Post has left an indelible scholarly impact and eternal legacy in the country and the region. His valuable work and services in journalism inspire countless journalists while his patriotism and selfless reporting earned him eminence and fame in scholarly circles in Pakistan. His passing is not just a loss for his family, the frontier post, and the journalistic community but for the entire region that benefitted from his tireless endeavours to bring forth the truth, and support to justice delivery.

The Frontier Post family is shocked and saddened at this grave loss, and shares sympathy and condolences with the bereaved family/ children of Mr. Rehmat Shah Afridi. We bid farewell to our beloved patron-in-chief and journalism icon. At this moment, The Frontier Post family expresses its resolve to carry forward the legacy of the late Rehmat Shah Afridi by upholding the principles of integrity, truth, and fearless reporting and playing a constructive role in social development, justice delivery, and nation-building. May Allah rest his soul in peace, and may his legacy inspire countless others to follow his footprints in the future. Ameen

Upsurge in terrorism

A recent report of the KP government has indicated a significant upsurge in terrorism across Erstwhile FATA and settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the current year wherein 7 areas have been specifically targeted by the miscreants during that time. According to the statistics, Peshawar, Khyber, Bajaur, Tank, Dera Ismail Khan, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan Districts remained on the hit list of terrorist outfits throughout 2023. A total of 1,050 incidents of terrorism took place in the province, 419 in settled districts and 631 in the newly merged areas bordering Afghanistan. These terrorist attacks led to 470 casualties including security personnel and civilians.

Terrorism has shaped into a grave challenge for the people and state of Pakistan over the past year after the government-TTP peace deal collapsed and insurgent groups relaunched their terrorism offensive against the public and Security Forces of the country. Since then a death dance and bloodshed continuously pouring down in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Erstwhile FATA while hundreds of innocent civilians, and Security personnel embraced martyrdoms in acts of violence and terrorism in the past months. The country has faced significant challenges, particularly along its western border with Afghanistan as the border belt area has been the most vulnerable and terror-hit region in Pakistan.

Historically, Pakistan has been engaged in counter-terrorism campaigns over the past two decades to weed out its homegrown terrorism which no doubt had always enjoyed foreign funding and sponsorship throughout the past. Our valiant security forces successfully defeated the menace of terrorism from Pakistani soil through a series of operations in Swat, North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Khyber, and other border regions. Unfortunately, those hard-earned successes could not be consolidated by the successive governments largely due to lax border management, security lapses and nonimplementation of crucial anti-extremism and counterterrorism measures under the National Action Plan (NAP). Pakistani leaders did not learn from the world's experiences failing to tackle terrorism and violent extremism through repeated mistakes and nonseriousness in sensitive national security affairs. An important truce with terrorist outfits was conceived secretly by a few individuals without national deliberation and taking Parliament into confidence, that treacherous act not only revived terrorism but pushed the nation into a fresh quandary.

Presently, the evil of terrorism has resurfaced in the country, while the numbers and severity of terrorist attacks clearly illustrate the magnitude and volume of the risk that confronts our nation. The current situation is complex and multifaceted, with ongoing efforts to address the root causes of extremism, strengthen national security, and promote regional stability. The effectiveness of those strategies is of utmost importance and needs continuous debate and evaluation that reduces the scope of failure and increases the chances of lasting success against evil doers.

There is a dire need for a multiprong approach along with a ruthless Counterterrorism campaign and international cooperation on terrorism, which includes strict border management, enhancement of border security, Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) measures, deportation of illegal migrants, and stern punishment of the perpetrators of terrorism. So that, the Security Forces could eliminate the armed rebels through full military might, and the government and national institutions play their due role in the consolidation of strategic gains, this evil could not rebirth in the country anytime in the future.

Important Notice

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



Collapse of Gaza truce comes with a heavy price

Yossi Mekelberg

The collapse of the truce in Gaza was as regrettable as it was expected, and one of the immediate costs was that it prevented the release of one last group of women and children being held hostage by Hamas, in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners.

So the fighting resumed and the already unbearable death toll among the people of Gaza swiftly began to rise. The focus of the Israel Defense Forces has shifted toward the south of the Strip in pursuit of Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar and Mohammed Deif, among other senior officials, who are believed most likely to be holed up in the tunnels under the city of Khan Younis or the refugee camp nearby, and this is exacerbating an already intolerable humanitarian crisis.

Few observers expected the week-long pause in the fighting to become a longer-term humanitarian ceasefire, let alone a permanent one. At this point, Israel remains determined to end the war in a position from which it can declare victory; Hamas is unlikely to lay down its arms and surrender of its own accord; and the international community is still unwilling to enforce a ceasefire.

What is not being taken into account with the required sense of urgency is that it is the civilians of Gaza who are literally caught in the crossfire and paying an extremely heavy price, and for this there can be no excuse. In the coming days, perhaps weeks, if the war is allowed to rage on, the death toll and the suffering among ordinary Palestinians is bound to increase as the military campaign is concentrating on areas that are highly populated, not only by long-term residents but by people displaced from northern Gaza who were

actively encouraged by Israeli authorities to move south while the military operations focused on the north, and who now have nowhere left to run to escape the hellish situation.

Both Israel and the US blame Hamas for the collapse of the truce, accusing the group of reneging on commitments it made by failing to provide a list of the last group of kidnapped women and children it intended to release, and launching rockets at Israeli territory on the very morning that the release was supposed to take place.

Moreover, Hamas negotiators were accused of shifting the goalposts when it came to listing the category of hostages to be released next. The situation was made worse when the militant group claimed responsibility for killing three Israelis, and injuring several more, after two Palestinian gunmen opened fire at a bus stop in West Jerusalem.

But it was always just a matter of time anyway before Israel resumed the war, as it stated it would. It is unclear what the leaders of Hamas were thinking, as they were probably the side that most, even desperately, needed the truce to be extended. Israel's resumption of hostilities also means risking the lives of more than half of the hostages taken by Hamas on Oct. 7 who remain in captivity.

However, the mood in Israel demands that those responsible for the horrific attack on Israel be punished and so the war will continue until Hamas is defeated, despite warnings from humanitarian organizations operating in Gaza that the situation there is disastrous for Palestinian civilians. Very little can be done in practice to help those

evacuate, most recently from Khan Younis to Rafah. This order created panic, fear and anxiety, and forced 60,000 people to move to already overcrowded UNRWA shelters.

Nearly 1.9 million people — more than 85 percent of the population — have been displaced across the Gaza Strip and 1.2 million of them are sheltering in UNRWA facilities, mostly in the south where much of the fighting is currently taking place. These shelters are inadequate for such huge numbers of people to live and survive in, and they are concentrated in an area that is less than one-third of the total area of the tiny territory. They have little or no access to food, water or shelter, and live in constant fear for their lives.

In the face of such enormous suffering, the silence of the international community is deafening. Israel's right to wage war on Hamas was dictated by the actions of the militant group on Oct. 7. Not surprisingly, the international community was shocked by the attack and rightly expressed its support for Israel. At some point, however, and sooner rather than later, that same international community, the US first and foremost, must bring the war to an end.

It must realize that fighting Hamas is primarily a battle on behalf of the politically marginalized that will only be won by ensuring a better future that is free from both repression by Hamas and Israel's oppressive occupation. It is obviously in the interest of Palestinians for the war to come to an end. But it is also in Israel's best interest because the longer it continues, the deeper the hole the country is digging for itself without any exit strategy, while also losing the moral battle and, with it, international support.

Since the end of the pause in fighting, Israel's bombardment has intensified and people are constantly being ordered to

An American license to kill

Faisal J. Abbas

In Arabic, we have a famous saying that translates as “when the excuse is uglier than the sin.” This is exactly what can be said about the US justification on Friday for being the only country on the UN Security Council to oppose an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

Deputy US Ambassador to the UN Robert Wood told the Security Council that the draft resolution “was divorced from reality.” He reiterated his government, and Israel's, declared position that a ceasefire would strengthen Hamas.

However, the only thing that is indeed “divorced from reality” is this US position; particularly since it was coupled with the State Department invoking an emergency provision to approve the sale of tank shells to Israel, bypassing Congress.

Ironically, both the veto and the emergency provision come after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken publicly criticized Israel for the high number of civilian deaths during its offensive in Gaza, saying

that there is a gap between “the intent to protect civilians and the actual results”. How exactly can such a statement come from the same US State Department that just allowed Israel an additional 14,000 rounds of tank ammunition, valued at more than \$100 million?

However, what is even more “divorced from reality” is the argument that Hamas will emerge stronger as a result of a ceasefire.

First, if the US and Israel were serious about preventing Hamas from getting stronger, they should have done so 16 years ago by stopping the group's biggest enabler, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, from “upgrading them from a terrorist organization to a partner,” as recently described by The Times of Israel in severe criticism of Netanyahu's long-standing policy of furthering divisions by undermining the legitimate Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, and empowering Hamas in Gaza.

Second, I do not know how anyone could imagine that continuing with a war that has killed more than 17,700 people, mostly civilians, women and children — will make Hamas weaker.

Just for the record, this is not in support of Hamas. Again, nothing justifies the killing or deliberate targeting of any civilians; before, on Oct. 7 or after.

However, this war only gains Hamas more sympathy and breeds similar groups. This is simply because, as proven so far, it is impossible to achieve Israel's goal of eradicating the groups without a severe population death-toll, displacement and unprecedented damage to civilian infrastructure.

This is why, by being the only country to veto an immediate ceasefire, the US has effectively granted Israel a further license to kill. It goes without saying that this sharply contradicts America's declared values, and previous positions, such as its criticism of Russian over Ukraine.

This is why it was almost laughable that renowned PBS presenter Nick Schiffrin would have the audacity to ask Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan if the Kingdom is saying one thing in public and another in private when it comes to Gaza. If there is any hypocrisy, it is now blatantly clear that this is coming from Washington. If anything, Schiffrin should be asking the same question to his own administration.

Furthermore, this American license to kill applies not only to Israel killing Palestinians: This US veto has just contributed to the creation of a future generations of extremists in Gaza, and beyond.

As such, the fighting has to stop, and a solid path toward a two-state solution made by allowing for a Palestinian state.

This all starts with a ceasefire — which is now “unfortunately seen as a dirty word,” Prince Faisal told PBS, adding that he simply cannot understand that ... I do not think any sane person does!

Putin's strategic patience beginning to pay off

Dalia Al-Aqidi

Since the outbreak of hostilities on Oct. 7, when Hamas attacked Israel, the global spotlight has been fixated on this conflict. International media outlets have devoted the lion's share of their coverage to this confrontation between a recognized terrorist organization and a sovereign nation. Regrettably, this intense focus on the Israel-Hamas conflict has inadvertently cast a shadow over other global crises, particularly the ongoing war in Ukraine. This diversion of attention has afforded Russia a strategic opportunity to advance its expansionist agenda in Ukraine with minimal international scrutiny.

For the first time since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine in February last year, the Kremlin has successfully cultivated an aura of potential victory. This stark departure from the conflict's earlier outlook underscores the effectiveness of President Vladimir Putin's strategies. Among these strategies was placing Russia on a war footing: a move that has consolidated his hold on power within the nation.

Furthermore, Putin has adeptly procured military resources and equipment from international sources, significantly bolstering his country's military capabilities. These actions emphasize not only the Russian president's unwavering commitment to sustaining the conflict, but also his ability to secure critical assets from global suppliers, often through audacious means.

Putin has been waiting for a chance to expand his influence and undermine Western convictions. Beyond military maneuvers, Russian officials have embarked on a calculated campaign to garner support from nations in the Global South. This diplomatic

.....the most profound implication of Russia's recent moves lies in its relentless efforts to undermine prevailing convictions in the Western world. The consensus among Western nations is that Ukraine possesses the potential and the imperative to emerge from the ravages of war as a flourishing European democracy. But Moscow's actions have cast doubt on this belief, challenging the West's determination to support Ukraine's post-conflict transformation and potentially altering the entire narrative of the conflict.

offensive has effectively sown seeds of opposition and discontent against the US, while undermining the international coalition that is critical of Russia's actions in Ukraine.

Arguably, the most profound implication of Russia's recent moves lies in its relentless efforts to undermine prevailing convictions in the Western world. The consensus among Western nations is that Ukraine possesses the potential and the imperative to emerge from the ravages of war as a flourishing European democracy. But Moscow's actions have cast doubt on this belief, challenging the West's determination to support Ukraine's post-conflict transformation and potentially altering the entire narrative of the conflict.

In essence, the dynamic landscape of the Ukraine-Russia conflict has evolved significantly since its inception, with Russia's recent actions and strategies reshaping the geopolitical and strategic landscape of the region. This, in turn, has had an impact on global perceptions and alliances.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last month candidly acknowledged that Russia was “controlling the skies” over Ukraine and urgently requested US-made F-16 warplanes and advanced anti-aircraft defenses to alter the situation. However, questions loom about whether the US would be willing to provide such crucial assistance.

Things have not been easy for the Biden administration. In a letter addressed to Mike Johnson, the new Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives, and other congressional

leaders, White House budget director Shalanda Young expressed concerns about the diminishing resources available to support Ukraine in the ongoing war. She wrote: “I want to be clear: without congressional action, by the end of the year we will run out of resources to procure more weapons and equipment for Ukraine and to provide equipment from US military stocks ... There is no magical pot of funding available to meet this moment. We are out of money — and nearly out of time.” Johnson gave the letter a cold response, expressing concerns about Ukraine's lack of a clear strategy.

Congress has previously approved more than \$110 billion for Ukraine's war effort. However, no additional funds have been allocated since the transition of power in the House of Representatives from Democrats to Republicans in January.

