

Fawad's remand plea rejected
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Plea seeking physical remand of former minister Fawad Chaudhry in graft case was rejected by the Anti-Corruption Court (ATC) on Monday. After completion of one-day physical remand under the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE), the former minister was produced before the court seeking further physical remand of the accused.

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Lala) - a visionary figure

Ikram Ullah Khalil

PESHAWAR: Every year, thousands of people leave for eternal abode after spending an aimless life but very few live for a noble-cause by guiding their countrymen in the right direction to achieve their set goals and immortalized forever.

Rehmat Shah Afridi, who was an iconic figure in the media industry of Pakistan, has devoted his entire life for a well informed and knowledgeable based society besides highlighting the country and public issues through credible journalism in addition to infotainment and education services to people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa based on unbiased and free editorial policy of The Frontier

Post. Salim Shah Hoti, a journalist turned lawyer said that he had found Rehmat Shah Afridi was highly humble and a journalist friendly personality. "When I joined The Frontier Post Peshawar as staff reporter in 1993, I met with Rehmat Shah Sahib whose journalistic vision had impressed me a lot," he said. He said Frontier Post grows with each passing day and it was also published from Islamabad, Lahore and Quetta and Karachi.

After positive response from people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other provinces, the management of The Frontier Post also launched Pashto daily Hewad and Urdu Daily Maidan where a large number of



Rasm-e-Qul today

The Rasm-e-Qul of the Chief Executive, The Frontier Post and prominent journalist late Rehmat Shah Afridi to be observed today (Tuesday) at his residence, 27 Abdara University Town, Peshawar.

The sons of the late Rehmat Shah Afridi, Mahmood Ullah Afridi, Jallil Afridi, Bilal Shah Afridi and Barrister Ahmad Afridi invited all family members and friends for participation in Rasm e Qul for special prayers of departed soul of late Rehmat Shah Afridi.

Post Peshawar.

"Rehmat Shah Afridi had lived a purposeful life and his contribution for promotion of quality journalism was immense in KP," said Pir Habibullah Zakori, former Director General, Press Information Department, while talking to media. Rehmat Shah Afridi brought out The Frontier Post from Peshawar when Muhammad Khan Junego government eased curbs on press in the dictatorial regime and run the newspaper with full editorial independence.

After launching The Frontier Post Peshawar in 1985, he said Rehmat Shah Afridi was a highly visionary leader as evidenced by his appointment of prominent journalist Aziz Siddiqui as its Editor and soon the newspaper had made its mark in the print media circle of Pakistan. Aziz Siddiqui had shaped the publication as one of the most progressive voices of the country that remained in the forefront of the struggle for safeguarding the rights of underprivileged and vulnerable groups in the society besides restoration of democracy in Pakistan.

Rehmat Shah Afridi was pro-workers and was often seen taking lunch and dinner in the newsroom or reporting room with his colleagues, Syed Bukhar Shah, former President, Peshawar Press Club told media. "Following the closure of Khyber Mail, The Frontier Post Peshawar had provided an excellent opportunity to people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to get accurate information, update themselves from the country's issues, geopolitical environment of the region, sports, Afghans conflict and economic challenges," he said.

"The readership of Frontier Post was enormous due to its bold stance on regional and international issues and credible content on social, economic, environmental and politics besides a separate page on Afghanistan," he said. Serving like an academy for young journalists, he said The Frontier Post's platform was always open for graduate and post graduate students who get internship and training in its competitive soothing environment.

journalists were trained professionally that served within and outside of the country. Salim Shah Hoti said despite all odds and pressure, Rehmat Shah Afridi had never compromised on principles and ran an independent foreign policy.

He said Rehmat Shah Afridi had faced jail with bravery and steadfastness after he was arrested in a narcotics case in 1999 and was awarded life imprisonment. However, the apex court later acquitted him. He said Rehmat Shah Afridi was declared 'prisoner of conscious' by Amnesty International due to his longstanding struggle for media freedom and democracy in the country.

Rehmat Shah Afridi was in jail when The Frontier Post Office was set ablaze in Peshawar, he said. However, the publication of the national daily was soon resumed and continued today. "Rehmat Shah Afridi was like an institution and was a friend of journalists. His death saddened the entire journalist community of Pakistan," said M Riaz, former President, Peshawar Press Club while talking to media.

"Whenever I met him, there was a smile on his face. I found him a thorough gentleman and balanced personality and his contribution for promotion of journalism in the country especially in KP would always be remembered in golden words," he said. Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakkhel, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Information and Public Relations has expressed 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 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 said, "Rehmat Shah Afridi's impact on English journalism in the frontier region has been monumental. His vision and dedica-

An ode to flawed perfection

SO you have decided to say good bye

To part ways, for real
Ending the journey, we shared, abruptly

Was it your choice to do so?
I could not bear the pain, you say
You could not take away the pain, you say

But I want more, I say
More of this journey, more of you
I have not had enough, of you
Please do not end it now
Let's be together, just a bit longer
Wait, there is time

Time has not yet come to end
But I am tired, you say
It hurts, you say
Everything hurts, you say

I am not strong, you say
I never was, you say
I just pretended, you say
I hid it all so well, you say

I want peace, you say
Why did you have to be so? I say
Your purity is peace, I say
You are transparent, I say

You were yourself, I say
You were weak, like us, I say
We all hurt now, we say
We want your eternal love
We want your smile
We want your glow

We want you to be ours
I am yours, all of yours, you say
But I want you for me alone, I say
I am for you alone, you say

I live through you, you say
Look around, I am you
I never left you
You carry on

I will watch and cheer you on
Can't you see me in the eye of your mind?
Can't you sing me in the beating of your heart

I am with you, my sweetheart
I just need a bit of rest
Everytime you want me, call for me
I will come

I will meet you in your dreams of ambitions
You will see me the glint of your eyes
In the sparkle of each smile

Till we meet again, I will rest
Good bye? Who said good bye?
So, be happy my darling
I love you

I love you too, dad, I say
(Ali Akbar Afridi)

KP govt to launch Khushal KP programme F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (Retd) Arshad Hussain Shah has said that the caretaker set up is determined for the welfare of the people of the province in its short period, saying for this purpose, a Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Programme would be launched soon.

He expressed these views while presiding over 17th meeting of the caretaker cabinet here on Monday. Besides, members of the caretaker cabinet, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary (P&D), Additional Chief Secretary (Home & Tribal Affairs) and administrative secretaries, other concerned authorities also attended the meeting.

Under the proposed programme, steps would be taken for resolution of financial problems, bringing improvement in law and order situation, service delivery system, guaranteeing of good governance, generation of employment opportunities for youth and provision of maximum facilities to the people.

The chief minister said that short-term measures would be implemented with immediate effect while long-term steps would be proposed for the upcoming elected government. A roadmap would be provided to the upcoming elected government, so it could keep public welfare-oriented steps continuing.

The chief minister appreciated the efforts of the Chief Secretary and administrative secretaries in the preparation of Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Programme. He said that the Chief Secretary and his team had prepared a good and feasible programme within a short period of time, whose implementation will help to serve the people of the province in a better manner. He stressed on all concerned authorities to ensure the implementation of the programme and put their share in the welfare of the people of the province.

The caretaker chief minister said that though they have a short period of time. However, they are laying the foundation of a good beginning, saying if the intentions and spirit are high then they could do many things even in a short period also. Highlighting the salient features of the Khushal Pakhtunkhwa Programme, he said that bringing improvement in the law & order and financial conditions atop the agenda of the programme, beside good governance and special focus on improvement in the public service delivery system.

Under the programme, international market demand-based IT courses would also be taught to youth to enable them to obtain employment abroad. He further said that under this programme 0.5 million youth would be sent abroad for employment in the first year.

Imran, Qureshi get bail from ATC F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Islamabad on Monday granted bail to former prime minister and PTI founder, Imran Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

ATC Judge Abu Alhasnat Zulqarnain heard the pleas of the PTI founder and Qureshi. The prosecutor opposed the PTI stalwarts' bail plea, citing it as an 'extraordinary' relief. Were the PTI founder and Shah Mahmood Qureshi present at the incident scenes, in which they were booked? the judge asked the prosecutor. No, they were not, the prosecutor replied.

Later, ATC granted bail to PTI founder chief Imran Khan in three cases and Shah Mahmood Qureshi in two cases. Both PTI founder and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi are currently in Adiala Jail in cipher case.

State will not negotiate with terrorists: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday warned terrorist groups in the country to make an "unconditional surrender", saying the State would not negotiate with them. "The State will not show any leniency towards the terrorists who committed violence and killed innocent citizens," he said in an interaction with the families of martyrs here at the Interior Ministry, where he earlier launched the country's new visa policy.

PM Kakar categorically said that no person would be allowed to take the law into his hands, adding that only the State had the legitimate right to use armed power through its security forces. "No one should have any doubt about the stance of the State against terrorists," he said. "All organs of the State have the clarity to remain persistent against militancy." He said any damage incurred in the past by giving a lenient space to the militants would be mitigated.

The prime minister said if someone wanted to denounce terrorism must seek forgiveness from the families of the martyrs, who had paid the ultimate price. "We cannot compensate those who lost their loved ones, but can make a gesture to acknowledge and honour their invaluable sacrifices," he added. PM Kakar said the reward for the martyrs' souls rested with Allah Almighty, however, it was the responsibility of the society to honour them with a distinguished status.



"I pay tribute to all the martyrs - an unending list of heroes from all segments of the society, including police, politicians, journalists, soldiers, and even children," he said. Earlier, at the launch of the new visa policy, the prime minister congratulated the Ministry of Interior on the achievement of a "good milestone". He said the country needed to further rationalize its visa policy with the target of attracting investment.

"Unless we open up to the world, we cannot attract investment and develop connectivity," he said, adding that a country's visa policy was the cornerstone of its economic roadmap. The minister was briefed that the new visa policy includes the introduction of investor visas and the revision of the existing business visa category. The investor visa has been introduced in line with the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) initiative. The hassle-free process allows visa approval within 24 hours with a short-term (1-3 years) and long-term

entry visa (5 years). The process requires minimal documentation with the option of converting the entry business and investor visa into a long-term investor visa. The prime minister was informed that the business visa category was revised with the introduction of SIFC Business Entry and its extension.