Had Ukraine received the comprehensive support it currently enjoys from the onset of the conflict, the war might have taken a substantially different course. During the early stages of the conflict, Ukraine grappled with the challenge of defending its territorial integrity and sovereignty against a well-equipped and formidable adversary. At that time, the level of assistance and resources at Ukraine's disposal was comparatively limited, making it difficult to counter the military might and strategic prowess of opposing forces.

Unfortunately, the diversion of global attention has played directly into Russia's hands. With the world's gaze fixed on the Israel-Hamas conflict, it has seized the opportunity to advance its expansionist ambitions in Ukraine with significantly reduced international

scrutiny. Moscow has been able to continue its hostilities and atrocities against Ukrainians with relative impunity as the global spotlight remains diverted, likely giving Putin and his troops a solid boost to continue to ignore the international community. Meanwhile, concerns are intensifying within the corridors of power in Washington, where apprehensions abound that Putin may be strategically inclined to bide his time until the next presidential election in November 2024. This vote is likely to bear a striking resemblance to the electoral showdown witnessed in 2020 between then-incumbent President Donald Trump and Joe Biden. This apprehension is grounded in the recognition that a pending presidential election often dominates the country's political landscape, drawing substantial attention, resources and decision-making capacity away from international crises.

Shrewd tactician Putin, who is a former KGB officer, might perceive this as an opportune moment to maintain a holding pattern, capitalizing on the potential distraction of the election to further advance his objectives in Ukraine. With its high stakes and divisive nature, the historical precedent of the 2020 election serves as a poignant reminder of how the domestic political calendar can influence America's ability to respond decisively to global challenges.

Consequently, the forthcoming election year looms large in discussions about the trajectory of the Ukraine-Russia conflict and Putin's calculated patience.

Global South is beginning to flex its political muscles... but who will lead?

One of the defining features of the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference, COP28, which concludes in Dubai in another two days, has been the fast-growing influence of the so-called Global South. This is reflected in the issues being discussed and the deals being made, including a landmark “loss and damage” agreement on the opening day of the summit.

While the concept of a Global South dates back to the 1960s, usage of the term has significantly increased in recent years, including after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and now during the conflict in Gaza between Israel and Hamas.

There has been much discussion about the perception within many nations in the Global South of a double standard in the West’s moral clamor in protest against the actions of Moscow, while declaring strong support for Israel’s military offensive following the Hamas terrorist attacks in October, despite the thousands of casualties among innocent Palestinians.

The salience of the Global South identity, which some have compared to the rise of the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War, has grown while, in comparison, other more economically-defined terms to describe this bloc of nations, such as “emerging markets,” appear to have declined in usage.

The concept of the Global South is a more politically loaded term, often defined by the perceived unfair nature of the existing global order and the continued preponderance of the West or Global North. Outside of international climate summits, in recent times the growing power of the Global South has also manifested itself in much wider global debates. These include the issue of the war in Ukraine, where much of the Global South does not perceive the conflict in the same stark moral terms as the West, and therefore remains unaligned with either side in public.

Such nonalignment holds significant appeal for many countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, not least because a large number depend heavily on trade, aid, investment and/or weapon supplies both from Western powers and from China, if not also Russia.

Another dynamic that highlights the politically charged nature of the Global South is the growing rivalry for leadership of the bloc. This includes moves by China, India (the

Andrew Hammond

during the 1964 UN Conference on Trade to promote a more equitable world order in the face of the massive economic inequalities that continue to cause increased global concern.

However, it is widely considered that the G77 has been surpassed by BRICS as the premier forum for the Global South. The growing prestige of the BRICS alliance — which currently comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China and South

These six nations will significantly increase the bloc’s clout, collectively, accounting for about 30 percent of the global gross domestic product plus more than 40 percent of global oil production.

Despite this economic strength, BRICS nations have tried to emphasize in recent years their political cooperation, leading some in the West to worry about the group becoming an anti-Western club, not least because China and Russia (and soon Iran) are among

adopting a much more pro-Israel view than the latter.

Given its huge economy, China under President Xi Jinping sees itself as the natural leader of the Global South in general, and BRICS in particular. Unsurprisingly, it therefore favors a rapid expansion of the bloc in an attempt to create a Beijing-friendly club. However, India and Brazil also have burgeoning leadership credentials in the South, despite their more cautious approach to BRICS expansion compared with China.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi — whose Bharatiya Janata Party, polls suggest, is expected to win a third term of office at the Indian general election next year — has leveraged his position as current chair of the G20 to showcase India’s global leadership. Part of the reason why New Delhi believes it has such a strong claim to leadership of the Global South is that many demographers believe the country might now have the world’s largest population, having surpassed China this year. Modi said during the 2023 G20 summit that his country is “becoming the voice of the Global South.” In January, he even hosted a virtual “Voice of the Global South Summit” that included 125 countries — but not regional rivals China and Pakistan.

Brazil’s aspirations for leadership of the Global South have come during Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva’s second term as president. His country will take over the chair of the G20 from India in January, and Lula wants to use this powerful platform to further project his nation’s return to the international stage after years of self-inflicted international isolation.

All of this together highlights the many ways in which politics is at the fore of the increased use of the Global South label. As the tectonic plates of international relations shift further, in an increasingly multipolar competitive landscape, this trend might well continue apace in the second half of the 2020s.

‘Aging Asia’ offers challenges and opportunities for ME

Ehtesham Shahid

even though the Middle East could leverage its strengths to cater to the energy needs of rapidly developing Asian economies.

Political and economic stability is crucial for such shifts in value chains. Regions with political unrest or economic instability might not attract the necessary investment. There is also a risk of overdependence on certain industries or foreign investment, which could lead to economic vulnerabilities. Environmental sustainability is another concern, as rapid industrialization, if not appropriately managed, can lead to increased pollution and resource depletion.

The existing demographic synergies between Asia and the Middle East are critical. It encompasses labor migration, economic interdependence, cultural exchanges, educational collaborations, investment flows and mutual influences in tourism, healthcare

Council region, have historically relied on labor from Asian countries. As Asian countries deal with aging populations, there is potential for collaboration in healthcare, particularly in areas of elder care and medical technology, which can benefit Middle Eastern countries as they develop their healthcare infrastructure.

Notably, like the diverse Middle East, at least five Asias are bound to follow different trajectories. As the McKinsey report highlights, “Asia was largely in a demographic sweet spot in the ‘Era of Markets.’” Between 1990 and 2022, 55 percent of global growth in the working-age population was in Asia. Moreover, the region’s working-age population grew faster than its overall population. Some jitter is bound to surface when indices shift and other underlying factors kick in. An embattled Middle East, however, would hope for the aging Asia to bounce back.

Aging Asia presents both

Conventional wisdom says the Middle East, with its strategic location and significant investment resources, could play a vital role in these shifting value chains, especially in logistics and finance. Economies in the region seeking diversification away from oil could benefit from increased trade and investment opportunities with Asia. A few other factors are also craving attention. Increased competition for foreign investment and technology might arise even though the Middle East could leverage its strengths to cater to the energy needs of rapidly developing Asian

economies. Political and economic stability is crucial for such shifts in value chains. Regions with political unrest or economic instability might not attract the necessary investment. There is also a risk of overdependence on certain industries or foreign investment, which could lead to economic vulnerabilities. Environmental sustainability is another concern, as rapid industrialization, if not appropriately managed, can lead to increased pollution and resource depletion. The existing demographic synergies between Asia and the Middle East are critical. It encompasses labor migration, economic interdependence, cultural exchanges, educational collaborations, investment flows and mutual influences in tourism, healthcare and political strategies. These synergies reflect a complex and evolving relationship with significant implications for both regions and create a dynamic interplay, influencing migration, economic policies, cultural exchanges and development strategies.

and political strategies. These synergies reflect a complex and evolving relationship with significant implications for both regions and create a dynamic interplay, influencing migration, economic policies, cultural exchanges and development strategies.

Labor migration is one of the most significant demographic synergies between the two sides. Many countries in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf Cooperation

challenges and opportunities for the Middle East. The challenges, in terms of labor dynamics and economic interactions, present alongside a range of possibilities. These include driving innovation, fostering new bilateral relations and catalyzing economic diversification and development in healthcare and other sectors. How Middle Eastern countries navigate and leverage these dynamics will determine the overall impact on their socioeconomic landscape.

Israel’s latest weapon against Palestinians - humiliation - will backfire

A video has gone viral showing an Israeli soldier in full protective gear standing in a small bookstore and gift shop somewhere in Gaza. Looking into the camera, most likely held by one of his comrades-in-arms, the soldier acts like a salesperson, offering the price of a toy, a book, and other trinkets before throwing items violently on the ground to ensure that they are broken. The message behind the Israeli video is clear: We are the masters, and we can do whatever we please to you, Palestinians.

The video appeared 24 hours after other, much more disturbing photos and videos of a large number of Palestinian men from Beit Lahia being transported in Israeli trucks and squatting with their hands behind their backs. The men are naked, except for their lower underwear. Israeli soldiers are seen standing by doing nothing. A moving video from a vehicle shows the khaki jacket of an Israeli soldier. The photos and videos were distributed in Israel and on social media.

These videos and their

content have no military value to Israelis. Neither the small stationery/gift shop nor the squatting men appear to have any role in the Hamas-Israel war. Within a short time of the video of the partially clothed men going viral, Gazans were able to identify many of those shown. They happen to be professionals — engineers, doctors, journalists, and teachers, according to the people who were able to identify them. It turned out that the Israeli army took the men from their homes and from a UN school sheltering homeless people, made them strip, and forced them to squat or be transported.

When questioned, Israeli spokespersons claimed that those arrested were suspected Hamas members who had ignored Israel’s orders to resettle in the south of Gaza. The Israeli army, which was clearly in command of the area, claimed it had nothing to do with the distribution of images showing barely clothed Palestinians forced to squat in the dirt amid the December cold because they were suspected of having suicide belts.

Daoud Kuttab

Arab media reported that after a while the men were allowed to return to their families and the locations from which they were taken.

Clearly, they were not Hamas combatants. Social media was full of commentary saying that not a single Hamas fighter has surrendered or been captured alive. Furthermore, many commented that Israel, which has not discriminated much between civilians and combatants, would unlikely spare Hamas operatives.

So, what was the purpose of this Israeli army charade?

The Israeli military has yet to achieve any of its declared goals. It has not destroyed Hamas nor has it succeeded in securing the release of a single hostage against the will of Hamas, which welcomed the exchange with Palestinian prisoners.

So, was this an attempt at achieving a cheap victory of sorts? Was the goal to relay to an angry Israeli public that the army is in command, and is control-

ling Palestinian areas and arresting Palestinians?

That might be one purpose, but another more sinister motive behind the Israeli army action was to humiliate Palestinians. Israel believes that Hamas humiliated its army and intelligence services, as well as civilians, on Oct. 7, and wants revenge. The army is not satisfied with the death of nearly 20,000 Palestinians in Gaza, more than half of whom were children. It seems oblivious to the destruction of schools, bakeries, mosques, hospitals, clinics, churches, universities, and ordinary homes. It wants something more cold hearted that will satisfy the Israeli desire to hit back hard at Palestinians for daring to challenge them and their mighty army/intelligence machine.

Stripping and humiliating Palestinian men is not new. During the intifada, this scene was repeated, as Israeli soldiers entered homes and ordered men out, forcing them to clean the streets of rubble, repaint graffiti, and sit for hours in the same way that the men from Beit Lahia were

Erik Berglof

This knowledge is site-specific, and acquiring it will require contributions from scientists and local populations. The good news is that there are already models for such collaboration. The vast Sanbei reforestation project, aimed at preventing two large deserts from merging in northern China, was a flawed endeavor at the start, with only single tree types planted. But, over the course of two decades, deeper knowledge of the local environment and the participation of local communities transformed it into a success.

Governance and incentives are also crucial to protect and nurture natural infrastructure. In Indonesia, mangroves have long protected communi-

ties, particularly poorer households, from deadly tidal floods, but these are being depleted in regions with weaker state capacity. In Egypt, by contrast, efforts to restore mangroves have been aided by revenues from eco-tourism and beekeeping, which produces honey and supports the delivery of vital pollination services.

The nature-as-infrastructure approach demands that we assess what nature can deliver before considering gray solutions, and it can help countries close their infrastructure gaps in truly sustainable ways. But gray infrastructure will always be necessary for growth and development. This demands that we design it better, to minimize its

impact on nature. For example, renewable-energy infrastructure has a large ecological footprint, and road infrastructure fragments and damages ecosystems. Solutions like co-locating infrastructure on brown sites and providing auxiliary infrastructure, such as wildlife highway crossings, green urban spaces, and nature-restoration offsets, can help mitigate these effects.

Of course, financing might pose a challenge. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, agreed a year ago, assumes that between \$598 billion and \$824 billion per year will be needed by 2030 to close the biodiversity funding gap. Such sums, essential to protect and then begin to restore nature, can be generated only by valuing nature properly, and

creating markets that will mobilize private and institutional capital.

To this end, “nature as infrastructure” must be developed as an asset class, using new tools and financial instruments. At the micro level, this will require better pricing of nature’s services — for example, usage charges or permits and taxes for damaging activities — and adaptive local regulations. Micro-level policies can support the development of other financial instruments and, eventually, markets — for performance-linked bonds, policy-based lending, debt-for-nature swaps, and nature credits, to name a few — to channel more finance into nature. Lessons from carbon markets should be heeded in order to avoid repeating past mistakes.