The business visa will be issued in 24 hours for a six-month short-term entry visa and a five-year long-term visa. The National and Database Registration Authority (NADRA) is managing the visa process and has also deployed its staff at the SIFC.

The prime minister inaugurated a memorial gallery where the pictures of martyrs were put on display. He mounted on the wall a photograph of Additional Inspector General of Police Safwat Ghayur who was martyred by the terrorists. He also visited the social media cell where he was given a briefing about its functioning.

(Continued on Back Page)

SC to take up lifetime disqualification issue

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Monday served notices to the Attorney General of Pakistan and advocate generals of all provinces in a matter pertaining to lifetime disqualifications.

A three-member SC bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa heard the disqualification case of JUI-F's ex-MPA Meer Badshah Khan Qaisrani. During the course of proceedings, the bench took notice on the contradiction between the apex court's verdict on lifetime disqualification and amendments in the Election Act 2017, and sent the matter to the judges committee to fix the case before a larger bench.

The CJP remarked that no one had challenged the amendments in the Election Act. In the elections are on,

returning officers, election tribunals and courts would be in a quandary whether to rely on the Election Act or the SC judgment, he observed.

He said that the Constitution was silent on the period of disqualification under Article 62(1)(F) and Article 63(1)(G), which disqualified a parliamentarian for 5 years while Article 63(1)(H) disqualified for three years for moral offences. CJP Isa remarked that the real disqualification was under Article 63. The person who destroyed Pakistan should not enter politics again, but the disqualification on that count was five years.

"The language of the Constitution has to be looked at as everything is not clearly stated. What is not clear in the Constitution can be interpreted by the Supreme Court," he added. The court that the case

would be heard in January 2024 but it could not be used as a pretext to delay the general elections.

The court also instructed to publish the notice of the case in two national English newspapers. Any political party could become a respondent in the case. The court also instructed to send the order copy of it to Election Commission of Pakistan. Earlier, during the hearing, the chief justice inquired that why Qaisrani was disqualified. To this, this petitioner's lawyer said that his client was disqualified in 2007 on the charge of holding a fake degree but the high court allowed him to contest elections in 2018 as he submitted degree of matriculation. He said that the lifetime disqualification of his client still sustained. The further hearing of the case was then adjourned.

Toshakhana: IHC reserves verdict on Imran's plea

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Monday reserved a verdict on former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) former chairman Imran Khan's petition seeking suspension of the trial verdict in the Toshakhana case.

A two-member bench, comprising IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, conducted the hearing on Monday. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) disqualified the PTI supremo for five years from holding any public office.

A trial court in Islamabad had then found the PTI founder guilty of "corrupt practices" for concealing details of state gifts that he received as prime minister and sentenced him to three years in prison. In

October this year, the former premier challenged the trial verdict in the IHC, however, later he sought withdrawal of the appeal since his petition in the same case was pending before the Lahore High Court (LHC).

However, the IHC rejected his withdrawal petition last week. During the hearing today, Imran's lawyer Latif Khosa appeared in court while Advocate Amjad Parvez appeared on behalf of the electoral body. Imran's lawyer, in his arguments, told the court that he was refused to attend the hearing when he went to Adiala jail. He said he has the right to be present on behalf of his client.

At this, Justice Farooq asked if he contacted the judge of the court concerned in this matter. Khosa said that he, including his

staff, were stopped and ridiculed. Justice Farooq told Khosa that he would inform the registrar about this matter.

ECP's lawyer then raised an objection on the same plea filed in the Lahore High Court (LHC), saying that they had learned about the petition challenging ECP's disqualification notification. Parvez said that the LHC's single bench had forwarded the matter to the five-member after hearing it.

He requested that this petition was not admissible in this court. An appeal was filed on August 8 to suspend the trial in the Toshakhana case and the verdict was announced on August 28, said the ECP lawyer. He added that one month and eight days after the verdict, a separate petition for suspension of the verdict was filed.

Zardari says he could be candidate for PM slot

ISLAMABAD: With Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif apparently all set to take a fourth shot at power during the upcoming elections, "political scientist" Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari has hinted at joining the race for the coveted slot of prime minister.

In an interview with a private news channel on Monday, the "king of reconciliation" said: "I can be a candidate for prime ministership and Bilawal too. Even Khursheed Shah can be the candidate." Without unveiling the name of PPP's candidate for the top slot, the former president said: "Time will tell who will be the candidate." All political parties are gearing up for the general elections set to take place across the country on February 8, 2024, with some expressing fears that the security situation is still not feasible to stage them.

Responding to a question, Zardari claimed he made Shehbaz Sharif premier, adding that he arranged the required numbers to get him elected as the chief executive of the country. Last month, the PPP stalwart had rallied support for Bilawal to install him as the country's youngest prime minister.

"We have to make Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari the leader of today and tomorrow," he said while addressing a public meeting organised on the party's 56th foundation day in Quetta.



To another query, Zardari said he had closed doors for the presidential system forever, adding, "The presidential system can never be imposed in Pakistan." Firing a fresh salvo at incarcerated former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan, Zardari said that he ruined the country. The PPP leader also dubbed Khan as "ignorant" and said: "His future depends on his conduct."

The imprisoned ousted premier, who was removed from power via a parliamentary vote last year, opposed the nationwide drive against the illegal Afghan immigrants to get their support in the elections. At the same time, the PPP co-chairman accused Khan of "misguiding" overseas

Pakistan.

The PTI supremo was brought into power via a "conspiracy", Zardari said, adding that the conspiracy was hatched by his friends and a "mind-set" — which currently does not exist. "For the mindset, there are actors who create a narrative." The former president further said: "He [Khan] would have sold Pakistan and the country would have defaulted if I had not ousted the person.... Sometimes a puppet does not know what its handler is doing to it."

When asked whether his party would form an alliance with the PTI, he said: "This is what you think. I'm a political scientist. You're a journalist, you believe in journalism and understand it. You believe what polls are saying; perception is more important than facts. But no, actual facts are more important. We have 400 polling stations in Nawabshah, then how can the PTI cover all polling stations? To another question about the economic crisis, the PPP leader said that every government would have to introduce a 10-year economic formula to put the country on the right track. To another query, Zardari "congratulated" the chief justice of Pakistan as the Supreme Court is set to take up the 11-year-old presidential reference on revisiting the controversial death sentence awarded to former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto — the founder of the PPP. — Agencies



CM forms technical body to evaluate rates of Karachi Safe City project equipment, software

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar presided over a decisive meeting on the Karachi Safe City Project here at CM house on Monday and in principle, approved the project subject to the rationalization of the rates of different equipment and software and the payment of taxes.

"I want to start work on the much delayed and needed project, but as the custodian of public funds, it is my responsibility to ensure transparent utilization. Therefore, the NRTC must satisfy me and my team regarding the estimates," he said and constituted a technical committee under Secretary Home Iqbal Memon to evaluate equipment prices and compare them with the market price.

The committee would select its technical members from universities, and they would be empowered to delete duplications and insert missing items. However, the Chairman of P&D, Shakil Mangnejo, would continue his sessions with the NRTC team on different components of the project and their prices. The chief minister discussed every item and its cost with the NRTC representatives, and they agreed to reduce the cost of the equipment and software and delete the items included in duplication.

"In principle, we have decided to

approve the PC-I [by the P&D], but even then, a technical committee, to be selected from the universities' experts headed by the Home Secretary, would evaluate the rates of the equipment and submit proposals within the next 15 days," the CM decided. The meeting was attended by Minister Home Brig (R) Haris Nawaz, Chairman P&D Shakil Mangnejo, Secretary Home Iqbal Memon, IG Sindh Riffat Mukhtar, Secretary Local Govt Manzoor Shaikh, Secretary Finance Kazim Jatoti, DG Sindh Safe City Authority Asif Aijaz Shaikh, NRTC representatives and other concerned officers.

The CM said that if the NRTC did not agree on the prices, the provincial government would prefer to start the civil works, such as the construction of ducts, laying of optical fibre, installation of poles and construction of the main building, so that the much-delayed project can be moved forward. DG Safe Cities Authority Asif Aijaz Shaikh briefed the Chief Minister on the progress of the project. The project was conceived in July 2016, and the Home Department had selected a firm to prepare the PC-I/RFP. In December 2020, an MOU was signed between NRTC and Sindh Safe Cities Authority for the installation of 10,000 cameras.

The CM was told that since the Karachi Safe City Project had already been delayed, the cost of the project was increasing day by day with dollar variation. Chairman P&D Shakil Mangnejo told the CM that the NRTC has submitted a modified PC-I with them [P&D] of Rs. 48 billion. Under the PC-I 10,000 new high-definition cameras would be installed, apart from the upgradation of 2000 existing cameras. This entire process of installation and upgradation would be completed in five phases.

It was pointed out that the P&D had disagreed with the NRTC over the prices of different items. Upon this, the CM decided to discuss all the disputed rates of equipment and managed to get most of the prices reduced, curtailed, and agreed to some of the NRTC rates.

As per the PC-I, 10,430 would be installed in the Red Zone and Airport corridor, 2,425 in South, Malir & East, 2,250 in Malir, City, and Central, 2,150 in Korangi, City, and West, and 2,131 in Kiamari areas in five phases. The prices and taxes were discussed by the chief minister, who stated that the NRTC would only pay the applicable freight taxes and duties, and no extra taxes or duties would be imposed on the Sindh government.

Punjab govt directs provision of urea at certified rate

LAHORE (APP): Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali Randhawa has said that there is a clear direction of Punjab government to ensure provision of urea to farmers at certified rate. He presided over a meeting on availability of urea, desilting of canal and anti water theft measures here on Monday.

Dealers would declare supply of urea fertilizer and would sale on government rate, he added. He directed to launch crackdown on report of special branch against urea hoarding and illegal profiteering. Regarding canal desilting, the commissioner said that in first phase desilting of canal in Lahore would be carried out from December 16 to January 13.

LESCO recovers over Rs 5.3m from 317 defaulters in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) in collaboration with Tehsildars (Recovery) has recovered Rs 5.3 million from 317 dead defaulters in all the five districts - Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara - on the 88th day of its recovery campaign.