If we value our future, we must put a price on nature

For millennia, natural infrastructure, such as river systems, wetlands, coastal plains, sand dunes, and forests, supported the development of human civilization. In fact, our ability to harness such infrastructure, for everything from food and drinking water to storm-surge protection and flood mitigation, has been central to our success as a species. And it will prove vital to our future survival.

Technological advances propelled the evolution of infrastructure. Green turned to gray, with concrete, cable, and steel delivering energy, communications, and transportation — and, with them, unprecedented growth and development. But while rapid modernization produced once-unimaginable prosperity, it has had grave

unintended consequences, not least the environmental degradation and greenhouse-gas emissions that are jeopardizing our very existence.

The question now is how to meet urgent environmental goals — reducing emissions and protecting and restoring nature and biodiversity — while enabling developing economies to fulfill their legitimate growth aspirations. The answer, as a recent report from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank suggests, may well begin with an explicit acknowledgement of nature as infrastructure.

Viewing nature as infrastructure is transformative, because it forces us to think in a more systemic way. As we pursue growth and development, we must not only avoid damaging

nature, but also strengthen and enrich it through “nature-positive” investments, all while tapping its vast potential to deliver essential services.

Biologists already do this when they benchmark how to restore degraded land. But now economists must get on board and enhance their tools for capturing the value and complexity of natural capital. Biodiversity, for example, covers not just the number of species, but also their genetic diversity and diversity of functions. Yet another dimension of biodiversity is the complex evolutionary history of species — when they were separated on the “tree of life.” It is only by deepening our understanding of biodiversity that we will comprehend nature’s full potential and our impact on it.

Stock market boom pointing toward economic stability

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt has said that the boom in the stock market is a good sign of the stability of the economy.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that tax, energy, and agricultural sectors should be prioritized to increase the speed of economic stability. He said that incentives, government expenditure, and tax on the industrial sector should be reduced.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that in contrast, taxes on agricultural income and the wholesale, retail, and real estate sectors should be

increased to improve the economy. The loss-making government institutions should be sold; taxes should be increased on the rich and reduced on the poor for an economic turnaround, he added.

The business leader noted that the government had taken several measures showing positive effects, including control of smuggling, speculation, and other shady businesses.

However, he said, the fertilizer mafia's activities were on the rise, which amounts to playing with the lives of millions of farmers and the country's food security, which warrants urgent action.

Shahid Rasheed said that

to improve the economy, there would have to be an increase in foreign investment and remittances. This will increase the foreign exchange reserves and reduce the difficulties in debt repayment.

Saudi Arabia, UAE, China, and Qatar are interested in investing in agriculture, refinery, and mineral projects, and it was the authorities' job to remove bottlenecks.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that the FBR was taking steps to bring new people into the tax net and prevent tax evasion, which needs to be increased.

Nevertheless, this time around, instead of making people with low incomes a

scapegoat, it has to target the elite who are getting annual benefits worth seventeen and a half billion dollars, and no government is willing to reduce this amount even a little bit, which is surprising.

The non-taxpaying elite will only collectively think of saving the system when they see it collapsing or in a crisis that directly affects them. To expect them to contribute to increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio seems unlikely.

If the elite could not be controlled, the problems of Pakistan would never be reduced, he said, adding that the current situation is a test of the vision of our leadership.



HYDERABAD: Labourer women busy in sorting the good quality green chili at vegetables market.

NEPRA needs to reverse its decision of raise in Discos tariff under FCA

LAHORE (INP): Chairman Pakistan Industrial and Traders Association Front (PIAF), Faheemur Rehman Saigol criticizing the government's decision to make another raise in electricity tariff has urged the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) to reverse the proposed jump in power charges, as it has increased tariff of power Distribution Companies (DISCOS) by Rs3 per unit for Oct 2023 to recover Rs32 billion from consumers under monthly Fuel Charges Adjustment (FCA) mechanism.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, Faheemur Rehman Saigol said the government's decision to increase the electricity tariff is anti-industry, and the PIAF strongly condemns the government's move and calls on it to rescind it. He urged the power ministry to identify system constraints and communicate targets to all concerned departments in order to launch a wartime effort to upgrade the transmission system.

It was to be noted that the Authority conducted the hearing in the matter on November 29, 2023, wherein the data submitted by the CPPA-G came under scrutiny. According to

reports, the Nepra reviewed the request by CPPA-G seeking monthly FCA and due diligence was done accordingly. From perusal of the information so provided by CPPA-G, the actual pool fuel cost for the month of October 2023, as claimed by CPPA-G, is Rs.11.4277/kWh, against the reference fuel cost component of Rs.7.8938/kWh. The actual fuel charges, as claimed by CPPA-G, for the month of October 2023 increased by Rs.3.5339/kWh as compared to the reference fuel charges.

CPPA-G was directed to develop a proper mechanism for Inter DISCO settlement of FCA worked for each XWDISCOs and the FCA charged from consumers after consultation with DISCOS, in order to ensure proper accounting of energy and cost of each DISCO as per their own basket.

The NEPRA, after incorporating the adjustments, has reviewed and assessed a National Average Uniform increase of Rs.3.0786/kWh in the applicable tariff for Discos on account of variations in the fuel charges for the month of October 2023 i.e. Actual National Average Uniform Fuel Charge

Component for October 2023 for Discos consumers was Rs10.9724 per unit against corresponding FCA of Rs7.9838 / kWh, showing a difference of Rs3.0786/ kWh.

The positive adjustment shall be applicable to all the consumer categories except Electric Vehicle Charging Stations and lifeline consumers. It shall be shown separately in the consumers' bills on the basis of units billed to the consumers in the month of October 2023. Discos shall reflect the fuel charges adjustment in respect of October 2023 in the billing month of December 2023.

Faheem Saigol said that it was unfortunate that the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has accorded final approval for another raise in electricity rates for industry, commercial sector, agriculture tube-wells, public lighting and other categories of consumers.

Faheem Saigol said that the further increase in rate of electricity is also part of pact signed between government and International Monetary Fund, which says that the government has to notify NEPRA's determinations without any delay and amendment.

On July 14, 2023, the NEPRA approved average rebasing in tariff of Rs4.96 per unit across the board but the government, after intensive consultation, decided to pass more financial impact of proposed increase to unprotected domestic consumers and other categories through cross subsidisation to protected category of domestic consumers and adjustment of Rs148 billion subsidy.

The Chairman PIAF argued that this was a big blow to electricity-heavy industries, if not passed on to the consumers. It could also affect the businesses, who are reliant on grid. Roughly this could mean over Rs50/bag impact if their goods were produced using grid. He said that Pakistan's industry had been harmed by the high cost of doing business, which discouraged investment in capacity and capability and called for easing the burden of heavy taxes on the power sector.

He said that the high cost of doing business has proved to be dangerous for Pakistan's industry, discouraging investment both in capacity and capability, calling for lessening the burden of heavy taxes on the power sector.

Disappearance of urea from market regreted

ISLAMABAD (INP): Presidential candidate of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh has said that disappearance of urea fertilizer from marketplace is regrettable and the artificial scarcity of urea will affect millions of farmers and agricultural and industrial production.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said those pushing the nation toward a food security crisis for quick profit should be held accountable as they play with the country's future.

Atif Ikram Sheikh, who has also served as VP FPCCI, Chairman PVMA, and President ICCI, said that the hoarders were increasing the problems of millions of farmers for personal gains.

He demanded that immediate action should be taken against the hoarders and profiteers to save millions of farmers.

The business leader informed that every year, as soon as the wheat cultivation season begins, urea fertilizer disappears from the market, and the farmers have to buy it from the black market at high prices.

He said that due to the high cost of urea, its use was reduced, which affects production, and the government has to spend a lot of foreign exchange to import wheat.

Now, he warned that farmers were protesting all over the country, and the food security situation was feared to be affected.

He said those pushing the country towards a food security crisis should be dealt with iron hands, adding that it was necessary to stop the distributors and dealers from milking poor farmers, for which immediate steps should be taken.

Atif Ikram Sheikh noted that despite the decline in local production, urea was not being imported, which was surprising.

The country was facing a urea shortfall of around half a million tonnes. Current consumption estimates of urea were about 6.7 million tonnes.

He said that the full production capacity of the industry needed to be utilized, which was contributing to the shortfall of providing opportunities to intermediaries for exploitation.

Minister's visit to foster Sino-Pak economic ties

BEIJING (INP): In a bid to enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation, Federal Minister of Commerce Dr. Gohar Ejaz has embarked on a visit to China, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Sunday.

The visit aims to foster stronger ties between the two nations and explore opportunities for mutual economic growth.

During the visit, the Commerce Minister is expected to engage in high-

level discussions with his Chinese counterparts, focusing on trade policies, investment opportunities, and collaborative initiatives.

Both countries are keen on expanding their economic partnership, and this visit is anticipated to be a significant step towards achieving that goal.

Official sources said that the discussions are likely to cover various sectors, including textile, agricul-

ture, technology collaboration, and the promotion of trade through existing agreements under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The Minister is also scheduled to hold a series of meetings with prominent Chinese business leaders and investment groups in Beijing and later will visit Suzhou where he will meet Chinese entrepreneurs and local government leaders.

Pakistan poised for \$100b export target: CEO-PFC

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has the potential to significantly increase its exports, aiming for a target of \$100 billion, according to furniture industry leader Mian Kashif Ashfaq.

He emphasized the crucial role of the private sector in achieving this goal and urged the government to provide a comprehensive incentive package for exporters.

Ashfaq, CEO of the Pakistan Furniture Council, met with a delegation of exporters led by Chaudhry Areeb Arain on Sunday. He stressed the importance of utilizing the full potential of the private sector, which he believes is key to driving

economic and commercial development.

"To achieve this export target, it is imperative to offer a consolidated, comprehensive, and easily accessible incentive package to exporters," Ashfaq stated.

He expressed confidence in Federal Trade Minister Gohar Ijaz's ability to provide a clear framework for exporters to leverage and promote domestic exports.

The furniture leader highlighted Pakistan's capacity to fulfill global requirements across various sectors, from textiles and agriculture to technology and manufacturing.

He emphasized the need for investment in infrastructure, technology, and skills development to enhance the competitiveness of Pakistani exports on the international market.

"By overcoming logistical challenges and improving the quality of products and services, Pakistan can position itself as a reliable and attractive trading partner to the world," Ashfaq concluded.

The government's focus on promoting an environment conducive to export trade, coupled with active private sector participation, suggests a promising outlook for Pakistan's export ambitions.

PEC honored with ICC award

F.P. Report

KARACHI: International Code Council (ICC) honored Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) with the ICC Global Award-2023 during United Nations COP28 Climate Conference in Dubai.

A four member PEC delegation led by its Chairman Engr. Muhammad Najeeb Haroon, Dr. Nasir Mahmood Khan, Registrar PEC, Prof. Dr. Sarosh Hashmat Lodi, Convener PEC Technical Committee and Mr. Faiz ul Sibtain Secretary to Committee PEC/Focal Person to ICC participated in the event.

Marisa Lago, Under Secretary US Department of Commerce along with Judy Zakreski, Senior Vice President of ICC Global Operations presented the prestigious ICC Global Award-2023 to PEC Chairman and delegation. While congratulating PEC, she appreciated the PEC national role by updating Building Code of Pakistan along with the development of Green Building Code of Pakistan-2023 including



the provisions of Rainwater Harvesting for Buildings.

She also acknowledged the serious efforts put-forth by Pakistan to contribute for the global sustainability agenda to decarbonize the built environment in Pakistan by adopting and implanting these standards.

The Chairman PEC ensured with his commitment that PEC being a global partner of ICC is very much conscious to work further with local

stakeholders in public and private sector including the financial back support of national/international organizations to enforce these codes through capacity building, policy making to incentivize the society by the government for conservation of energy, water and to reduce adverse impact of climate change on built environment in Pakistan.

The ceremony was globally livestreamed during the session on "Decarbonizing

the built environment: Building Codes and Capacity Building for implementation and enforcement".

The event was very well participated by the international community and relevant experts attending the UN COP28 Climate Conference.

This prestigious award is a great honor not only for PEC but also for Pakistan, particularly the engineering fraternity.

ICCI, EOI sign agreement to jointly promote SMEs

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) and the Entrepreneurs Organization Islamabad (EOI) on Sunday signed a Memorandum of Understanding to forge a partnership for promoting SMEs and start-ups through joint efforts.

President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and President EOI Taimur Adil signed the agreement during a ceremony held at ICCI. Faad Waheed Senior Vice President, Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar Vice President ICCI, Ahmed Jalal Global Student Entrepreneurs Awards Chair at EO Islamabad Chapter, and others were present on the occasion.

Both organizations by signing MoU pledged to work together to promote

the growth of SMEs and start-ups by helping them scale their businesses.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that access to finance is a major hurdle for the growth of SMEs and start-ups in Pakistan, therefore, ICCI and EOI would work together with the government authorities to ensure that SMEs and start-ups are ensured easy access to credit so that these businesses could flourish in the country and play an active role in the economic development of the country.

The ICCI President said that both sides would also work together to provide business development support to startups and SMEs including training, mentoring, and coaching on topics such as business planning,

marketing, and financial management. It would help startups and SMEs to improve their operations and increase their chances of success.

President EOI Taimur Adil said that in the competitive global business environment, networking is key for SMEs and startups to achieve better growth. He said that EOI in collaboration with ICCI would provide networking opportunities to startups and SMEs to meet and connect with other entrepreneurs, investors, and industry experts and build relationships for access to new markets. He said that efforts would also be made to provide access to SMEs and startups to innovation resources so that they could develop new products/services and adopt new technologies for better growth.

Court Notice

In the Court of Kiran Noor Judge Family Court Tehsil Matta Swat. Case# 177/FC Institution Year 2023. Next Hearing date 22/12/2023. Subject:- Bachi etc VS Bacha Zada etc. Notice to defendant No. 1. Bacha Zada s/o Qasim Khan Mobile 00966507023293. (2) Qasim Khan s/o Samandar Khan r/o Deharijaba Gai Raqba Skhra Matta Swat Tehsil Matta district Swat. (Presently). In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 22/12/2023. Exparte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this court.

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Businessmen Panel (BMP) of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has denounced the government for not keeping a check on foreign exchange market, as the State Bank's foreign exchange reserves dropped by \$237 million to \$7 billion in the week ending Dec 1, because debt servicing on foreign loans continues to eat up SBP's holdings.

FPCCI's former president Mian Anjum Nisar said that the exchange rate looks stable, but increasing debt servicing costs without significant inflows have put the economy at risk, as that Pakistan's economy was stuck in a low-growth trap with poor human development outcomes and increasing poverty.

The country's total liquid foreign reserves stood at \$12.1bn, including \$5.09bn held by commercial banks,

the central bank said. The SBP has now lost more than \$1.7bn since mid-July.

Mian Anjum said the economic conditions leave Pakistan highly vulnerable to climate shocks with insufficient public resources to finance development and that international experience suggests that domestic debt re-profiling did not always work unless associated with sharp and sustained structural reforms. He said the IMF had identified the need for reforms over three to four decades ago, but they were still pending.

With the formation of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the government aims to bring up to \$100bn in investments in the next three to five years, particularly from the Middle East.

Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) have been signed with the UAE,

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for billions of dollars, which has helped stabilise the domestic market while the stock exchange has been crossing one milestone after another. However, the anticipated \$700m from the IMF is yet to materialise. While these funds could bolster the SBP's reserves, ongoing debt servicing may continue to erode them.

The BMP Chairman pointed out several times that the State Bank has been buying dollars for debt servicing and to keep the reserves at the current level. This buying has resulted in a tight grip over imports, which fell by 17.3 per cent year-on-year to \$21.5bn during the first five months (July to November) of the current fiscal year. This steep decline in imports with a slight improvement of exports by 1.9pc reduced the trade deficit by 33.6pc,

or \$9.4bn.

Not only are the importers in trouble, but the State Bank has grossly restricted the profits outflows, he said.

In July-October, the outflows for profits and dividends were \$485m compared to just \$71m in the same period a year ago.

The outflows of profits were relaxed before the IMF talks, he said, adding that this could again hurt the foreign direct investment inflows. Pakistan received just \$524m in FDI during July-October, an annual increase of just 7pc.

Adding to the concerns, the country's foreign debt and liabilities rose by \$3.48bn, reaching \$128.09bn in the first quarter of FY24.

Mian Anjum Nisar said the economic conditions leave Pakistan highly vulnerable to climate shocks with insufficient public resources to finance devel-

opment and that international experience suggests that domestic debt reprofiling did not always work unless associated with sharp and sustained structural reforms. He said the IMF had identified the need for reforms over three to four decades ago, but they were still pending.

The monthly headline consumer inflation remains high but is projected to drop over the next several months. The exchange rate is no longer deteriorating as it was until the end of August, thanks to the army-sanctioned actions against illegal dollar trade and unchecked smuggling to Afghanistan. The current account deficit is contained, and the haemorrhage of foreign exchange reserves stopped — for now.

The primary surplus target for the first quarter of the present financial year has been achieved.

Nevertheless, this reduction in volatility has come at a heavy cost to economic growth, public and private investments, and jobs.

The major structural challenges — how to control debt accumulation and current account deficit without suppressing growth, increase one of the world's lowest tax-to-GDP ratios of less than 9pc, boost industrial and agricultural productivity and exports, manage haemorrhage of resources through public sector entities, settle circular debt in the power sector without further raising the electricity prices and so forth — remain unaddressed.

Mian Anjum Nisar was of the view that Pakistan should resist the temptation to use short-term measures like domestic debt restructuring and attracting one-time investment without addressing the country's

big picture issues through reforms aimed at improving the larger business climate, taxation, human capital and business competitiveness.

He told that such steps could help once or twice, but it was no solution to Pakistan's challenges, which could only be addressed by improving the business climate, providing a level playing field and removing distortions and tax exemptions. His remarks were in line with an earlier International Monetary Fund (IMF) advice to the government against creating a group of preferred investors.

The business leader said that he hoped his institution could disburse up to \$2 billion to the country during the current fiscal year, provided elections were held on time, and the present and new governments remain committed to reforms and deliver on promised efforts.



In brief

Inter-School Hockey title

PESHAWAR (APP): In the Annual Sports competitions of government schools, Government middle School Baghdada Mardan maintained its superiority and won the first position in Mardan district in hockey. Sports play a significant role in overall personality development, character building and developing leadership skills besides creating brotherhood. Sports raise the quality of health of every country, the country which has good quality will always have a good quality of life and a stress-free environment, said the Principal of the Government Middle School Baghdada while addressing the students after their thumping victory. He said hockey is a national sport but no heat was paid to it either on the school level or in the colleges and universities. Students of our school go ahead and participate in high and higher secondary school competitions to make their schools famous, he said. Sports are also important for the nourishment of the children, he said, adding the main purpose of education is the understanding of knowledge and wisdom, while sports are art, literature and other fine arts.

Weightlifting Championship

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Hafiz Salman Butt Memorial Punjab Inter Club Youth Junior and Senior Men's and Women's Weightlifting Championship would kick off on January 18, 2024. The late Hafiz Salman Butt was the chairman of the Punjab Weightlifting Association. The announcement of the championship was made during a meeting held at the Weightlifting academy in Choburji, presided over by Federation President Hafiz Imran Butt. The four-day championship would bring together talented weightlifters from various clubs, according to a press release issued here. Aqeel Javed Butt has been appointed as the event director to ensure the seamless execution of the championship. The organizing committee is headed by Hafiz Imran Butt, while members include Amjad Amin Butt, Madam Nuzhat Jabeen, Javed Asghar, Jabran Butt, Irfan Butt, Sheikh Anwar, Qaiser Iftikhar, and Aqeel Javed Butt. Various committees have been formed to manage different aspects of the championship. Jameel Akhtar, Arslan, Maryam Aqeel Butt, Hamad Asghar, Hasnain, and Jazeb would contribute to the Technical, Reception, Refreshment, Computer IT, and other proposed committees. Sohail Javed Butt and Islam Natiq would take charge of the media committee.

Basketball coaching course

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Olympic Solidarity WABC Level-I Basketball Coaching Course would kick off on Monday at the Government College University Lahore under the aegis of Pakistan Basketball Federation. The Secretary General, Pakistan Basketball Federation, Khalid Bashir said FIBA Coaching Instructor, Milan Kotarac from Serbia, has been entrusted to lead the six-day coaching course by FIBA from December 11 to 16. The program aims to provide in-depth theoretical and practical insights to fifteen coaches, encompassing both male and female participants, during morning and evening sessions. Mr. Kotarac will be assisted by Ouj-e-Zahoor, Associate Secretary PBBF, M Sami, Course Coordinator and Muhammad Riaz Malik, Head Coach, Pakistan Basketball Team.

Unbeaten century by Azan Awais helps Pakistan U19 beat India U19 by eight wickets



DUBAI (Monitoring Desk): The fifth game of ACC U19 Asia Cup saw Pakistan U19 inflict an eight-wicket defeat on India U19 at the ICC Cricket Academy Ground in Dubai. Azan Awais, following an undefeated half-century against Nepal, scored an unbeaten century to take the team over the line while chasing 260. Pakistan won the toss and elected to field first. Indian opening batter Adarsh Singh hit a half-century (62, 81b, 4x4s, 1x6) to recoup the momentum for his side following the loss of two wickets

inside the first 12 overs. A 93-run stand between the captain Uday Saharan (60, 98b, 5x4s) and Singh helped restore control in the innings. However, when Singh fell to left-arm spinner Arafat Minhas in the 32nd over, the innings once again faltered. Pressure mounted on the Indian batting as successive wickets fell. A quick half-century by Sachin Dhas (58, 42b, 2x4s, 3x6s) took India U19 to a respectable total as they finished at 259.9 in 50 overs. The Pakistan pace attack delivered well with right-arm quick Mohammad

Zeeshan picking up four wickets, having taken a six-wicket haul in the previous game. His fellow fast bowlers Amir Hassan and Ubaid Shah returned with two each as well. Pakistan U19 cruised to the target with much ease, doing so in 47 overs and eight wickets in the bag. Despite losing opening batter Shamyul Hussain cheaply in just the fifth over, Pakistan U19 remained in control of the chase. A 110-run partnership between Shahzaib Khan and Azan Awais ensured that Pakistan U19 dominated the Indian bowling after

the first wicket fell. The partnership was broken in the 28th over when Shahzaib was caught off Murugan Abhishek's bowling, after scoring a half-century (63, 88b, 4x4s, 3x6s). Pakistan captain Saad Baig, replacing Shahzaib at the crease, produced a quality half-century (68 not out, 51b, 8x4s, 1x6). Azan and Saad put up an undefeated partnership of 125 runs to see Pakistan U19 through. Azan was the star of the match as his superb century (105 not out, 130b, 10x4s) ensured that Pakistan U19 remain in a commanding position throughout the chase. For his extraordinary batting display, he was awarded player of the match. Pakistan U19 will now face Afghanistan U19 on 12 December at the same venue. The first ball will be bowled at 1030 PKT. Scores in brief: Pakistan U19 beat India U19 by eight wickets India U19 259-9, 50 overs (Adarsh Singh 62, Uday Saharan 60, Sachin Dhas 58; Mohammad Zeeshan 4-46, Ubaid Shah 2-49, Amir Hassan 2-56, Arafat Minhas 1-40) Pakistan U19, 263-2, 47 overs (Azan Awais 105 not out, Saad Baig 68 not out, Shahzaib Khan 63; Murugan Abhishek 2-55) Player of the match – Azan Awais (Pakistan U19).

Davis inspires Lakers to NBA In-Season Tournament win over Pacers

LAS VEGAS (Agencies): As NBA Commissioner Adam Silver geared up to present LeBron James with the MVP trophy for the inaugural In-Season Tournament, he emphasized that it "doesn't entail a franchise." James bent over in laughter, but he has been serious about wanting to own an NBA expansion team in Las Vegas. For now, he'll more than settle for the individual honor and tournament championship after scoring 24 points and adding 11 rebounds Saturday night to help the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Indiana Pacers 123-109 in the final. "My enthusiasm about being here post-career, bringing a team here has not changed," James said. "The fans are amazing here. They have everything already: WNBA team, they have a baseball team (Athletics) coming in soon, NFL team, hockey team, FI (Formula One) was just here. This is a place that loves great attractions, and I think the NBA will be another great addition to this city." As well as James played Saturday, the star was teammate Anthony Davis, who had 41 points and 20 rebounds – numbers that would have been season highs if they counted. This is the only



game in the tournament that doesn't figure in the standings or statistics. Davis also shot 16 of 24, had five assists and blocked four shots. "They're a hell of a one-two punch," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said about James and Davis. "That one or two could be either one of them on any given night. At the end of the day, they know how to take it to the next level when everything is on the line." Los Angeles is the first In-Season Tournament champion because the two headliners received plenty of help. Austin Reaves scored 28 points, D'Angelo Russell added 13 points and Cam Reddish set the tone defensively by limiting the damage by Indiana's Tyrese Haliburton, who emerged as one of the faces of this

tournament. He had 20 points and 11 assists against the Lakers, often passing to a teammate rather than trying to force the action. "(Reddish) didn't score a lot (nine points), but I felt like he was one of the best players on the court with the way he defended and really changed the game on that end of the floor," Reaves said. Also for the Pacers, Benedict Mathurin scored 20 points and Aaron Nesmith had 15. In addition to taking home a trophy, Lakers players on standard contracts each made \$500,000 and the Pacers received \$200,000 apiece. Players on two-way deals take home half those amounts. The tournament and the title game had a combination of an NBA playoff and one-and-done NCAA Tournament kind of atmosphere, and the Pacers and Lakers played as if their seasons were on the line. Los Angeles made it to Las Vegas where it was essentially the home team before a sellout crowd played Sunday like it had been here before. The situation was different for the Pacers, who are still trying to prove they are a championship-level team.

Grealish puts Man City back on track after Luton scare

LUTON (AFP): Jack Grealish ensured Manchester City ended their four-game winless run as the Premier League champions survived a scare from Luton in their 2-1 victory on Sunday. With star striker Erling Haaland absent due to injury, Pep Guardiola's side trailed to Elijah Adebayo's goal late in the first half at Kenilworth Road. But, after squandering a host of chances, City finally clicked into gear with two goals in three minutes after the break. Silva equalised and Grealish bagged the winner to give City a much-needed first victory in five league matches.