LESCO spokesman told media here Monday that on the 88th day, Chief Engineer O&M (T&G) Zafar Iqbal with the support of Tehsildar City Mujahid Zia and Tehsildar Shalimar Noreez Humayun recovered outstanding dues of Rs 0.91 million from 60 defaulters in Northern Circle and Rs 1.59 million from 52 defaulters in Eastern Circle respectively. Similarly, LESCO Manager (Material Disposal) Engineer Anwar Watto along with Tehsildar Model Town Rana Arsal and Tehsildar Cant. Sajjad Qureshi recovered Rs 0.75 million from 40 defaulters in Central Circle, while Manager (Technical) Engineer Muhammad Farooq with the assistance of Tehsildar Nankana Sahib Muhammad Iqbal Rasheed and Tehsildar Sheikhupura Muhammad Aslam Gujjar recovered Rs 0.28

million from 22 defaulters in Nankana Sahib Circle and Rs 0.82 million from 56 defaulters in Sheikhupura Circle. He added that LESCO Manager E&S (PMU) Engineer Abbas Ali in collaboration with Naib Tehsildar Kasur and Okara Mirza Zahid Baig recovered outstanding dues of Rs 0.79 million from 79 defaulters in Okara Circle and Rs 0.16 million from 02 defaulters in Kasur Circle.

Up till now during the recovery campaign, the LESCO with the help of Tehsildars (Recovery) recovered more than Rs 1.57 billion from 51,052 dead defaulters in its all circles of operation. He elaborated that LESCO recovered outstanding dues of Rs 198.44 million from 6,581 defaulters in Northern Circle; Rs 382.28 million from 6,604 defaulters in Eastern Circle; Rs 210.85 million from 6,075 defaulters in Central Circle; Rs 82.05 million from 2,659 defaulters in South Circle; Rs 112.79 million from 4,723 defaulters in Nankana Sahib Circle; Rs 238.58 million from 5,894 defaulters in Sheikhupura Circle; Rs 100.11 million from 7,960 defaulters in Okara Circle.

Second Social Sciences Winter School launched at the IBA Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The second Social Sciences Winter School, jointly organized by the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi and the Centre for South Asian and Himalayan Studies in Paris (CESAH, CNRS-EHESS) commenced at the IBA City Campus. The theme of the second Winter School is 'Environmental Change, Societies at Risk and Social Vulnerabilities in South Asia'. Running from December 11 to 15, the school will try to address the issues at the interface of environmental change, societies at risk and social vulnerabilities with different thematic focus, scales of interpretation, theoretical questioning and methodological frameworks, and in interaction with various local and international stakeholders.

Dr. S Akbar Zaidi, Executive Director, IBA



and one of the organizers of the Winter School opened the session by discussing the importance of collaboration between IBA and CESAH on such a key theme that will help propose indigenous solutions to help communities fight climate change. He mentioned that about 46 participants had joined the school from different locations and multidisciplinary fields to learn more about environmental challenges and social risks. He mentioned how South Asia is one of the most effected regions

by climate change.

His speech was followed by Dr. Remy Delage, Research Scholar for CESAH (CNRS-EHESS) and organizer of the school.

He discussed how the Winter School was "A unique training setup that brings together scholars and participants from various backgrounds so as to address societal challenges through the prism of social sciences". He further elaborated on the three workshops that were offered during the second Social Sciences Winter

School: Workshop 1 - Urban infrastructures, natural hazards and risk responses through uses of geotechnologies. Workshop 2 - Dynamics of socio/ecosystems, local knowledge and adaptation strategies to climate risk and Workshop 3 - Historical and sociological approaches to environmental studies. He ended his speech in the hope that more such collaborations would continue between the two countries in the coming years.

Dr. Michel Boivin, another prominent research scholar of CESAH (CNRS-EHESS), mentioned "I am delighted to work with IBA to co-organize the second winter school in social sciences and the topic we have selected this year is of great importance since it is related to climate change and this afternoon, we had the opportunity to speak to our workshop people.



LAHORE: Artist using his artwork skills to restore and finalize an elephant sculpture.



KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Information, Minorities Affairs Minister Ahmed Shah, caretaker Education Minister Rana Hussain addressing a press conference at Sindh Assembly.

CM launches online learning driving license App

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi officially launched the online learning driving license app at his office here on Monday. The CM appreciated Punjab Information and Technology Board (PITB) and IG police for their efforts in this regard.

Emphasizing the significance of the initiative, the CM highlighted the convenience it brings, allowing applicants to effortlessly secure learning driving licenses online from the comfort of their homes. Furthermore, he noted that the Punjab government is extending its support by providing facilities for obtaining learning driving licenses at patrolling posts, service centers, and the front desks of police stations.

Provincial Information Minister Amir Mir, IG police, ACS, chairman PITB and others were also present.

Punjab cabinet extends legal recognition of motorcycle-rickshaws: The 34th meeting of the provincial cabinet, held under the chair of Caretaker

Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at his office on Monday, greenlit revisions to the Motor Vehicles Rules of 1969, extending legal recognition of motorcycle-rickshaws. These rickshaws will now be categorized as three-wheelers, with the regional transport authority designated as a special registration authority for the temporary registration of existing motorcycle-rickshaws.

Following temporary registration, motorcycle rickshaws will undergo a four-month window for specific size and redesign modifications. Subsequently, they can obtain a registration number from the excise department upon the issuance of a fitness certificate. The CM emphasized the need to streamline the registration process and said the forms should be prepared in Urdu.

The huddle also sanctioned the permanent fortification of the infrastructure for 18 major roads, allocating toll revenue for their maintenance. Additionally, a decision was made to

ring-fence the toll amounts for these roads. Approval was granted to confer medical institution status upon the Dera Ghazi Khan Cardiology Institute under the Punjab Medical and Health Institutions Act of 2003, and an administrative committee was endorsed for its management.

Various measures, including a one-billion-rupee operational expenditure, were given the green light for the establishment of a nursing college in Recep Tayyip Erdogan Hospital, Muzaffargarh, with the chief minister urging the prompt commencement of classes. The meeting also resolved to convert the 180-bed Rehmatul Lil Alameen block into the Sahiwal Institute of Cardiology, endorsing its imminent functionality.

The meeting further approved the Data Darbar revamping project, amendments to the police rules, and the implementation of pay scales for 2023, aligning them with those of the federal government.

Ahmed Shah terms Indian Supreme Court decision regarding Kashmir, a murder of justice

KARACHI (APP): The Provincial Minister for Information Mohammad Ahmed Shah has condemned the decision of the Indian Supreme Court regarding the Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and said it has been proved that Modi's fascist government had also taken the superior judiciary of the country

hostage. Commenting on the Indian Supreme Court's decision, the provincial minister said this decision was a murder of justice.

Shah said the decision of the Indian Supreme Court is against the resolutions passed by the United Nations Organization and the aspirations of the people of Occupied Jammu and

Kashmiri. Ahmad Shah said that declaring the revocation of the special status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir by India as valid was the highest degree of injustice.

He said that Pakistan always supported that any decision regarding Jammu and Kashmir should be made as per the wishes of the people of Kashmir.

The caretaker Sindh government is with the Kashmiri brethren and Pakistan's position on the Kashmir issue is in line with the principles and requirements of justice, Shah said. Ahmed Shah said that the international community should reject the decision of the Indian Supreme Court.

PFA shuts murabba factory over violations

LAHORE (APP): An enforcement team of the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Monday shut down a candied fruit (murabba) factory over multiple violations of the PFA Act besides discarding 900kg of fungus-infested food. PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javed, in a statement, said that on a tip-off, the team raided a production unit in China Scheme, Haider Town, and caught the adulteration mafia red-handed producing inferior quality candied fruit with rotten vegetables and fruits. Moreover, loose colours and hazardous chemicals were being used for preparing murabba, he said.

He said that fungus-infested candied fruits were preserved in non-food grade drums while the use of non-food drums is strictly prohibited. Besides, the team witnessed an unhygienic working environment, dirty floor, open sewerage, an abundance of insects and mosquitoes in the processing area.

Muhammad Asim Javed said that the substandard and adulterated pickle was to be supplied to hotels and local shops after packing, however, the PFA ruined their unholy ambitions by taking timely action. He said that the use of fungus-infested candied fruit is injurious to human health and causes stomach and liver problems. It is mandatory for food business operators (FBOs) to adopt and follow the PFA's law, otherwise, strict action will be taken against violators, he said. Moreover, he said the provincial food regulatory body is utilizing all available resources to root out the adulteration mafia from Punjab.

LDA demolishes properties on illegal commercial use

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) on Monday sealed and demolished several properties during its ongoing crackdown against illegal commercial activities.

According to a spokesman for the authority, on directive of Commissioner Lahore and DG LDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, the action was taken by under the supervision of Operation Chief Town Planner II Azhar Ali.

The LDA teams took action against multiple illegal constructions/commercial

properties in Johar Town and affiliated schemes; illegal commercial construction was demolished on Military Account Plot Number 31.

An illegal commercial shop in Military Account Society on Plot Number 16 was sealed, while plot number 227, Block Y, UET Society, was sealed for illegal commercial use.

Plot Number 111 in Al-Hamra Town was demolished for illegal commercial construction, plot number 334 and 9 in Sunny Park were sealed for illegal commercial use.

گیس بل میں بچت کا یہ سادہ سا فارمولا

حکومت پاکستان کے توانائی پلان کے مطابق اوگرا نے گیز میں گیس سیور کوں کی تنصیب لازمی قرار دے دی

گیس بل میں بچت کے لیے سیور کوں استعمال کریں

MANDATORY

PDU/1855-D



Minister visits Info Cell

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce & Technical Education and Merged Districts, Dr. Aamir Abdullah visited the Information Cell of Information and Public Relations (I&PR) Department at Civil Secretariat Peshawar here on Monday.

Besides, Director Information Liaquat Amin and Deputy Director Communication, Khan Sarwar, other officers and technical staff of the department were also present on the occasion.

Director General (DG) Information and Public Relations, Muhammad Imran briefed the caretaker minister on the comprehensive system of communication to deliver official news to media including electronic media monitoring system, modern press brief-

ing and production studios in the information cell of the Department of Information.

Speaking on the occasion, the caretaker minister said that the information department plays the role of a bridge in effective communication between the provincial government and the people.

He said that the Information Department is fulfilling its responsibilities of public awareness in a factual manner from government initiatives and development agenda for the welfare of the people, which is commendable.