After their lethargic 1-0 defeat at Aston Villa on Wednesday, which followed draws with Chelsea, Liverpool and Tottenham, City were in danger of falling out of the title race. Liverpool's win at Crystal Palace on Saturday had moved the leaders seven points clear of City. But fourth-placed City responded with a gritty display to close the gap on Liverpool to four points. City still have work to do to regain control of their bid for an unprecedented fourth successive top-flight title and Haaland's fitness scare could not have come at a worse time. Haaland, who had started all of City's league matches this season, was sidelined with a foot injury that could impact his availability for the treble winners' hectic Christmas schedule. City boss Pep Guardiola said Haaland, who has 19



goals this season, noticed the injury after Wednesday's defeat at Aston Villa. Guardiola will be sweating on his fitness with City travelling to the FIFA Club World Cup in Saudi Arabia before returning for the busy festive programme. Despite their lowly position, Luton have been a tough proposition at home on their return to the top-flight after a 31-year absence. They drew 1-1 with Liverpool, who needed a late equaliser to avoid defeat, and came within seconds of a point against Arsenal, before losing 4-3 on Tuesday. On their first visit since 1998, City were the latest star-studded side to find an inhospitable welcome amid the terraced houses that surround tiny Kenilworth Road. City escape

While they dominated the first half, Guardiola's men were hamstrung by their profligate finishing. Phil Foden accelerated onto Silva's pass for a sting-

ing drive that Thomas Kaminski saved at full stretch before Silva sliced the rebound wastefully wide. Kaminski rescued Luton again as he stuck out a hand to repel Rodri's strike, then plunged to his right to stop Foden's shot. City kept coming and Alvarez poked narrowly wide from Grealish's pass, while Foden was denied by Kaminski's brave save at his feet. By the time Mateo Kovacic's blast flashed over, Guardiola was shifting uneasily on the touchline. The Spaniard's fears were realised with seconds left in the first half when Luton grabbed the lead. Josko Gvardiol allowed Andros Townsend too much time on the right flank and the Luton winger's cross reached the far post, where Adebayo climbed above Ruben Dias and Kyle Walker to head home. Guardiola left the pitch in animated discussion with the officials over

the goal being scored beyond the two minutes allotted stoppage-time. When Rodri side-footed woefully wide from Walker's cross in the second half, the hoots of derision from the Luton fans exacerbated City's misery. But Dias thumped a free-kick against the bar to foreshadow City's impending revival and they drew level in the 62nd minute. Rodri was the catalyst with a ram-paging run into the Luton area and when the ball broke for Silva, he curled a fine finish into the far corner. Three minutes later, City's comeback was complete as appeals for handball against Julian Alvarez were ignored before the Argentine's low cross reached Grealish for a clinical close-range finish. Guardiola celebrated by sarcastically blowing kisses towards the Luton coaching staff, while inwardly breathing a sigh of relief at City's escape.

Sajid replaces Abrar for Pakistan's first Test against Australia

PERTH (Agencies): The knee injury that Pakistan legspinner Abrar Ahmed sustained during a tour game earlier this week has ruled him out of the first Test against Australia on Thursday and created doubts around his participation in the two matches that follow. A press release from the PCB on Sunday said Abrar will stay with the team and undergo treatment in Perth. Then he will undergo "conservative rehabilitation" and will have to be reassessed before the Boxing Day Test to "ascertain his availability on this tour". The PCB hasn't ruled him out of playing in Melbourne or Sydney just yet, but has called up Sajid Khan to bolster the spin stocks. On day three of the

warm-up match against the Prime Minister's XI in Canberra, Abrar went off the field after bowling 27 overs "due to severe pain in his right leg around his knee". Following an initial assessment by the PCB medical team, he was sent for an MRI scan which revealed the extent of the damage. Abrar, who has picked up 38 wickets in his six Tests so far, was shaping to be the lead spin bowler for Pakistan as they attempt to win their first-ever Test series in Australia. If he is to spend an extended period of time on the sidelines, that will put the onus on Noman Ali to lead the spin attack in conditions that may not suit his style of bowling. The left-arm orthodox bowler has typi-

cally thrived on slow and low pitches, picking up 47 wickets in 15 Tests. Sajid, meanwhile, has 22 wickets from seven Tests, the last of which came in March 2022. He was the joint-12th-highest wicket-taker in the 2023 Quaid-e-Azam Trophy, Pakistan's first-class competition, with 18 strikes in six games. Agha Salman, the spin-bowling allrounder in the squad, may be pressed into spin service as well. Pakistan have plenty of seam options to call upon with Shaheen Shah Afridi as their spearhead and Hasan Ali, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Wasim, Faheem Ashraf and the uncapped duo of Khurram Shahzad and Aamer Jamal coming in as support.

Haney dominates Prograis to grab WBC super lightweight world title

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP): Devin Haney wrested the WBC super-lightweight world title from Regis Prograis on Saturday, knocking his opponent down once on the way to a unanimous decision victory in San Francisco.



Haney, the former undisputed lightweight world champion stepping up to the 140-pound division for the first time, won by scores of 120-107 from all three judges and said the move up in weight had made a new fighter of him. "A tremendous difference," a victorious Haney told DAZN in the ring at the Chase Center, home of the NBA's Golden State Warriors. "You see it in my performance. I felt so much stronger... 140 got a new

king." Haney sent Prograis to the canvas in the third round with one of many devastating combinations. He wobbled Prograis again in the sixth on the way to the dominant victory. Haney, a 24-year-old Bay Area native, improved to 31-0 with 15 knockouts.

Hard-hitting southpaw Prograis was making the second defense of the WBC title he won with an 11th-round knockout of Jose Zepeda for the vacant title in November last year. He notched a split-decision win over Danielito Zorrilla in June but fell to 29-2 with 24 knockouts with the defeat.

Atish Club, Tank, Dera Club advance in Peshawar Football League

PESHAWAR, (APP): Atish Club Tank and Dera Club of Dera Ismail Khan advanced to next round after recording victories against their respective rivals in the ongoing Peshawar Football League Season 6 Championship being played here at Tahmas Khan Football Stadium on Sunday. Atish Tank team defeated Dara Adam Khail Club on penalty shoot-out after playing 2-2 draw in the allotted 90 minute play. Khalid gave an earlier goal in the 15th minute through a field attempt while Manzoor, the right winger, made it 2-0 by scoring a nice goal in the 53rd minute. After going two goals down, Dara Adam Khail club managed their position in the 65th and 74th minute when Ibrahim and Siraj Khan succeeded in equalizing the goal tally 2-2. At the end of the stipulated time,

both the teams were awarded five penalty kicks. In the other match Dara Football Club defeated Hazara by 4-0 in a one-sided affair. Dara FC defeated Hazara FC 4-0. In the 10th match played in the league, Dara FC and Hazara FC proved to be an easy match and from the beginning, Dara FC players started attacking the opponents' goal. Usman scored the first goal for Dera FC in the 42nd minute, while the second goal was scored by M. Rizwan in the 46th minute. After that, the third goal of the match was scored by Usman in the 66th minute. Remember, this was his second goal during the match. The fourth and last goal was scored by Wajid in the 69th minute and thus easily won the match. In the 11th match of the League was played between Popo FC and Shinwari FC, which was tied with one

goal each, both teams attacked each other's goal, but both teams could only score one goal each. In the 34th minute of the match, Adeel from Popo FC scored the first goal and gave his team the lead, but in the 69th minute of the match from Shinwari FC, Waseem equalized the tally 1-1. Later, until the end of the match, both teams attacked each other's goal, but they failed to score more goals, so the 11th match of the League between Popo FC and Shinwari FC was tied with one goal each. Ex-Captain Gohar Zaman was the match commissioner while Anwar Khan, Hayat, Abdul Rehman, Ikram and Zahid performed the duties of the match referee. Regional sports Officer Zakirullah, Chief Organizer, Chairman Youth Glam Welfare Organization Gul Haider and other personalities were present on the occasion.

WC ski races cancelled because of bad weather

VAL-D'ISERE (AFP): The men's World Cup slalom in the French resort of Val d'Isere and the women's super-G across the Swiss border in St. Moritz were both cancelled on Sunday because of bad weather. It is the seventh men's event to be cancelled this season out of nine scheduled. Marco Odermatt won Saturday's giant slalom before bad weather closed in to wipe out the slalom. "The snow was really good yesterday during the GS and then late afternoon it starts raining," said men's chief race director Markus Waldner. "And then it turns into wet snow, strong wind also. We went out at two o'clock in the morning. The base was actually gone, not good enough to race anymore. "We tried to set the course and clean a little bit, but it was not safe enough." Prior to Saturday's giant

slalom, the only other race to go ahead was a slalom in Gurgl, Austria. The season giant slalom opener in neighbouring Soelden was cancelled, before two downhill in Zermatt-Cervinia (Switzerland/Italy) were also scratched. Last weekend's races at the American resort of Beaver Creek — two downhill and a super-G — were wiped out by heavy snowfall and high winds. Snow in St Moritz After two days of speed racing in St Moritz, heavy snowfall on Saturday night made the Corviglia course unsafe for the women's super-G. "It was quite a lot of snow last night," said Peter Gerold, FIS race director for women. "The minimum was 20 centimetres, there were some spots where it was over 40. "The snow cov-

ered the whole course and the race line that we kept quite clean until last night. This new snow destroyed the base. "It's impossible to get this base hard enough to make a safe race." This event was to be the first women's speed race this season, since the two downhill at Cervinia-Zermatt in mid-November also fell victim to the weather. Sofia Goggia won the first super-G in St Moritz on Friday in light snow and poor visibility, while Mikaela Shiffrin won the downhill on Saturday, her 91st World Cup victory, under sparkling skies. The American leads the overall women's standings, 195 points ahead of the Italian Federica Brignone while Marco Schwartz leads fellow-Austrian Manuel Feller by 36 points in the men's.



In brief

IRSA releases 84,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 84,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 38,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1487.30 feet and was 87.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 19,500 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1167.70 feet, which was 117.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,800 cusecs and 26,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 58,400, 43,500, 39,400 and 9,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 6,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Int'l mountain day to be observed today

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Mountain Day, themed "Restoring Mountain Ecosystems," will be observed on Monday across the country and around the world to highlight the significance of the mountains and their people's lifestyles. According to details, the United Nations General Assembly nominated December 11 as "International Mountain Day" in 2002. However, beyond their aesthetics, mountains play a crucial role in our planet's well-being, impacting global ecosystems, climate, and communities. This theme was selected to fully include mountains in the UN decade on ecosystem restoration 2021-2030, co-led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN and the UN Environment Programme. The decade is an opportunity to draw together political support, scientific research, and financial resources to significantly scale up restoration and prevent further degradation of mountain ecosystems. It is pertinent to mention here that mountains cover around 27 percent of the Earth's land surface and host about half of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

Health fair on Dec 12

RAWALPINDI (APP): Head of District Local Hepatitis Elimination and Prevention (LHEAP) Dr Ansar Ishaq has said that District Health Authority in collaboration with Red Crescent and LHEAP will organize a health fair on December 12 at Divisional Public School and College. Talking to APP Dr Ansar said that a free medical camp would be organized for all private and government school students, where they will be screened for their eyes, ENT, Dental checkup, HB, TNT, malnutrition and other necessary scans. He said the fair would be from 9 am to 4 pm.

AIOU to host Int'l moot

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Department of Arabic (Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies) of the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is organizing a two-day international conference on "Modern Trends in the Arabic Novel" on December 13-14 as a part of its Golden Jubilee celebrations. According to Chairman, Department of Arabic, Dr Abdul Majeed Baghdadi, the conference will feature 13 scholars from countries such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Thailand, Malaysia, Oman, Algeria, Nigeria, and Syria who will be physically present, while 15 international scholars will participate online.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Ulama Council Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi addressing a press conference.

Christmas ahead to spread joy in cold December

ISLAMABAD (APP): Christmas is around the corner to spread joy in the cold, wintry December, with the majority of the Christian community in the federal capital, like across the globe, having started the initial preparations for celebrating this festival in a passionate way.

Like every year, the main markets and shops of the capital city have started displaying a variety of Christmas-related accessories to attract the community, while the sweet and flower shops are also ready to earn good profits by selling their stuff on this occasion. Every year, the Christian community, with the advent of December, starts their preparations by buying all the stuff, including dresses, shoes, and other accessories, to mark the occasion in a befitting manner. Those who cannot afford to shop for their family at the main markets and malls during the prevailing price hike situation are also visiting the flea markets to buy second-hand clothes to become a part of this festival. Samina Masih, a mother of three school-going children, said, "My husband is a cab driver and not earning much. We

are hardly managing the educational expenses of our children and running household affairs." "Due to the price hike situation, it has become impossible to buy the new clothes and shoes of my children, so I have decided to flee the market to buy stuff for the occasion," she said. The festival proves to be a blessing for the shopkeepers, who earn good business by selling festival-related essentials.

"Christmas is the main festival during this winter season, through which we can earn good profits through selling decorative ornaments, chocolates, flowers, and gift items in bulk," Abid Ali, a shop owner at F-7 Markaz, said. Talking to APP, he said, "We are expecting a good sale on this year's Christmas, as most people prefer to buy gifts for their loved ones to share the happiness of the festival."

The festival would be marked through different activities ranging from community gatherings to cake-cutting ceremonies, while the main attraction of the Christmas celebrations is the decoration of the Christmas tree to welcome the arrival of Santa Claus,

also known as Father Christmas. The youngsters decorate the Christmas tree with different ornaments, including baubles, small bells, painted gold or silver, stars of different shapes and sizes, pine cones, apples, candies, tinsel, and balloons made from glass, metal, wood, and ceramic. An angel and star are often placed at the top of the tree, representing the host of angels. "I always get excited to decorate the Christmas tree with different unique ornaments at my office, arrange a cake-cutting ceremony, and exchange gifts besides other celebrations," Asiya, a government employee, said while talking to APP.

She said, "Sharing happiness with others on such occasions gives a sense of joy and contentment, and we should collectively pray for the safety of all the citizens and the progress of our country during our visits to church." It has also been observed that a number of stalls are being set up outside the Katchi Abadis, where the majority of the Christian community resides.