He termed the monitoring system and information cell of the Information Department playing a very crucial role for conveying the official version to the people and keeping the government aware of the public opinion.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chairing 17th meeting of Provincial Cabinet.

KP govt notifies posting, transfers

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Establishment Department on Monday notified posting and transfers of 18 provincial officers including Additional Secretaries, Deputy Secretary and Director.

According to the notification Additional Secretary Law Zaheer ud Din Babar was transferred and posted to the Planning and Development Department, Additional Secretary Home Muhammad Ali was transferred and posted as Director KP Private Schools Regulatory Authority and Additional Secretary Education Hassan was posted as Additional Secretary Home.

Similarly, Haider Gondal was also given charge of Additional Secretary Home. Additional Secretary Chief Minister Secretariat Nasrullah appointed Additional Secretary Health, Deputy Secretary Sadaqatullah has been posted as Additional Secretary Health while Mahmood Ahmed has been posted as Director Food Safety and Halal Food Authority.

Married woman's harassment case:

AD&SJ grants interim bail to SP

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Peshawar Liaquat Ali granted interim bail to Superintendent of Police (SP) Muhammad Arif Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police in married woman harassment case, on Monday.

According to prosecution, SP Muhammad Arif had tortured a married woman resident of Taro Jabba and pressurized for forced divorce from her husband.

Police had registered First Information Report (FIR) under sections 337A, 354 and 506 of Criminal Proceeding Code at Chamkani police station.

However, SP Muhammad Arif had approached Session Court for interim

bail in the case while AD&SJ Peshawar Liaquat Ali granted relief till 18th December and ordered for submission of record in this regard.

It is worthy to mention that the complainant had held a press conference at Peshawar Press Club and placed serious allegations against SP Muhammad Arif of harassment, torture and pressurizing for forced divorce.

Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had took notice of the issue by suspending SP Muhammad Arif and registration of FIR as well as initiation of departmental inquiry against him.

Meanwhile, Former Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser challenged his arrest under Section 3 of

Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) at Peshawar High Court.

The counsel Syed Sikandar Shah advocate filed writ plea in which provincial government, deputy commissioner and district police officer Swabi are made respondents in the case.

The writ pleaded that High Court had stopped arrested of Asad Qaiser till 29th November but police had arrested former Speaker National Assembly on 9th December under 3MPO which is illegal and against the law.

The petition argued that provincial government had arrested Former Speaker National Assembly under 3MPO due to lack any other case against him and requested to declare his arrest null and void.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Dr. Aamir Abdullah visiting Information Cell of I&PR. DG Information Muhammad Imran also present on occasion.

KP Bar Council delegation calls on CM

PESHAWAR (APP): A 9-member delegation from the KP Bar Council met with the Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah here on Monday. Led by the Vice Chairman of the KPK Bar Council, Zarbadshah, the delegation apprised the Chief Minister of ongoing issues faced by the legal fraternity.

The delegation emphasized the need for effective implementation of the Lawyers' Protection and Welfare Act. In response, the Chief Minister directed the Law Secretary to consult with relevant authorities and lawyers to propose actionable recommendations for resolving the issues faced by the legal community.

Recognizing the vital role lawyers play in society, Arshad Hussain Shah asserted that addressing their concerns would be prioritized based on fundamental principles of justice. The CM highlighted the pivotal role of lawyers in ensuring justice for the oppressed, affirming the government's commitment to take every possible step for the welfare and prosperity of lawyers while staying true to its mandate.

Delegating powers to young people inevitable for country, says Faiq

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of Amun Taraqqi Party said delegating power to young and competent people has become inevitable in the country.

Chairing a meeting here at the party's central secretariat on Monday, the party leader said hereditary politics has brought colossal damages and pushed the country back many years, stating that rulers have always prioritized personal vested interests over people issues and interests.

Someone betrayed Roti, Kapra and Makan, someone deceived in the name of the so-called change and

multiple/different slogans but they failed to keep their promises.

He maintained instead of uplifting living standards of people, rulers have only added to public miseries.

The ATP chief noted laws and constitution made for only personal interests and politics while rulers had kept deprived people from basic amenities and rights, they don't deserve any kind of forgiveness and people will soon hold them accountable.

"We want to empower people and ensure the transformation of powers at grassroots level."

In this regard, he said his party has consistently carried out an organised cam-

paign for public authority and justice, which has brought fruitful results, and a large number of people have become part of this drive and joined the ATP.

Shah said the party has a complete solution of the crisis which has also been given to government, opposition and relevant stakeholders. If it would be implemented with true spirit then the country could set a path of sustainable economic growth and development.

The party leader held present and former rulers responsible for current economic chaos.

He called for tapping indigenous resources and reserves to make the coun-

try economically self-reliant and free from the clutches of foreign lenders, i.e IMF and WB.

Expressing grave concern over rising echoes of delay in election, he said polls postponement is never in great favour of the country.

Faiq urged the interim government and election commission to take pragmatic steps for creating a conducive environment and level playing field for all political parties.

At the same time, Shah demanded reforms to remove intervention of wealth, pressure and rigging in electoral process and no one will raise questions on credibility and fairness of the election.

KPCTA appoints Saad as spokesperson

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Department of Tourism, Culture, Archeology and Museum Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Monday promoted Saad bin Owais as Deputy Manager Media through a notification issued here.

Saad bin Owais also served as spokesperson of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority.

Saad bin Owais, who also worked as Reporter in local newspaper and a private TV channel.

As Deputy Manager Media he would also perform the responsibilities of media and information as well.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority assigned Saad bin Owais the responsibility of Tourism Authority spokesperson.

According to the notification issued by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority, the spokesman of the authority and all the responsibilities related to the media and information have been assigned to Saad bin Owais.

International mountain day observed

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism Department on Monday observed International Mountain Day and reported that over 15.7 million tourists visited the hilly tourist resorts in the province from January 1st to December 10, 2023.

It said that most of the tourists visited Galiyat this year however, the influx of foreign tourists was reported from district Chitral, adding that 5,761,505 tourists including 232 foreigners visited Galiyat this year.

Similarly, 4,710,563 tourists including 897 foreigners visited Naran - Naran-Kaghan Valley, 334,265 tourists including 536 foreigners visited Malam Jabba, 1,309,070 tourists including 393 foreigners visited Dir Upper, 550,361 tourists including 1,647 foreigners visited Chitral Lower 36,675 tourists including 789 visited Chitral Upper.

The data of tourists was recorded by the KITE project of the Tourism Department.

PESHAWAR (APP): Former Federal Minister for Petroleum & Natural Resources, Anwar Saifullah Khan has expressed his deep grief over the sad demise of Rehmat Shah Afridi, founder of The Frontier Post newspaper.

In a heartfelt message of condolence, Anwar Saifullah Khan expressed profound grief at the loss of Mr. Afridi, a distinguished friend, senior journalist, and the resonant voice of his province.

He hailed Rehmat

Afridi's commitment to progress as a steadfast journalist who championed the cause of democracy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

His legacy stands unparalleled—a true luminary in the realm of journalism, Saifullah remarked.

"It is with immense sorrow that our nation bids farewell to an icon of an era that reshaped journalism in our country," commented Anwar Saifullah Khan.

"Afridi's unwavering dedication to the people and the nation was exem-

plary and his absence leaves an irreplaceable void, he added."

Recognized for his altruism and tireless efforts toward the betterment and welfare of the community and the nation, Rehmat Afridi's philanthropic spirit and commitment remain an inspiration.

Anwar Saifullah Khan prayed to Almighty Allah for solace upon the departed soul and grant patience strength and fortitude to the grieving family during this difficult time.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali addressing a seminar at Govt. Girls College Chugarmatti.

DIG: CTD police nab 2 Afghan extortionists

PESHAWAR (APP): The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Mohmand in an operation against extortionists on Monday arrested two Afghan extortionists along with eight facilitators, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) CTD Imran Shahid said in a press conference here.

He said that the accused were also doing business of illegal money exchange and

honey in Peshawar and Lahore, adding that they were the operatives of the banned outfit Tehrik-e-Taliban and one of the facilitators was affiliated with the medical sector.

The DIG said that the accused were blackmailing a citizen and threatened to kill him.

The CTD police recovered two chequebooks being used for the transfer

of extortion money, Rs three million cash and a vehicle.

SSP CTD Najam-ul-Hassan told the media that, "CTD was working to arrest other terrorists and their facilitators adding that 1600 Afghans were involved in terrorism, extortion and other crimes and 90 per cent of Afghan SIMs were being used by them".

PESCO notifies power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electrical Supply Company (PESCO) on Monday notified power suspension from various grids of the province on December 13 due to unavoidable maintenance work.

According to the notification power supply would remain suspended from Rehman Baba grid station from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. resultantly consumers of Sheikh

Muhammadi grid connected feeders would face inconvenience.

Similarly, power supply from RB Terbela grid station would remain suspended from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. resultantly consumers of Topi, GIK Industrial, Mix-II, Kalabat and Kotla feeders would face inconvenience.

Power supply would remain suspended from RB

Terbela grid station from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., resultantly consumers of Gandaf, Hay-at Steel, New Yousafzai, Utla, Amanzai feeders would face inconvenience.

The power supply from Gomal University Grid Station would remain suspended from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. resultantly consumers of Gomal University grid connected feeders would face inconvenience.

Guidelines issued to KP hospitals

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Monday issued guidelines to hospitals in the province to expedite diagnosis and treatment of viral flu, cough and skin diseases.

The KP Health Department said that due to dry cold weather, air pollution and substandard food, a large number of people are suffering from seasonal flu, cough and skin diseases.

It advised people to wash their clothes, shawls and blankets with hot water and drying under the clear sunlight besides using face mask and ensuring cleanliness.

The health department also advised the citizens to take regular sunbath to avoid these diseases.

Illegal connections removed

PESHAWAR (APP): PESCO during its ongoing drive against power pilferage removed as many as 21,480 illegal connections across the province and imposed Rs745.2 million on pilferers.

According to PESCO spokesman, 5,007 illegal connections were removed in Peshawar circle, 4,228 in Mardan circle, 3,549 in Khyber Circle, 2,425 in Swat Circle, 2,266 in Bannu Circle and 1,701 in DI Khan Circle.

The company filed 6,112 cases for registration of FIRs against power pilferers and 2,823 accused were arrested by the police.