Authorities directed to swiftly complete all arrangements for general elections

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta has directed the authorities concerned to swiftly complete all the arrangements for general elections in 2024. According to a commissioner office spokesman, the commissioner had instructed the authorities to finalize the best possible arrangements to ensure the transparent conduct of general elections.

The Divisional Administration would provide unconditional support to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to ensure the transparent conduct of the general elections, the Commissioner said, adding that all the arrangements, including security, would be completed timely as per the

guidelines of the ECP.

He said that 2500 polling stations would be set up in Rawalpindi district, while 1750 buildings had been selected for the polling stations. The Commissioner had directed the Assistant Commissioners to complete all the arrangements in their respective areas for the polling stations. Special arrangements should be made for the security of the polling stations, the commissioner instructed.

The spokesman informed that the Regional Transport Authority, Rawalpindi, had also arranged vehicles for the election staff.

He informed me that Liaquat Ali Chhatta had instructed that while assigning the responsibilities to all the relevant

departments, a meeting should also be called as soon as the schedule of the election comes and an update should be taken from all the departments. "Transparent conduct of elections is indispensable for our country's security and development," the Commissioner said, adding that, considering this work as a social responsibility more than a professional one, the implementation of the Code of Conduct issued by ECP should be ensured in letter and spirit. All possible steps should be taken to implement the Code of Conduct that would be issued by the ECP regarding the conduct of transparent and impartial elections. Liaquat Ali Chhatta directed.

Punctuality of trains reached 93 pc in last three months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The overall punctuality ratio of trains has improved from 76 to 93 percent in three months owing to close monitoring and stern measures taken by Pakistan Railways at the divisional and ministry levels.

"With the punctuality of trains and concrete measures taken by the department in last three months, the number of passengers has increased by over 20 million, which is ample proof of the department's achievement," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said, "Pakistan Railways is also set to introduce the 'Train Driver Assistant System' (TDAS) to help train drivers a clear view of the railway tracks up to an impressive distance of 700 meters."

"The technology aims to enhance the safety, punctuality and efficiency of train operations during adverse weather conditions, particularly in the presence of dense smog and fog," he added.

The system, he said, "TDAS is set to revolutionize the way trains navigate through foggy landscapes. It promised not

only to avert potential accidents but also to facilitate smooth train travel when visibility is severely compromised."

He said, "The capabilities of this digital system extend beyond improved visibility; it can also identify and monitor vital elements such as signals, level crossings, gates, track obstructions, and other potential hazards within the same 700-meter radius." The official said, "This comprehensive approach to training management promises to reduce the risk of accidents significantly." Initially, he said the department was planning to install the anti-fog device in four engines. However, Pakistan Railways has outlined a strategic expansion plan, with the ultimate goal of equipping all trains with this life-saving technology in the coming year.

He said, "In a move to combat the persistent challenge of fog-related train delays, Pakistan Railways has joined hands with the University of Engineering Taxila (UET) to introduce a cutting-edge 'Digital Railway Driving System.'"

'AAPP establishment, underscores significance of aesthetic medicine'

RAWALPINDI (APP): Special Advisor to the Prime Minister for Human Rights Mushaah Mullick on Sunday hailed the establishment of the first Association of Aesthetic Physicians of Pakistan (AAPP) here and underscored the significance of aesthetic medicine on the occasion.

She was the chief guest at the inauguration of the first Association of Aesthetic Physicians of Pakistan (AAPP) which was marked as a significant milestone in Pakistan's medical sector.

Mullick, in her address, highlighted the importance of this historic moment, expressing pride in the establishment of the association in Rawalpindi.

She emphasized the alignment of this achievement with the belief in Allah's appreciation of beauty, as seen in the colorful and beautiful universe He created.

Her speech underscored the significance of aesthetic medicine, a field she described as both challenging and rewarding. The event also saw the participation of notable figures such as Shahzad Ali Khan,

Vice Chancellor of Health University, and Dr Anees Ahmed, Vice Chancellor of Riphah International University.

Dr Samina Mohsin, President of the association, and Dr. Shamaila A. Khan, the General Secretary, were present as well, along with esteemed estheticians from across the country.

Dr Mohsin, in her welcome speech, introduced the guests and presented a documentary on aesthetic medicine. She spoke about the growing global interest in this field, emphasizing its distinction from traditional beauty practices and highlighting recent academic advancements in aesthetic medicine. The event concluded with Mullick and other dignitaries presenting commemorative shields to the guests, symbolizing the promising start of the Association of Aesthetic Physicians of Pakistan. Mullick's presence and words at the event underscored the government's support for this emerging field and its potential impact on the medical landscape in Pakistan and beyond.

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

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

According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM. Islamabad Circle, Bani Gala, G-6/3, Parliament Lodges-2, Park Enclave, CDA Office, Pandori, Korai, F-10/2, Farash Town, Karachi Company, I-8/4, I-10/1, PHA-1 (Itwar Bazar), National Police

Foundation, P&T, Pindi Point, Barian, Kotli Sattian, Balawara, Rawalpindi City Circle, E-Block, Shamsabad, Khurram Colony, Fazia, Naji Shaheed, Gangan, Eid Gah, Zafar-ul-Haq, City, Jamia Masjid, Gawalmandi, Major Masood, Alam Abad, Dhoke Najo, Azizabad, Railway Colony, Kamalabad, G-15/1&4, Bhadana, Saham, Chakra, Range Road, Mohanpura Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Kashmir Road, Tipu Road, Rahmatnabad One, PWD Two, Humak, MSF, Lair Colony, Major Riaz, Adiala, Hayal, Gulshan Saeed, Cantt, Chakri, Nirwat, Rawat, Chowk

Pandori, Nad, Kambili Sadiq, Ghazan Khan, New Mandira, New Kalam, Bahr-e-Kalal, Nishan-e-Haider, Mahota, Kahota City Two, Hanif Shaheed, Abrar Shaheed, Panjar, Khawaja, CW.O, AOWHS, Spaco, IST Feeders, Attock Circle, Mushtaq Hussain, Ghori, Salargah, Shahullah Dutta, Sarai Kharboza, Wahdat Colony, Poormiana, PM Colony, Pathargarh, Industrial, Musa, Gondal, Sarka, Shadi Khan, Bagh-e-Nilab, Khori, Nika Kalan, Maskinabad, Bhatiyot, Bahtar, Nara, Galial, Khanda, Hanjara Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Kalia, Millat Chowk.

Time to regulate real estate for common man's benefit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Having one's own house is dream of every citizen. But in a society plagued with exploitation and weaker regulations, this dream often lands these citizens in real trouble when they fall prey to property tycoons.

Playing with their emotion of having a house, the housing societies' owners first trap them by showing pleasant dreams and then exploit them fleecing their hard earned money. In a desire of having their own abode, some invest their pension or gratuity money and others sell their ornaments or household. But, after sometime they come to know that either the society was illegal or the owner had invested the collected money elsewhere delaying development and possession of plots.

The investors are charged repeatedly either in the name of development charges or other expenditures other than the specified plots price as recently surfaced in the case of a society in the suburbs of Rawalpindi.

Social media is seen flooded with hue and cry by investors against owners of this society, the heirs of a big gun in real estate business, for massively charging development expenses. "They have become a mafia. Weaker regulations encouraged them to act without fear. Under the garb of specific laws, they freely fleece the people," said an investor Rashid Mahmood. "It is very rare that there is any compatibility in actual land price and the price charged by buyers." There is dire need to transparently maintain the data of files or property selling by housing societies by the government departments not leaving the developers to play as per their will. Moreover, strict laws must be enacted to ensure that both the developer and the investor or end

user could equally benefit from these projects. In many cases the societies' owners disappear with the investors' money leaving them in lurch. Many societies' owners sell the same plot or file more than once to earn double or triple money against the actual price, flaring disputes among the owners and leaving them to strand for years to settle disputes.

Astonishingly these developers sometimes operate hand in glove with the government authorities with a few among them becoming so influential that they have a say in making or breaking the governments.

They manage market as they desire through engineered mechanism of themselves dropping the rates of files or plots making way for their crony sale partners to purchase the same on lesser rate. Once the purchase is completed, they enhance rate for theirs and cronies benefit.

"They grab billions of rupees through this fake dip and hike," said a small property dealer Amir Chaudhry. "But, nobody can challenge them as they have deep roots in the state institutions." "I know hundreds of investors who invested money by selling their ornaments and other valuables. But, since years they are waiting for plots to construct houses," he regretted. "All this happens due to weaker legislation in this area."

Then the societies' owners have their own style of recovery, cancellation of files and surcharge policies and extract billions after billions from the people. There is also no check to officially gauge the mechanism of compatibility of land purchasing rate and rates of plots offered to end users, uneven revision of prices, double selling of plots and delayed development or delivery.

The dilemma is that developer

recovers his land value manifold and the real estate agents get their commission time and again, but inflicting pangs of deprivation and depression on investors or end users.

Although much has been stated, written or clamored about this ongoing exploitation, yet these practices still go on making the low income class to bear the brunt.

Therefore, the common people have demanded from the government to set up an exclusive regulatory authority on the pattern of NEPRA, OGRA or NADRA to manage these developers.

Such an authority must be empowered to have a say and rationalize the plots prices vis a vis the cost of purchased land, keep record of buying and selling, rationalize development charges mechanism, ensure timely completion of projects and handing over plots to owners as well as the recovery of their payment if any developer flees or delays the project.

This regulatory body must also have power to recover investors' money by selling the belongings of a developer if he fails to deliver project on time. The small investors have appealed to the government to deal with this issue on priority as they have recently dealt with artificial hike in dollar price, hoarding, repatriation of illegal migrants and other issues of common man's interest. Just to conclude, the case is not with all housing societies as there are good developers as well who take along their investors by bailing out them if any problem comes their way. Therefore, it is direly needed to regularize this business setting certain rules and regulation through involvement of the government so the poor could be saved from cruel clutches of these money hungry property tycoons.



ISLAMABAD: Vendor along with horses waiting for costumers at Lakeview Park in the Federal Capital.

Türkiye to invest in mines

KABUL (BNA) Acting Mines and Petroleum Minister, Sheikh Shahabeddin Delawer met Rajab Mustafa, President of Emmeoglu Marmmer Company, and Sheikh Omar Faruq, President of Anadolu Ulama, Turkey in Kabul. Acting Minister Delawar, said that Afghanistan is rich in mineral resources and security is maintained for foreign businessmen who are interested in investing can freely invest in the country's mineral resources, mainly in marble, oil and gas mines.

The Frontier Post

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 25, 1445 — Monday, December 11, 2023

Communication coverage

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Communications and Information said that the Afghanistan Telecom Regulatory Authority (ATRA) will create 450 telecommunications sites soon. Enayatullah Alokozi, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Communications and Information, told TOLOnews that these sites are created in remote parts of the country where people are deprived of telecommunication services.

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

Haqqani opens new mosque



KABUL (Ariana News): The acting minister of interior on Sunday inaugurated a new mosque in Paktia province and stressed the need for unity among the people and tribes of the country.

According to the ministry, the mosque was built on the recommendation of the leadership of the ministry of interior and a businessman and cost 15 million Afghanis. The mosque can accommodate 400 worshippers at a time.

Sirajuddin Haqqani also

said that while foreigners said during the war that the Islamic Emirate were “destroyers” of the country, the opposite is true. He said the IEA has implemented construction projects across the country and is a “builder” and not a “destroyer”.

“With the blessing of Jihad and the support of the people, with the cooperation of the countrymen and other good Muslims, the construction works are continuing all over the country,” said Haqqani.

According to him, the IEA's Supreme Leader Akhundzada Hibatullah has instructed a number of ministries, including the Hajj ministry, to build mosques along highways and ring roads for the convenience of travellers and ordinary citizens.

“Although some sides are still accusing the Islamic Emirate of their intentions, history will prove the true and limitless love of the Islamic Emirate to the people,” Haqqani added.

He further said: “We gave our happiness to the nation, we lost our happiness to see the orphans. If we sacrificed a lot, but with the grace of Allah, we won the independence of the country.”

Haqqani also said that the IEA were elected leaders not because of talk and promises, but because of religion, good behavior and gentleness. He also emphasized that the more united and coherent the people are, the more the enemies will be defeated.

US position criticized

KBAUL (BNA) The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs deems the position of the United States regrettable and condemnable vetoing the UNSC resolution and international consensus calling for a cease-fire in Gaza, thus openly making the United States complicit in the ongoing atrocities in Gaza.

The Ministry in a statement said ‘It again demonstrates that the US instrumentalizes international bodies against human rights for its political ends. Rather than condemning the perpetrators of war crimes in Palestine on Int’.

Human Rights Day and adding them to the Treasury Department's sanctions list, they have sanctioned additional IEA officials, showcasing that the US utilizes human rights as a political tool.

We commend the position of UN member states that have adopted a principled consensus against the ongoing war crimes of the zionists, called for a permanent ceasefire, and supported a permanent solution to the Palestinian issue.

As humanity is held hostage to the political whims of one actor, it highlights the unjust nature of the current international order, erodes any remaining credibility of purported rights bodies, and the necessity of an equitable order.

Admin corruption close to zero: Mujahid



KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate's spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid says the caretaker government has eradicated corruption in all government institutions and efforts are underway to eradicate corruption in non-governmental sectors as well.

Marking International Anti-Corruption Day in Kabul, Mujahid said: “While corruption is close to zero, in the lower levels maybe unworthy people commit corruption, but the struggle is still ongoing.”

“But the fact that there is no corruption in huge contracts, there is no corruption in the country's ports, there is no corruption in the tax departments, there is general transparency and there is still no corruption in various governance interactions, means that the struggle has taken place,” he stressed.

Some officials from ministries also said that they have eradicated corruption in all financial and economic sectors of the country, and regular monitoring against this continues.

“When we eradicated corruption, more than 80 percent of our companies were reactivated. The main and basic reason for this is the elimination of corruption,” said Abdulsalam Jawad Akhundzada, a spokesman for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

Meanwhile, members of the private sector have confirmed the elimination of corruption in the economic and financial sectors of the country, saying that everything is dealt with transparently.

“The former problem of corruption, bribery and lawlessness has disappeared and transparency has been established in most places, especially in the tax, customs, tendering and procurement departments,” said Khanjan Alkozi, a member of ACCI.

According to experts, there was huge administrative corruption in the previous government and this caused problems in the governance process.

Calls mount for scrutiny of war crimes

KABUL (TOLOnews): The UN special rapporteur for Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, criticized the lack of accountability for crimes against humanity in Afghanistan.

Richard Bennett in a conference for “Accountability for Crimes Committed in Afghanistan” said that Afghanistan has been experiencing impunity for decades, the crimes against humanity, and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

But the Islamic Emirate said that the United States and its allies are perpetrators of war crimes in Afghanistan. This conference of the United Nations on “Accountability for Crimes Committed in Afghanistan” was held.

The UN special rapporteur for Afghanistan, Richard Bennett: “I really like to stress the importance of this event, as accountability is the bedrock of the human rights system and

Afghanistan has been experiencing impunity for decades... for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of human rights or international humanitarian law.”

Anna Myriam Roccattello, the Deputy Executive Director and Director of Programs of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, said: “Member states should consider particularly those that are involved in the various phases of the conflict in Afghanistan to open cases for their own citizens.”

The representative of Norway in this conference emphasized the global support for women in Afghanistan and added that women should attend the meetings about Afghanistan.

Andreas Lövsold, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, said: “we have to create a kind of a joint platform with Afghan women and bring them to the table where its

possible... and there is an opportunity for them to speak. We should as member states do whatever we can in providing that platform because its not only about talking and discussing about the current situation, it's about the future of their country.”

But the Islamic Emirate said that the United States and its allies are the perpetrators of war crimes in Afghanistan.

“If there was a crime or violation of human rights during the 20 years of American occupation, they themselves were the main perpetrators of the crimes. If it is calculated, They must be calculated,” Zabiullah Mujahid said.

Amnesty International had previously called for an investigation of war crimes in Afghanistan before 2021.

This organization asked the International Criminal Court to review the cases of war crimes committed by the Taliban and other countries in Afghanistan.

IE reacts to sanction of its officials by US

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Islamic Emirate condemned the recent sanctions imposed by the US Department of the Treasury on two of its officials and said that imposing sanctions is not the solution.

Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, wrote on X that “while the US is one of the biggest violators of human rights due to its support for Israel, accusing others of violating human rights and imposing sanctions on them is unjustifiable and irrational.” “These sanctions have no results and if it continues, it will not have any negative impact on the Islamic Emirate and people of Afghanistan because we don't have any financial or commercial engagement with the US,” he said.

The US Department of Treasury said in a statement on December 8 that the Office of Foreign Assets Control designated “Fariduddin Mahmood (Mahmood) and Khalid Hanafi (Hanafi) for serious human rights abuse related to the repression of

women and girls, including through the restriction of access to secondary education for women and girls in Afghanistan solely on the basis of gender.”

This gender-based restriction, the statement said, “reflects severe and pervasive discrimination against women and girls and interferes with their enjoyment of equal protection.”

The US special envoy for Afghan women and girls, Rina Amiri, also said on X that “the Taliban's discriminatory edicts targeting women and girls are some of the most heinous human rights abuses in the world.”

“Today, the US has issued sanctions related to restricting access to secondary education on Khalid Hanafi and Fariduddin Mahmood. We must continue to hold accountable those involved in repressing the women and girls of Afghanistan.”

Suraya Paikan, women's rights activist, said that the sanctions will cause a global reflection but will not help with the situation of women

and girls in Afghanistan.

Sayed Mustafa Mortazavi, university lecturer, suggested that the Islamic Emirate should bring “immediate reforms in reopening girls schools and university.”

Sayed Jawad Sijadi, university lecturer, said that the imposition of sanctions will affect the relations between the US and Taliban. “The condition will become difficult for the Taliban and the violation of human rights will not remain without response,” he said.

In July this year, The European Council said that it imposed restrictive measures against 18 individuals and 5 entities under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, because of their responsibility for serious human rights violations and abuses in Afghanistan, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Ukraine and Russia.

“Six individuals were listed over various forms of sexual and gender-based violence,” said the Council of the EU in a statement.

Olive yield doubles in Nangarhar

JALALABAD (TOLOnews): The yield of olives in Nangarhar province has doubled this year compared to last year.

Officials at the Nangarhar Canal Department say that this year's olive yield will total nearly 300 tons, from which about 3,000 liters of oil will be extracted.

“Our harvest this year has doubled compared to last year. Last year, the yield was 150 or 160 tons, but this year we have about 300 tons of olives,” Gholam-ur Rahman Kazim, the head of Nangarhar Canal Department, said.

Workers in olive production companies express satisfaction, but they want more facilities to improve the capacity of processing factories.

“We ask the authorities to provide us facilities so that the production level (of olive oil) increases. When the production level increases, more workers will be needed,” Baghche Gol, a factory worker, said.

The head of Nangarhar Canal Department says that 700 people are directly employed in olive oil processing companies, and more than 4,000 people are employed indirectly.

Nangarhar Canal Olive Oil Production Company is one of the oldest companies in the country, which was established on 27 hectares of land with the financial assistance of Russia.

Few professionals in food and drug sector in Afghanistan, says Abdul Bari Omar

KABUL (TOLOnews): Abdul Bari Omar, acting head of the Afghanistan Food and Drug Authority (AFDA), expressed worry about the lack of professionals and experts in the Food and Drug sector in the country.

Omar said that there are only a few professionals and experts in these sectors in the country.

The AFDA conducts the examination of more than 2,000 candidates for five hundred vacancies in free competition in Kabul in cooperation with the department of Administrative Reform and

Civil Services.

“This may be the 10th or 11th test we have taken this year, but there are very few people specialized in Food and Drug in Afghanistan,” Omar said.

Noor-Ul-Haq Anwar, the head of the general directorate of the Islamic Emirate in Administrative affairs, criticized the existence of global corruption in government offices in recent years, but said the Islamic Emirate is attempting to award posts to the deserving.

“The appointments and regulations were illegitimate and unwise, and the

result of the system was corruption, not only at the regional and neighboring levels, but global corruption,” Noor-Ul-Haq Anwar said.

Shahzadnor Rashid, the head of the Administrative Reform and Civil Services department, also said that they are ready to give the exam for the vacant posts of all the government institutions.

“We are trying to introduce every candidate and every student who has expertise in their field to different departments through open competition,” Rashid said.



This department also added that they have implemented their plans to improve the capacity of government employees in

33 provinces of the country and their efforts are ongoing to improve the process of taking the exam.

Only one resident in village of 800 in Maidan Wardak is literate

MAIDAN

(TOLOnews): In the village of Zul Qaida, Chek District, of the Maidan Wardak province, out of the 800 residents of the village, only one person can read and write.

Mohammad Dawood Bakhtiar, the one who can read and write, said that when he is traveling, the residents of the village face more challenges.

“People used to come to me to read and write some subjects and I would give them information about it. Now I am busy with my university lessons and these people are very backward in terms of education,” said Mohammad Dawood.

“There is no school in our place and none of the residents of the place have been educated. There is only one person in our place named Dawood who is now going to university, and we need education,” said Mohammad Wali, a local resident.

WARDAK

Residents of the village said that several generations of them have been deprived of education and remained illiterate due to the lack of schools. “We are two hours away from the high school, and when these children travel such a long distance, they will not be able to study. The problem is that we are far from the center, and no one pays attention to us,” said Saif Rahman, a local resident.

“Our request is that here, the school should be organized because we remain uneducated, I am not educated, my father was not educated either here, the school should be organized, and the lessons should be started in a standardized way,” said Amin Gul, a local resident. The governor of Maidan Wardak said that to provide educational opportunities for underprivileged children of the region, a committee has started its



activities about it.

“We are trying to build local Maaz, classes for them so that their problems will be solved. Right now, our head of education is traveling to remote areas and in those places where there is no school to arrange

a school for them,” said Bakhtiar Maaz, governor of Maidan Wardak.

Baik Samand valley in Chak district Valley is one of the areas where only one or two people in each village are educated.

Fish farmers eye govt help for business survival



KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): Fish farms owners in south-eastern Khost province have said their farming business was on the brink of collapse due to government negligence and lack of professional workers.

They said currently a large amount of fish was imported from Pakistan which is not like locally produced fish. Their meat is not tasty and are not fresh as well.

Haji Gul, the resident of Khost City's Tindi locality, said he had formed the fish farm from the past one year. He said fish farming produced good result in Khost but due to the lack of facilities and professional workers they faced challenges in their business.

He said: “We don't know the diseases, we have food and want the government to hire a doctor to explore the diseases, we also net help how fish are catch in the net.” Another farm owner Noorullah said currently most of fishes come to Afghanistan from Pakistan the quality of which cannot be relied on. “Fish in our farms are fresh, its meat is delicious, I have made one fish farm, if the government supports me we want to make more farms.”

Khair Gul, another fish farmer, said more than half of farms are closed in the province due to the lack of government attention.

He asked the provincial Agriculture Department and other institutions to increase

their support for fish farming. “Khost farm fish are very fresh and when people taste them once they will not eat other fish.” Dr.Roshan, deputy head of the livestock section at the provincial Agriculture Department, said total 35 fish farms were registered with them out of which 15 were closed.

He said 15 fish farms are closed due the shortage of water and lack of professional workers.

“DAA organization this year pledged to provide food and fish farming training to fish farmers,” he said. Fish farms that have more water did good business but others which have water shortage are struggling.

President, PM reiterate Pakistan's commitment to safeguard human rights

ISLAMABAD (NNI): President of Pakistan Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar have reiterated Pakistan's commitment to safeguard human rights in the country.

The commitment was made on the occasion of World Human Rights Day observed in Pakistan on Sunday (today) like other parts of the world.

The theme for this year's day is "Freedom, Equality and Justice for All".

World Human Rights Day aims to raise awareness and encourage action to uphold human rights globally.

It is observed annually to commemorate the adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948.

In his message on the World Human Rights Day, President Dr Arif Alvi reiterated Pakistan's commitment to upholding the rights of all citizens as enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other international instruments.

The president said Pakistan's constitution guarantees fundamental rights to the citizens and the country has adopted several legal, economic and social remedies to promote and protect these rights.

President Dr Alvi said Pakistan has provided an enabling environment and equal opportunities to all minority groups who enjoyed equal social, political and economic rights. The president said it was unfortunate that the people of Palestine are being deprived of their rights and have been subjected to the worst form of state terrorism and ethnic cleansing by Israel.

He observed that the international community has failed to take action against Israel and stop it from committing genocide of the Palestinian people.

Similarly, he said, the Human Rights abuses in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) also demand the attention of the international community to hold India accountable for unleashing a reign of terror against the people of IIOJK. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said that the government would continue its efforts to promote and safeguard human rights, both domestically and internationally.

He reiterated Pakistan's unflinching resolve to further advance respect for and protection of the rights and freedoms of all the citizens.

The caretaker premier said in South Asia, India is violating all norms and conventions of human rights in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). He said Pakistan reiterates its call for ending egregious human rights abuses in IIOJK and reaffirms to continue moral, diplomatic and political support to the Kashmiri people in their just struggle against India's occupation and oppression.

Caretaker Prime Minister Kakar said that another pressing human rights situation has emerged in Palestine where Israel is blatantly violating human rights in Gaza, resulting in thousands of casualties.

He said Israel's purposeful, indiscriminate, and disproportionate targeting of people violated all standards of human rights and constituted a clear breach of international law.

421,101 illegal Afghans returned to homeland

ISLAMABAD (NNI): At least 421,101 illegal foreigners including Afghans have so far been repatriated to their homeland in a dignified and safe manner.

The apex committee of the National Action Plan (NAP) in a meeting on October 3, chaired by Caretaker PM Anwaarul Haq Kakar gave a deadline to all foreign nationals living illegally in the country until October 31 to leave voluntarily or face deportation. The process of repatriation of illegal foreign nationals including Afghans to their homeland is continuing as 2,121 illegal immigrants have returned to their homes during the last 2 hours.

As many as 186 Afghan families returned to Kabul in 87 vehicles.

"Thousands of Afghans are returning to their homeland on a daily basis through Chaman and Torkham borders, thanking Pakistan for its generosity," Radio Pakistan reported.

Apart from other measures for the dignified return of Afghans to their country, transit camps equipped with all facilities have been established in various districts for their temporary accommodation.

Earlier, the Supreme Court (SC) issued notices to the federation, apex committee, and foreign ministry on plea against the deportation of illegal Afghans residing in Pakistan. The plaintiff stated that the caretaker government doesn't have the authority to evict illegal foreign nationals.

The government had in October set a deadline for "illegal/unregistered foreigners" and those "overstaying" their visa validity periods" to return to their countries by the end of month voluntarily otherwise they would be arrested and deported.

Nadeem Afzal Chan refuses to testify against ex-PM

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former special assistant to the ex-prime minister on parliamentary coordination Nadeem Afzal Chan has refused to testify against Khan in court.