Flowers exhibition starts at UOA Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): The two-week Gul e Dawoodi (Crysanthemum) and Gul e Sadburg (Meriguld) flowers exhibition started at the University of Agriculture (UOA) here on Monday spreads the colors of spring everywhere and aroma of flowers creates a captivating atmosphere.

As many as 30 types of Gul e Dawoodi and two types of French and African Gul e Sadburg were put on display in the exhibition organized by the Department of Horticulture UOA.

The Secretary Higher Education Department (HED) Khyber Pakh-

tunkhwa Arshad Khan and Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Jehan Bakht inaugurated the exhibition and appreciated the hard work of the gardeners of the University.

They also appreciated the efforts of Department of Horticulture and said that the breeding and duration of the Crysanthemum should be increased. They stressed that the faculty should focus on research for the development of the country.

Dr. Fazl e Wahid while briefing the participants said that they were conducting researches to improve these flowers and

explained about the capabilities, benefits and types of flowers.

In this ceremony, Chairman Department of Horticulture Prof Dr Ghulam Nabi Akhonzada, Registrar Dr Rizwan Ahmed, Director of Teaching Prof Dr Muhammad Idrees, Prof Dr Iqbal Munir, Prof Dr Muhammad Sajid, Dr Imran Ahmed along with faculty and officers of the University were present.

The charm of the bouquets decorated with the flowers captivated the participants' hearts and soul who showed keen interest in the exhibition.



PESHAWAR: A laborer busy in cutting scrap tyres at godown near Ring Road.



In brief

3 killed in road accident

HARIPUR (INP): At least three people were killed while other two injured after a speeding car allegedly coming from the wrong side, crashed into a truck GT Road Haripur on early Monday morning. According to details, rescue sources said that the driver of the car reportedly had lost control of his vehicle and in a result three persons lost their lives on the spot, a private news channel reported. The speeding car hit a truck from the left side, rescue sources added. The collision was so intense that the vehicle overturned and was badly damaged. Medical teams from Haripur Rescue 1122 provided first aid and shifted the injured to Haripur Trauma Centre.

Man killed in mishap

OKARA (INP): One person was killed when an over speeding car hit a motorcycle in Okara on Sunday-Monday midnight, rescue sources said. According to details, a reckless driven car knocked a bike near Crown City at Canal Road. As a result of accident, motorcycle rider identified as Siddique was killed on the spot and car driver fled the scene. The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem. The police impounded the car and after registering a case against the driver at large started raids for his arrest.

Load shedding condemned

SHANGLA: The residents and trader community condemned prolonged load shedding which had impacted every aspect of livelihood from business to public services delivery. The residents of Shangla district is facing 12 hours and more load shedding in winter despite multiple leaders of different political parties including two former ministers Amir Muqam and Shaukat Yousafzai. The residents annoyed behaviour of political leadership especially Amir Muqam and Shaukat Yousafzai for their silence on the issue. The residents threatened for nonstop provision of power as Shangla is contributing 100megawatt electricity to national grid but didn't obtaining five megawatt power otherwise they will be compelled to arrange protest on larger scale.

One killed, three injured

FAISALABAD (INP): One passenger was killed while three persons sustained multiple injuries in a road accident in the area of Khurarianwala police station, here on Monday. Rescue 1122 spokesman said that a speedy van hit a tractor trolley loaded with sugarcane produces near Chak No. 69-RB Ghaseetpura where it was parked on the road to remove its punctured tyre. As a result, one unknown passenger died on the spot whereas, Rescue 1122 shifted shopkeeper namely Shamshad (22), tractor driver Tariq (55) and van driver Sajjad (30) to hospital in critical condition in addition to providing first aid. The police took the body into custody and started investigation, he added.

Man injured

MUZAFFARGARH (INP): Some unidentified people wounded a bike rider after putting resistance in a robbery bid. Peer Bakhs, 30, s/o Muhammad Bakhs, basti bhagat wala, mouza bait of Alipur received head injuries through some sharp-edged weapon by the culprits, according to rescuers.



HYDERABAD: Chairperson of BISP, Dr. Amjad Saqib talking to media persons.

Reference to pay homage to Shams Bunerri held

F.P. Report

BUNER: The well-known politician, poet, writer progressive revolutionist late Shams Bunerri reference held at native village Ghazikhani. The grand gathering was organized by family members at play ground Ghazikhani. Thousands politicians poets writers social religious figures from parts of KPK districts and parts of Buner and villagers participated.

The family head Shamsur Rehman Advocate and Riaz Jan Advocate thanked the participants especially the villagers who were faced worst when Shams Bunerri was wanted to police for years and mostly search every house every day to arrest him but the villagers always protected him at own cost. They highlighted different aspects of the life of late Shams Bunerri.

On the occasion DSP Roshan Zada Ji amier Halem Bacha Ex speaker Bakht Jihan high court bar president Advocate Abdul Haleem poet Rahim Shah poet Ali Gohar Shah writer Haider Ali writer Akbar Syal poet Nasrullah former

aid to CM KPK Riaz Khan writer Amjad Shehzad PMI Nawaz president Haji Salar Khan poet Aziz Manirwal Advocate Salem Sawabiwal JUI amier Mufi Fazal Ghafor grand Jirga head Mian Syed Laiq Bacha Siraj Lala Swati QWP leader Professor Hamidur Rehman renown poet Muner Bunery spoke.

The speakers how highlight different aspects of late Shams Bunerri like fe struggle and impressment absconding exiled and lashes call conviction. They pointed about late Shams Bunerri political struggle dedication for labor revolution and progressive writings and poetry till his last breath. They vowed the candle light illuminated by late Shams Bunery would be keep illuminated in future too.

DRC resolves dispute: The disputes resolution counsel (DRC)Circle Pir Baba resolved years long dispute over motorcar issue among 6 parties in a single hearing. The parties summoned to DRC office in Police Station Pir Baba.

The members Mukhtar, Sardar Ali, Akbar Ali, Zia Husain, Diyar Khan,

Razimulk, Sherin and Journalist Abid listen the parties involved in sale and purchase of a non-custom paid cut motor car which was seized and confiscated by anti-car lifting cell because its chases plat was tempered. The last purchaser was moved application with plea he was suffered a lot by losing motorcar and money besides facing police and courts but the parties involved in selling the motorcar right from top to bottom were not paying his amount and expenses.

When the other parties summoned and inquired about status of the deal they admitted they were in chain but the last party was reluctant to pay the amount. The DRC members convinced them to pay small amount of their due share of using the car so as to compensate the last owner who had to suffer a lot for enjoying nothing. The parties agreed upon payment to the last owner and in writing disposed of the case happily. The parties extended thanks to DRC for resolving the long standing disputes among them in a single hearing due to which their precious time and hard earned money saved.

JUI-F kicks off election drive in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl kicked off its election campaign in the Lower Dir district by holding a workers' convention at Talash here on Monday. The JUI-F chief for all merged districts and former senator Maulana Abdur Rashid was chief guest on the occasion. The JUI-F workers from different union councils attended the event which was also addressed by the JUI-F provincial leader Qazi Ayazud Din, district chief Sirajud Din, Timergara tehsil chairman Mufti Irfanud Din, tehsil chief Mufti Bakht Sardar and others. Besides others, the JUI-F local leaders Muhammad Rahim Haqqani, village council chairman Maulana Nabi Shah, Maulana Muhammad Huzaifa and Ikram Khan were also in attendance.

Speaking on the occasion the former senator Abdur Rashid asked the party workers to speed up their door to door election campaign and create unity in their ranks. He said that thousands of ulema and religious scholars had full confidence in the leadership of Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the JUI-F central chief.

He said that the JUI-F chief struggled for more than three years to rid the people of Pakistan from Imran Khan's government during which the economy, sovereignty and integrity was at stake. Mufti Abdul Rashid said that the general election should be held on time. He said the JUI-F was the second largest political party in the country. The former senator informed the workers about the current political situation in the country and the challenges facing the nation.

The JUI-F senator said that his party would win a majority of seats in the merged districts and would form its government in the province. He said the ulema should play their active role in uniting the Muslim Ummah. He said that it was not the time for disunity and every responsible citizen should play an active role in bringing unity, love and brotherhood among the Muslims.

PML-N joined: About two dozen political workers on Monday announced to join the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz during a function held at Jango area of Adenzai here on Monday. The function was addressed by the PML-N nominated candidate for PK 15 Barrister Zaidullah and others. The newcomers said the nation had attached great expectations with the PML-N chief Mian Nawaz Sharif who would overcome the difficulties faced by the people.

Those who joined the PML-N included Ali Haidar, Zarin Khan, Anwar Ali, Fazal Akbar, Javed Akhtar, Adnan Khan, Yar Zamin, Yasin Khan, Salahud Din and others. The newcomers expressed their full confidence in the leadership of engineer Ameer Muqam and barrister Zaidullah.

Tribesmen protest against excessive load shedding

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: A protest demonstration against new schedule of power supply and unscheduled load shedding was held in front of local grid station tehsil Landi Kotal on Monday.

Led by local leadership of main stream political parties, people from different walks of life took out a rally near government girls' high secondary school. The marchers while carrying placards inscribed with slogans against excessive power off and black flags initiated protest sit-in in front of the grid station.

Addressing on the occasion speakers including Haji Muqtader Shah Afridi, Zernoor Afridi, Abdur Rauf Shinwari, Malik Zahid and others unanimously rejected the new power supply schedule implemented at civilians feeders and said that provision of electricity in hours from 11:00 pm to 4:00 am could not meet needs of locals.

Supply of electricity as per new schedule compels women folk to stay up till mid night to fill potable water that was injustice to them, they remarked. They went on that the Tesco officials had already adopted policy of four hours supply of electricity to the area and in fresh schedule; the tribesmen could only get it mid night that was ebullient to deprive them of the facil-



ity.

The protesters also criticized the local Tesco officials for conducting what they said unfair sections disconnections for smooth supply of electricity and urged them to ensure provision of power on equal basis. They threatened that if old schedule was not resumed in two days, they would come to the roads for indefinite agitation against it. Later on, the protestors gave up their protest after the Tesco officials assured them for carry on the power supply as per old schedule.