According to details, Nadeem Afzal Chan has denied becoming a witness against the PTI founding chief in the £190 mln settlement case.

He stated that NAB had inquired into the case and he shared whatever information he had and added not to testify against the former prime minister in the court. Nadeem Afzal Chan mentioned that since the PTI founder is in jail, he will not testify against him in court.

"When he [Khan] was in power, I used to tell him these things. However, he is in jail now and my school of thought is not that of talking against someone who is oppressed or incarcerated," he stated.

Meanwhile, National Accountability Bureau has compiled the list of witnesses in NCA £190 million scandal which includes former defense minister Pervaiz Khattak, Zubaida Jalal, Nadeem Afzal Chan and Azam Khan. The witnesses list also includes Asset Recovery Unit, Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) and cabinet division officer.



KOHAT: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari addresses a workers' convention in Kohat.

Israeli tanks reach centre of Khan Younis in new storm of Gaza

GAZA/CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli tanks battled their way to the centre of Khan Younis on Sunday in a major new push into the heart of the main city in the southern Gaza Strip which is sheltering hundreds of thousands of civilians who fled other parts of the enclave. Residents said tanks had reached the main north-south road through the middle of Khan Younis after intense combat through the night that had slowed the Israeli advance from the east. Warplanes were pounding the area west of the assault.

The air rumbled with the constant thud of explosions and thick columns of white smoke rose over the city. As morning broke near a city-centre police station, the constant rattle of machinegun fire could be heard. Streets there were deserted apart from an old woman and a girl riding on a donkey cart. "It was one of the most dreadful nights, the resistance was very strong, we could hear gunshots and explosions that didn't stop for hours," a father of four displaced from Gaza City and sheltering in Khan Younis told Reuters. He declined to be identified for fear of reprisals.

"In Khan Younis streets reached Jamal Abdel-Nasser Street, which is at the centre of the city. Snipers took positions on buildings in the area," he said. At the opposite end of the Gaza Strip, in northern areas where Israel had previously said its forces had largely completed their tasks, residents also described some of the most intense fighting of the war so far.

Israeli troops were pushing into militant strongholds and meeting fierce resistance in Jabaliya and the Shejaiya district of Gaza City, areas that are still inhabited despite orders weeks ago to clear out of the entire north. "I daresay it is the strongest battle we have heard in weeks," said Nasser, 59, a father of seven sheltering in Jabaliya after his house was destroyed in Beit Lahiya, another northern area. Explosions could be heard as he spoke. "We are not going to leave Jabaliya regardless of everything. We shall die here as martyrs or they will leave us alone." Israel vowed to annihilate Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007, after militants burst across the fence on Oct. 7 and went on a rampage through Israeli towns, gunning down families in their homes, killing 1,200 people and seizing 240 hostages.

Since then, Gaza's health authorities say at least 17,700 people have been confirmed killed in Israeli strikes, with thousands more missing and presumed dead under rubble. The toll no longer includes figures from northern parts of the enclave, beyond the reach of ambulances and where hospitals have ceased functioning.

After weeks of fighting concentrated in the north, Israel launched its ground offensive in the south this week with a storm of Khan Younis. With combat now under way along nearly the entire length of the Gaza Strip, international aid organisations say the enclave's 2.3 million people

have been left with nowhere to hide.

At the site of one Khan Younis home that had been destroyed by bombing overnight, relatives of the dead were combing the rubble in a daze. They dragged the body of a middle-aged man in a yellow T-shirt from under the masonry.

"We prayed the nighttime prayer and went to sleep, then woke up to find the house on top of us. 'Who's alive?'" said Ahmed Abdel Wahab.

"Three floors above collapsed down and the people are under it," he said. "My mother and father, my sister and brother, all of my cousins."

The main hospital in Khan Younis, Nasser hospital, has been overrun with dead and wounded. On Sunday there was no floor space left in the emergency department as people carried in more wounded wrapped in blankets and carpets. Mohamed Abu Shihab wailed and swore revenge for a son he said had been killed by an Israeli sniper.

The Israeli military said it bombed underground tunnel shafts in Khan Younis and attacked a squad of Palestinian gunmen preparing an ambush, but said nothing about any tank advance.

The vast majority of Gaza's residents have now been forced from their homes, many fleeing several times with only the belongings they can carry. Israel says it is doing what it can to protect civilians, but even its closest ally the United States says it has fallen short of those promises.

IPP wants Nawaz to accommodate its candidates in 64 constituencies

LAHORE (NNI): The Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) wants 20 National Assembly seats for the suggested seat adjustment with the PML-N, sources say, a desired share that is much bigger than the expected numbers, as Pakistan is getting nearer to the much-awaited February 8 elections. At the same time, the IPP expects the PML-N to back its candidates in 44 Punjab Assembly constituencies, according to the lists prepared by a committee – comprising Ishaq khakwani, Awn Chaudhry and Nauman Langrial – in consultations with the top party leaders.

Nineteen out of these 20 National Assembly constituencies are in Punjab while the remaining one is in Karachi, the sources say, adding that the list would be shared with the PML-N by Sunday night (tonight). It is claimed that the two parties

will go for seat adjustment in the provincial constituency if the PML-N refuses to accommodate the IPP candidate at the national level.

According to the sources, the IPP had formally endorsed the move to go for seat adjustment with the PML-N at meeting held a day earlier.

The report comes after Jahangir Tareen and Awn Chaudhry from the IPP – a party comprising the former members mainly from Punjab – met PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif on Friday to discuss the possibility of seat adjustment.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the PTI defectors are mostly joined bands with former chief minister Pervaiz Khattak who has formed his own faction – PTI (Parliamentarians).

As three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif eyes another term in office, he has decided to reach out to

other parties and groups for seat adjustment in places like Sindh and Balochistan to boost his party's representation in and from these provinces while also trying to woo influential figures to join the PML-N.

In this connection, Nawaz visited Balochistan last month where several politicians announced to be part of the PML-N and also held talks with Khalid Magsi-led BAP for seat adjustment after reaching a deal earlier with the MQM-P in Sindh.

However, it would be interesting to see whether and how much Nawaz will bend to accommodate other parties in Punjab – his stronghold where accommodating his own PML-N candidates is a challenge in many constituencies. The Chaudhrys of Gujrat have already asked Nawaz to support the PML-Q candidates in four national and eight provincial seats in Punjab.

Elections can be postponed in areas under security threat, suggests PPP's Abdul Qadir Baloch

ISLAMABAD (INP): PPP leader and former federal minister Abdul Qadir Baloch has suggested postponing elections in areas that are under security threat instead of delaying polls entirely.

Last month, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and President Arif Alvi agreed on February 8, 2024 as the date for polls. The development stirred activities in the camps of most political parties.

However, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali recently said it was difficult to carry out political activities in parts of KP and Balochistan due to the security situation.

Similarly, JUI-F chief Fazlur Rehman also raised questions on the feasibility of holding elections amid a "deteriorating" security situation. Earlier this week, caretaker Interior Minister Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, while emphasising the government's readiness to ensure peaceful general elections, acknowledged the terrorist threats faced by political leaders in the run-

up to the polls, highlighting a general threat to political figures, with a specific alert for the JUI-F chief.

In an interview with a private Tv channel on Saturday, PPP's Baloch said it was more suitable to delay elections in sensitive areas and hold by-polls there later.

"In a country with 236 seats, it is not appropriate to postpone elections for seven to eight seats and derail the democracy," he stressed. He stated that Balochistan, just like KP, was also under threat from the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

"Attack by the TTP in Balochistan are way higher than those by Baloch separatists," the PPP leader said, highlighting that Kalat, Mastung and neighbouring areas were often targeted by the outlawed organisation. "The threats are imminent and the separatist elements do not believe in parliamentary politics," Baloch stated, adding that these elements were hindering election campaigns in the

province.

The PPP leader also said that Bugti should not have openly announced the threats to Fazl on media and instead could have communicated the same to the JUI-F leader in directly.

Baloch further stated that the government, being aware of the threats, should take action to protect politicians in the country and fulfil its responsibility.

It must be noted that Pakistan has witnessed an uptick in terror activities in recent months, especially in KP and Balochistan, after the TTP ended its ceasefire with the government in November last year.

According to data released by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), the country experienced 34 per cent increase in anti-state violence last month.

A policeman was martyred in a bomb blast in Balochistan's Khuzdar today. Earlier this week, six people, including four children, were wounded in an IED explosion in a busy locality in Peshawar.

'Iranian people will prevail against rulers'

OSLO (Reuters): The Iranian people will ultimately overcome authoritarianism imposed by a government that has lost legitimacy and public support, Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi said from prison in a speech read by her children on Sunday.

The Norwegian Nobel committee in October awarded the prize to Mohammadi, 51, for her non-violent fight "against oppression of women in Iran" and the promotion of human rights for all, in a rebuke to Tehran's theocratic leaders. Her 17-year-old twins Kiana and Ali Rahmani collected the prize, a gold medal and diploma, at a ceremony in Oslo's City Hall attended by several hundred guests. The prize includes a cheque for 11 million Swedish crowns (about \$1 million).

In her speech, sent from Iran's notorious Evin prison, Mohammadi said continued resistance and non-violence were the best strategies to bring about change. "The Iranian people, with perseverance, will overcome repression and authoritarianism."

Zardari calls upon UN to strictly implement its charter on human rights

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Former president and PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari has called upon the United Nations to play an effective role in ensuring respect for human rights in the world.

In his message on the occasion of International Human Rights Day Sunday, Zardari urged the United Nations to strictly implement its Charter on Human Rights. He said that the Israeli army is violating human rights in Gaza. Occupied Kashmir has been made the largest prison in the world by the Narendra Modi government.

Zardari held that war frenzy and extremism are signs of deviation from human rights. He said that the democratic countries of the world

should raise their voices against the oppression of the Palestinian people. In his message on International Human Rights Day, Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that protection and promotion of human rights is one of the top priorities of the PPP. He said that the PPP manifesto regarding the upcoming general elections will also be a manifestation of such priorities.

He said that the Quaid Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto ensured the protection of human rights through this unified constitution, which is his gift to the nation.

Shaheed Bhutto envisaged equal freedom and rights for all citizens whether

Muslim or non-Muslim through the Constitution. A comprehensive human rights policy was adopted by the party's previous government in Sindh. The aim of the said policy is to ensure that every part of the provincial government plays its role to protect and promote the human rights of all citizens.

Bilawal said that the former Sindh government established Treaty Implementation Cell (TIC) under Human Rights Department to implement international human rights treaties. By strengthening the TIC, the former Sindh government ensured the implementation of the international agreements ratified by the government of Pakistan, he added.

Armed Forces of Pakistan pay glowing tribute to Sowar Muhammad Hussain Shaheed

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Armed Forces of Pakistan, CJsSC & Services Chiefs pay glowing tribute to Sowar Muhammad Hussain Shaheed, Nishan-e-Haider on his 52nd Shahadat Anniversary today.

During the 1971 war at Zafarwal Shakargarh Sector, Sowar Muhammad Hussain Shaheed's fearless actions and indomitable courage inflicted heavy losses upon the enemy & single handedly destroyed 16 Indian Tanks.

Sowar Muhammad Hussain's martyrdom anniversary serves as a powerful reminder of the



extraordinary sacrifices heroes who have laid down their lives in defence of motherland. The nation is proud of its gallant sons.

Founder's legacy upheld

Pakistani govt, nation stands firm on Palestine issue: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative on Religious Harmony and Pakistani Diaspora in the Middle East and Islamic Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, on Sunday asserted that the government of Pakistan and the nation had remained steadfastly united on the issue of Palestine since day one.

Speaking at a press conference held at the Press Information Department, he emphasized that on this International Human Rights Day, he aimed to spotlight Israeli atrocities in Gaza at the global stage.

Ashrafi who is also the Chairman of Pakistani Ulema Council underlined that both Palestine and Kashmir were not only issues of humanity but also vital concerns for the Muslim Ummah. He stated that Pakistan had consistently shown unwavering support for Palestine throughout its history. He emphasized the significance of acknowledging the vision of Pakistan's founder, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who advocated for an independent and sovereign

Palestine state with Al-Quds as its capital. Ashrafi said Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar reaffirmed this position at the recent Arab-Islamic Summit in Riyadh, aligning with Pakistan's consistent support for the two-state solution expressed in OIC meetings from 2004, 2006, and preceding years.

Following the Gaza events on October 7, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, Foreign Affairs Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani, and Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir had actively engaged in unwavering efforts for peace-building and voicing their concerns against Israeli aggression in Palestine at all the relevant forums globally. Emphasizing Pakistan's stance in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United Nations, he said Pakistan highlighted the nation's call for the establishment of a tribunal to address Israeli crimes in Gaza. He disclosed that Pakistan, among the first three countries, promptly provided relief goods to Palestine, and the government subse-

quently doubled the relief package under the directives of the prime minister and the army chief. Furthermore, he mentioned Pakistan's diplomatic efforts in addressing the Palestine issue through backdoor channels with friendly countries.

Discussing historic perspective on the two-state solution, Ashrafi highlighted its initial proposal and unanimous agreement during the 2002 Arab League meeting in Beirut, followed by endorsement in the 2004 OIC meetings in Malaysia and Iran. In 2006, the United Nations also adopted the solution, albeit not accepted by Israel, he added.

During this period, certain OIC member countries forged diplomatic ties with Israel, exercising autonomy in their foreign policies. He said Pakistan respected their foreign policies, and consistently refrained from intervening in the internal affairs of other nations. It should be noted that, as of the present date, Pakistan had not accepted Israel and maintained no diplomatic relations with it, he added.