International Human Rights Day observed: Like elsewhere in the country, world human rights day is commemorated here in Landi Kotal. In this connection an awareness walk was conducted that was attended by Additional Assistant Commissioner (AAC) Rameez Ali Shah, councillors, officials and members of civil society.

Speaking on the occasion AAC said that the aim

of celebrating the day was to aware the people aware of their basic rights being enjoyed by the citizens of the developed societies. It was a need of time to ensure equality and justice in the society and to supply basic rights to them.

Village councillor Aziz Khan said that it was obligatory on the State to guarantee human rights of every single citizen of the country and to make society free of tyranny. The participants demanded that the United Nation and other civilized societies to take notice of anti-human atrocities in Palestine and Kashmir and join hands with them to raise voice against inhuman practices being faced by the innocent Palestinians and Kashmiris. The marchers while carrying banner inscribed with statements in favor of human rights and chanted slogans against powers that usurped basic rights of the forcibly subjugated people and violated human rights.

BISE Mardan to start SLO training from 12th

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The three-day workshops regarding SLO base exams and on-screen marking organized by the Education Board will start from December 12.

Controller of Examinations of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Prof. Ishrat Ali said in a statement, December 12. At

eleven o'clock in the morning, a workshop is scheduled for female staff, while on December 13th, a workshop is scheduled for female staff. Colleges and higher secondary schools have been directed to participate in the workshop along with the subjects of English, Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

Child dead in house burning: A fire broke out

inside a room in Islampura house near Gaju Khan. As a result of the accident, a one-year-old girl Zema daughter died of burns. On receiving the information, Rescue 1122 firefighters and medical team reached the spot.

Rescue 1122 firefighters rescued the girl trapped in the fire and shifted her to DHQ Hospital. Rescue 1122 firefighters quickly controlled the fire.



LOWER: Books and other gifts being distributed among school students at a function.

KPITB celebrates coworking space, workaround initiative

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (KPITB) celebrated the success of its recently launched coworking space, workaround, by hosting an Open House event last day. Managing Director KPITB Sahibzada Ali Mahmud, Acting PM Digital Jobs Muhammad Yaseen, Manager Workaround Irfan Wahab and other officials attended the open house event.

The facility, strategically located in Abbottabad and Peshawar, collectively boasts 550 coworking seats. Abbottabad, with 200 seats, and Peshawar, with 350 seats, both operate on a no-profit, no-loss model, providing an ideal workspace for startups, software houses, call centres, BPO operators, and individual freelancers. Workaround, powered by KPITB and supported by the World Bank through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), stands as a testament to KPITB's commitment to job creation and the growth of the digital economy.

The open house event offered attendees a firsthand look at the state-of-the-art facilities, designed to meet the diverse needs of the dynamic IT sector. The key features of the open house are to both workaround in

Abbottabad and Peshawar and provide businesses access to vibrant pools of talent within educational clusters. KPITB's dedication to supporting the IT community is evident through Workaround's sustainable pricing structure.

The combined 550 coworking seats across Abbottabad and Peshawar cater to startups, software houses, call centres, BPO operators, and freelancers. Workaround offers essential coworking amenities, including power backup, security, high-speed internet connectivity, and the latest laptops with headgear. The Open House event held at Workaround Abbottabad provided an opportunity for attendees to explore the facilities, interact with the Workaround team, and gain insights into how these innovative spaces can elevate their businesses.

While addressing the event Dr. Ali Mahmud, Managing Director of KPITB, stated, "Workaround's successful launch and the positive response from the community reinforce our mission of job creation and fostering the digital economy. He further added that the open house event allowed us to connect with our stakeholders and showcase the value Workaround

brings to the vibrant IT landscape of Abbottabad and Peshawar.

Protest held

F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: In the Qamber Shahdadt district of Sindh, the protests of the device holders appointed from among the stipends received by the deserving women under the Benazir Income Support Program reached a peak. Women protested at Bahto Chowk shouting slogans against the device holders.

On this occasion, Sabra Khatun, Zeenat, Samira and others told the media that two out of the device holder stipend fixed by BISP, illegally deducting up to three thousand rupees while threatening to close the account of BISP on raising voice. He appealed to the Chairman Benazir Income Support Program and the caretaker Chief Minister of Sindh to take action against the device agents appointed in Qamber Shahdadt district so that the beneficiaries get the stipends. Deduction should be stopped.



QUETTA: A child vendor taking nap while selling warm cloth at his roadside setup.



GAZA: Palestinians mourn in front of shrouded bodies of relatives killed following Israeli strikes at Khan Younis's Nasser Hospital.

WHO calls for immediate passage of humanitarian relief into Gaza

GAZA: The World Health Organization has agreed on a resolution, the first by any United Nations agency, calling for immediate access to vital humanitarian aid and an end to the fighting in Gaza. The resolution - calling for the "immediate, sustained and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief, including the access of medical personnel" - was adopted by consensus at the end of a special session of the WHO's Executive Board.

It also called on "all parties to fulfill their obligations under international law" and reaffirmed "that all parties to armed conflict must comply fully with the obligations applicable to them under international humanitarian law related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and medical personnel." The special meeting of the executive board was only the seventh in the WHO's 75-year history.

The passage of the resolution "underscores the importance of health as a universal priority, in all circumstances, and the role of healthcare and humanitarianism in building bridges to peace, even in the most difficult of situations," the WHO said in a statement after the meeting. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has strug-

gled to respond to the deepening crisis in Gaza that erupted after the Palestinian armed group Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel killing 1,200 people and taking more than 200 captive.

In response, Israel declared war on Hamas and has subjected Gaza, which Hamas has controlled since 2006, to relentless attack, killing at least 18,000 people. The UN says about 80 percent of the population has been displaced and faces shortages of food, water and medicine along with a growing threat of disease.

A resolution for a humanitarian ceasefire put forward by the United Arab Emirates and co-sponsored by 100 other countries failed to pass in the UNSC after the United States vetoed the proposal. The US is one of five permanent members of the council with a veto. The vote came after UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres invoked Article 99 to formally warn the 15-member council of a global threat from the two-month-long war. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the UN health agency resolution could be a starting point for further action.

"It does not resolve the crisis. But it is a platform on which to build,"

he said in his closing remarks to the board. "Without a ceasefire, there is no peace. And without peace, there is no health. I urge all Member States, especially those with the most influence, to work with urgency to bring an end to this conflict as soon as possible." Fighting resumed this month after a week-long pause in hostilities that allowed some Israeli and foreign captives to be released in exchange for a number of Palestinians held in Israeli jails, as well as for the supply of humanitarian aid into Gaza. With Israel now stepping up its military actions in the south of the territory of more than 2 million people, calls for an end to the fighting have intensified.

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is expected to vote as soon as Tuesday on a resolution for an immediate ceasefire, after Egypt and Mauritania invoked Resolution 377 "Uniting for Peace" in the wake of the US veto. Adopted by the UNGA in 1950, Resolution 377 allows the 193-member body to act where the UNSC has failed to "exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security". Their letter also referred to Guterres's invoking Article 99 of the UN Charter on December 6. — Aljazeera

Two people killed in attack on aid convoy in Sudan, says Red Cross

KHARTOUM (BBC): Two people have been killed and seven others injured in a "deliberate attack" on an aid convoy in Sudan's capital Khartoum, the Red Cross has said. The vehicles - which the charity said were "clearly marked with a Red Cross emblem" - were due to evacuate over a hundred civilians.

The wounded included three charity staff, the International Committee for the Red Cross said. In a statement they said they were "shocked and appalled". Sudan's civil war between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces is now in its eighth month. Earlier, the East African regional body IGAD said it had secured a commitment from both sides to implement a ceasefire and hold face-to-face talks. It said the army chief and the head of the RSF had both

committed to a peaceful settlement. However previous commitments have been broken. The attack happened in al-Shajara neighbourhood, located in the west of the city, the ICRC said. It added that "over a hundred vulnerable civilians" were due to be moved from Khartoum to Wad Madani. The humanitarian operation was requested by, and coordinated with, the parties to the conflict, it said - and that both had given security guarantees.

Pierre Dorbes, the head of the ICRC delegation in Sudan said the attack was "unacceptable", before adding: "I am shocked by the total disrespect for the Red Cross emblem, which must be respected and protected in accordance with international humanitarian law. Our mission today was to bring these civilians to safety", Mr Dorbes contin-

ued, "Instead, lives have been tragically lost. My heart goes out to the loved ones of the people killed, and we desperately hope those injured will make a full recovery."

Those being evacuated included the sick, children, orphans and the elderly needed to be moved to a safer area. The evacuation operation has now been cancelled until a fresh security assessment can be made. The ICRC has called for immediate protection for all civilians, including humanitarian workers and medical personnel. A coup in Sudan two years ago saw the prime minister and his cabinet arrested and the government dissolved. This happened while the country's economy was in a deep crisis with high inflation and shortages of food, fuel and medicine. Since then, Sudan has ben run by a

council of military generals, and two men are at the centre of the dispute - Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the armed forces and in effect the country's president, and his deputy and leader of the RSF, Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as Hemedti. They disagree on the direction the country is going in and the proposed move towards civilian rule.

Fighting in Sudan started in April after members of the RSF were redeployed around the country in a move that the army saw as a threat. There had been some hope that talks could resolve the situation but these never happened. It is disputed who fired the first shot but the fighting swiftly escalated in different parts of the country. More than six million people have so far been displaced by the war, the UN says.

Turnout slumps to record low of 27.5% in HK 'patriots-only' poll

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's first "patriots only" district council elections saw a turnout of just 27.5 percent, a record low, after all opposition candidates were excluded from the ballot. At the last polls in 2019, turnout surged to a record high as voters backed pro-democracy candidates following months of sometimes violent mass protests, handing the opposition a landslide victory.

Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law the following year and embarked on an overhaul of the territory's electoral systems to exclude anyone deemed disloyal from holding public office. Voting stretched to midnight after a rare 90-minute extension was granted following a failure in the digital system used to confirm voters' eligibility.

Despite the extra time, the government's official website on Monday showed that the final turnout was 27.54 percent, with just under 1.2 million of Hong Kong's 4.3 million registered electors casting a vote.

"It can be seen that everyone has begun to feel that the election has no meaning," said Lemon Wong, one of the few democrats still involved in local politics. "Even pro-establishment supporters are asking themselves why they need to vote because it's all the same." The previous lowest turnout was 35.8 percent in 1999. Turnout also slumped in last year's delayed Legislative Council election, the first following the changes to the electoral system.

For the district council poll, the number of directly elected seats was cut by nearly 80 percent - from 462 to 88, with the remaining seats controlled by the city leader, government loyalists and rural landlords. All candidates were required to undergo national security checks and secure nominations from two pro-government committees. At least three pro-democracy and non-pro-establishment groups, including moderates, and even some pro-Beijing figures failed to meet those thresholds. More than 70 percent of the candi-

dates picked to run for the election were themselves members of the nominating committees. In the early hours of Monday, the territory's Chief Executive John Lee thanked the "more than 1 million" voters who had turned out to vote.

He defended the election's legitimacy, citing a need to secure stability in Hong Kong, which was returned to Chinese rule in 1997. "It is the last piece of the puzzle for us to implement the principles of patriots governing Hong Kong," Lee, a former policeman and security chief, said after casting his vote. "From now on, the district councils would no longer be what they were in the past - which was a platform to destruct and reject the government's administration, to promote Hong Kong independence and to endanger national security," Lee claimed.

Security around polling stations was tight, with more than 10,000 police deployed for the elections. At least six people were arrested for alleged offences, including posting

online for people to cast invalid ballots or to incite others to disrupt the polls, according to statements from the police and the city's anti-corruption authority. Three members of the League of Social Democrats, one of the last surviving pro-democracy groups, were among those followed and arrested just before they planned to protest against what they described as a "birdcage election" and a "big leap backwards" for electoral and democratic rights in Hong Kong.

The police said in a statement that the three were arrested on suspicion of attempting to "incite others" to disrupt the poll. The League called the arrests "extremely ironic and ridiculous". The national security police arrested a 77-year-old man for an "attempt to carry out seditious acts". A 38-year-old man was charged on Tuesday for reposting a video of an overseas commentator that allegedly incited people to boycott the election. — Aljazeera

Much of Kenya falls into darkness

NAIROBI (AP): NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) - A power blackout hit Kenya, paralyzing large parts of the country, and the transport minister called for an investigation into "possible acts of sabotage and coverup" over the third nationwide outage in three months.

The electricity failure began around 8 p.m., affecting many vital facilities, including the main airport in the capital, Nairobi, which is a major transport hub connecting East Africa to Asia, Europe and other parts of the world. Noting the recent big outages, Transport Minister Kipchumba Murkomen said soon after visiting the airport that "we are making a formal request to the National Police Service to investigate possible acts of sabotage and coverup."

The state-run utility, Kenya Power, blamed the blackout on a "system disturbance" and said the problem was being addressed by technicians. "We have lost electricity supply to various parts of the country due to a suspected fault affecting the power system," a statement said. Later, Kenya Power issued an update saying it had restored electricity service to parts of the country, including some residential districts in the capital, but many areas in Kenya remained without power Monday morning.

During a similar blackout last month, it took engineers over 12 hours to restore power in most parts of the country. But the worst outage was on Aug. 25, the longest disruption in Kenya's history. The cause remains a mystery, with the power company blaming a failure at Africa's largest wind farm, which laid the responsibility on the power grid instead. In parts of the country, including Nairobi, it took almost 24 hours for the power to come back on.

Kenyans on social media demanded answers from Kenya Power over the frequent power outages following failure, while others mocked the agency, saying it was worse than power companies in Nigeria and South Africa, where rationing or load-shedding, as it is known, is common. The latest blackout in Kenya comes at a time when the country is facing high fuel prices which many have blamed for millions of dollars in losses to businesses and the wider economy, which is struggling badly.

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.

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. Have no doubt, this is certain," she said in her speech read in French. The women's rights advocate is serving multiple sentences on charges including spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic after her last arrest in November 2021. "I write this message from behind the high, cold walls of a prison," Mohammadi said, adding that her life and lives of many activists in Iran had been a constant struggle "to stay alive".

Drug lords go on killing spree to hunt down corrupt officers

MEXICO CITY (AP): A recent killing spree in the Mexican border city of Tijuana could have been lifted from a TV script: enraged drug lords hunting down corrupt police officers who stole a drug shipment. Two of the officers suspected of the theft have been killed, prosecutors say. But so have at least three other officers, according to the city's former police chief, suggesting the cartel believed to have owned the drugs may have launched a generalized retribution.

It is the latest blow for Tijuana which has the most homicides of any city in Mexico, with about double the number of the place that comes second - the border city of Ciudad Juarez. Tijuana, situated in the border state of Baja California and with a population of over 2.1 million, has for several years seen around 2,000 murders annually. By comparison, Houston, Texas, which has about the same population, saw 435 killings in 2022. According to prosecutors, in mid-November, a half-dozen local and state police officers in Tijuana allegedly hatched a plot to steal a large shipment of drugs from a warehouse where traffickers were storing it. Video emerged last week of the officers' pickup truck pulling out of the building with big, plastic-wrapped bales of cocaine filling the truck bed.

State Prosecutor Maria Elena Andrade confirmed this week that three state detectives were under investigation in the case, along with a similar number of Tijuana municipal police. Alberto Capella, the former head of Tijuana's police force from 2007 to 2008 and again from 2011 to 2013, told The Associated Press that the cache of drugs appeared to have belonged to the Sinaloa cartel, specifically the wing controlled by drug lord Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, probably the most powerful gang in town. Apparently, the cartel knew almost immediately who had pulled off the heist. On Nov. 18, just hours after the theft, gunmen sprayed the federal prosecutors' office in Tijuana with at least 30 rounds, pockmarking the building's facade. Within an hour, one of the municipal police officers allegedly involved in the heist was gunned down on a street in Tijuana.

On Nov. 24, gunmen targeted the state prosecutors' office with a barrage of gunfire; nobody was injured. On Nov. 27, a state detective under investigation for the theft was gunned down in his car while filling it with gas at a station in Tijuana. It seemed the officer saw the attack coming, and was able to start his car and advance a few feet before hitting a column and collapsing dead at the wheel. The attackers fled on a motorcycle. An employee of the state prosecutors' office - who spoke to the AP on condition of

anonymity as he was not authorized to talk publicly about the case - confirmed this week that two of the officers under investigation in the scandal had been shot and killed in broad daylight on the city's streets, in apparent gangland revenge. The employee said the second officer declined an offer for a spot in the state witness protection program in return for testifying in the case.

Capella, the former police chief, said at least three other police officers have been killed since the heist, suggesting the cartel may have launched a generalized retribution for the theft. Tijuana is no stranger to violence or corruption. When he took over the police department, Capella recalls, he had to fire about a quarter of the force's officers and he survived an assassination attempt. But police stealing a cartel's whole drug shipment is a new low.

"This is very worrisome," Capella said. "Tijuana has never seen anything of this scale and that's saying a lot." The roots of Tijuana's current round of violence date back to 2017, when murders practically doubled, rising from 919 in 2016 to 1,782 in 2017. Observers say turf battles between the Jalisco New Generation and Sinaloa cartels, and other groups - like remnants of the old Arellano Felix gang - are largely to blame. And so pervasive is the violence in Tijuana that anyone, from singers to journalists, can fall victim to the killings. In January 2022, two journalists were shot to death in two separate attacks in one week. On Nov. 20, the Tijuana city council voted to ban performances of drug ballads known as "narco corridos," which glorify traffickers.

"If they come to sing other kinds of songs, they are welcome," said Mayor Montserrat Caballero, threatening those who performed the ballads with fines of up to \$57,000. That followed the cancellation of a concert in October by well-known narco corrido singer Peso Pluma. His organization called off the performance "for everyone's safety" after hand-lettered banners appeared in the city signed by the Jalisco cartel, which may have been angered by songs praising rivals. "Don't even think about performing on Oct. 14 because that will be your last performance," according to the banner. "You show up and we will destroy you." In June, Caballero, the mayor, announced she had decided to live at an army base for her own safety after receiving threats she didn't specify, but which everyone assumed came from cartels. Caballero rose to fame in 2022 when she made a direct public appeal to cartels to stop targeting civilians after gangs carjacked and burned at least 15 vehicles throughout the city.

UK to send two Royal Navy minehunter ships to Kyiv

LONDON (BBC): The Royal Navy will transfer two of its minehunter ships to Ukraine in a bid to strengthen the country's sea abilities, the Ministry of Defence has said. Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said the vessels would help to reopen "vital export routes" - limited since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine. But questions remain over how they will be able to enter the Black Sea.

The MoD said the UK was also launching a coalition with Norway, to garner long-term support for Ukraine. In a statement, the department said Mr Shapps would outline the plans in detail later on Monday, alongside his Norwegian counterpart. Further details about the UK's ongoing military support to Ukraine will also be shared, it added. The defence secretary has so far said the bid to improve Ukraine's navy "marks the beginning of a new dedicated effort by the UK, Norway and our allies to strengthen Ukraine's maritime capabilities... enhancing their ability to operate in defending their sovereign waters and bolstering security in the Black Sea".

"As an island nation with a proud maritime history, the UK and

Royal Navy are particularly well-placed to support this endeavour, which will form part of a series of new coalitions formed between allies to ensure an enduring military commitment in support of Ukraine." The provision of two Royal Navy minehunters to Ukraine has been in the works for a long time. They were part of a package of UK maritime support, promised before Russia invaded Ukraine. The Royal Navy has been training Ukrainian crews over the summer in how to use the ships. However, there are still questions as to how or when they will be able to enter the Black Sea - with Turkey controlling access through the Bosphorus.

It highlights concerns about the immediate impact of maritime support on the war in Ukraine. Over the last six months, Ukraine has successfully targeted Russia's Black Sea fleet in Crimea - using drones and long range missiles. The eastern European country still needs to rebuild its own navy, though, and to do that it will need just support from western nations - such as the UK and Norway - but access to sail through the narrow strait between the

Mediterranean and Black Seas. After invading Ukraine last February, Russia's navy blockaded the country's Black Sea ports, causing both naval and export issues - including trapping 20 million tonnes of grain. Ukraine is one of the world's biggest suppliers of crops such as sunflower oil, barley, maize and wheat.

"Strengthening the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU)'s maritime capabilities, in particular countering the threat from Russian sea mines, will help restore Ukraine's maritime exports," the MoD said. In July 2022, a deal brokered by Turkey and the UN was agreed, allowing Ukraine to safely export grain from its Black Sea ports. But Russia later pulled out, accusing Ukraine of a "massive" drone attack on its fleet in Sevastopol, Crimea. As part of the new coalition between the UK and Norway, the MoD said there would be a focus on "the rapid development of a maritime force in the Black Sea, continuing to develop a Ukrainian Marine Corps, and river patrol craft to defend coastal and inland waterways". Sign up for our morning newsletter and get BBC News in your inbox.

Trump cancels plans to testify at civil fraud trial

NEW YORK: Former United States President Donald Trump has decided against testifying for a second time at his civil fraud trial in New York, saying he has "nothing more to say".

Trump, the frontrunner for the Republican nomination in the 2024 presidential election, said that he saw no need to testify as he had done so "very successfully & conclusively" last month. "I have already testified to everything & have nothing more to say," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform. Trump had been expected to take the witness stand on Monday in the case involving allegations that the former president, his family members and employees inflated the value of real estate assets

by billions of dollars to receive more favourable bank loans and insurance terms.

Trump lawyer Christopher Kise said there was "really nothing more to say to a judge who has imposed an unconstitutional gag order and thus far appears to have ignored President Trump's testimony and that of everyone else involved in the complex financial transactions at issue in the case". New York Attorney General Letitia James, who filed the lawsuit, said her office had already proven Trump "committed years of financial fraud and unjustly enriched himself and his family."

"No matter how much he tries to distract from reality,

the facts don't lie." In a defiant and combative appearance on November 6, Trump clashed with prosecutors for more than three and a half hours as he defended his wealth and denied wrongdoing. Judge Arthur Engoron has already ruled that James's office has provided "conclusive evidence" that Trump overstated his net worth by between \$812m and \$2.2bn and ordered the liquidation of several companies managing the assets in question.

Engoron, whom Trump has branded "hostile" and a "political hack", in October slapped the former president with \$15,000 in fines for violating a partial gag order imposed over disparaging remarks he made about the judge's law clerk.

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World Human Rights Day-2023

THE Human Rights Day was observed by the global community, human rights organizations, governments, and civil society across the globe. World Human Rights Day aims to raise awareness and encourage action to uphold sane human rights values and commitments 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. The theme for this year's day is "Freedom, Equality, and Justice for All".

Historically, the global commitments and values regarding the collective cause of humanity and the universal well-being of mankind have largely met a selective, nonserious, showy attitude from nations across the globe. There are double standards and dual definitions of the same phenomenon relating to different communities and different parts of the world. Due to this selective approach, the freedom struggle to realize the globally recognized right to self-determination of Kashmiris and Palestinians is being termed and dealt with as terrorism while the government regulations in Hong Kong and Xinjiang are being viewed as a human rights issue and state oppression. At the same time, western scholars accuse the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) of gender discrimination and apartheid while Israel and India are given a clean chit for their war atrocities and racial/religious discrimination and genocide of Palestinians and Kashmiris respectively. Hence, biased definitions and selective approaches of the world nations have not only complicated global issues but seriously affected the victim communities over the past decades. Whilst, the international commemoration occasions just become ceremonial, worthless, and garish. Interestingly, no nation or community neither ready to acknowledge its moral and social imperfections, or administrative or regulatory flaws nor agree to resolve or mediate them. But, every community each year commemorate great legacies and admire noble cause without implementing them in their nations. Such biased conduct adds to the woes of marginalized communities at the global level rendering civic values irrelevant and trashy.

This International Human Rights Day comes at a crucial time when blatant aggression is currently underway in occupied Palestine, and the advocates of human rights and democracy stand exposed due to their unwavering support for the aggressor and undying opposition to the ceasefire. Currently, the Jewish state is committing genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinian people, while the global community is playing the role of a silent spectator amid the UN's importance and failure in holding Israel accountable for its war crimes against humanity and besiege of Gaza. Meanwhile, the Human Rights abuses in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), Myanmar, India, and other parts of the world equally merit the attention of the international community to hold those nations accountable for unleashing a reign of terror against their minorities and indigenous people in those territories. Similarly, western nations also need to address rising hate crimes and racism against immigrants along with taking stringent measures to curb repeating incidents of Islamophobia instead of accusing other countries of similar crimes.

The current year's Human Rights Day theme is Freedom, Equality, and Justice. There is a dire need to promote and raise awareness about human rights issues and to advocate for the rights and dignity of all individuals in this world. Whereas, nations around the globe must take decisive steps to provide an enabling environment and equal opportunities to all minority groups, so they enjoy equal citizenry rights and thrive like first-class citizens in their countries.

Time to control real estate mafia

THE real estate sector has shaped into an uncontrollable monster that ruthlessly spread its jaws over the cultivated land, barren hills and posh areas in the megacities, without complying with essential regulatory requirements and environmental and social codes in the country. The real estate mafia takes advantage of weak regulation and lax governmental control and blatantly plays with the public need to have a house. The housing societies' owners first trap the public by showing pleasant dreams and then exploit them by fleecing their hard-earned money. So far, almost every other individual invested his pension, commute or lifelong savings in pursuit of his desire to build his adobe, a majority of them had been entrapped in an unending wait for the completion of the project, handing over of plot/flat or paying out courts/prosecutors' fee to get their hard-earned money back from the fake developer and corrupt property dealers.

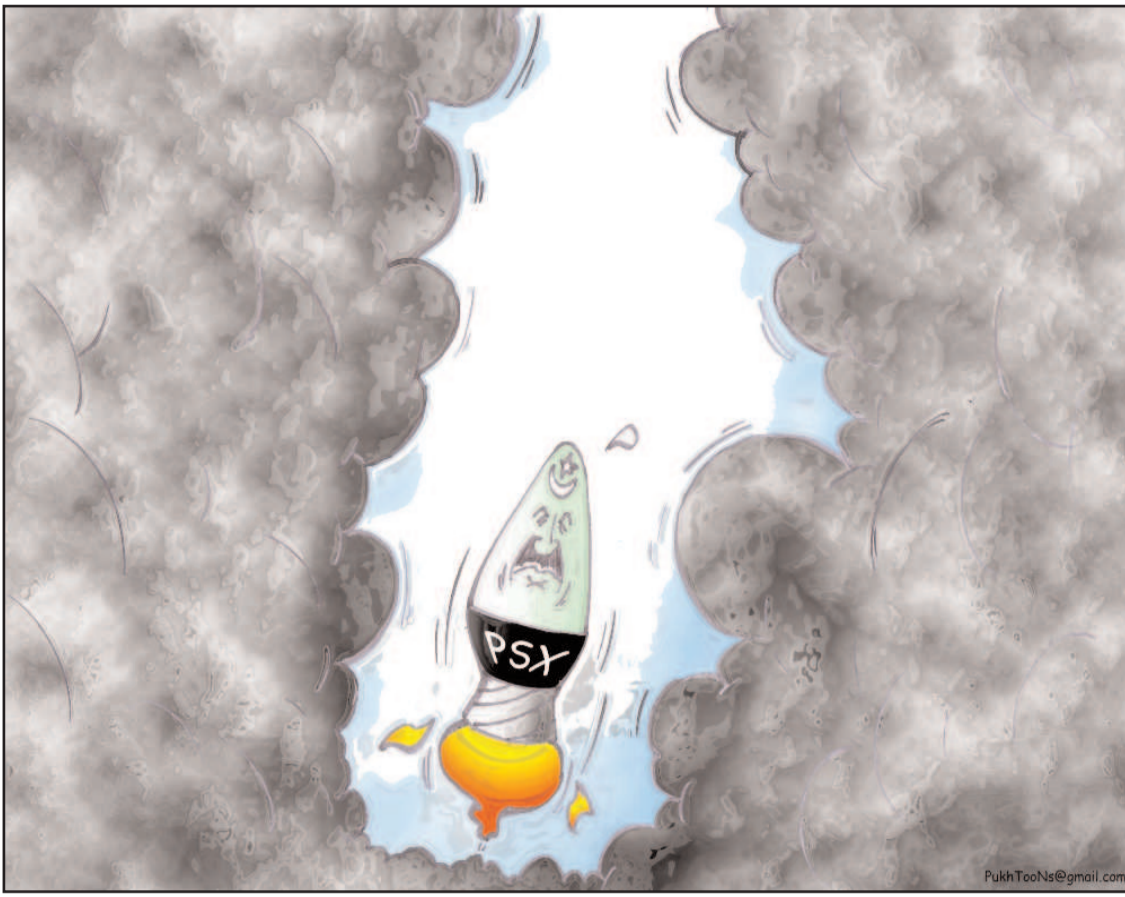
In the majority of the cases, the property tycoons launch their housing societies without getting NOC/approval from the concerned department and afterwards declared as illegal as happened in the case of Islamabad's Ghouri Town and hundreds of others, while in other cases, the owner had invested the collected money elsewhere delaying the development and possession of plots/flats as happened in the case of Bahria Town Saglain Mushtaq Heights. Meanwhile, several investors unjustly charge their clients repeatedly either in the name of development charges or bogus expenditures other than the specified plot price as recently surfaced in the case of Bahria Town Phase-8 Extension and Bahria Orchard, wherein society owners planned to grab millions of rupees from customers to fill their pickets and pay for their political adventure with the previous government.

Amid all those public agonies and malfunctioning of real estate mafia, the relevant government institutions such as RDA, CDA, LDA, PDA and others along with the judiciary and Police, the FIA, the anti-corruption department and NAB are just playing the role of spectators instead of taking stern measures against the culprits. Realistically, this cruel and hateful business has flourished over the past three decades and countless cases of fraud, fake housing societies and non-deliverance of projects occurred in the past but the government authorities did nothing to forestall such incidents except making money by issuing NOC and approval of fraught maps etc.

The situation is really worse and the government must lay out a transparent and time-bound procedure, fix land prices, and development charges, along with ensuring the provision of utilities, and essential recreational and social amenities for each society/project so that the real estate mafia neither dodges the public nor escapes the writ of the law.

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New approach needed on Libyan disarmament

Hafed Al-Ghwel

AS the UN approaches the end of another year of trying to resolve the problems in the complex political landscape of Libya, it is apparent that the road to stability does not, and never did, follow a straight path leading to national elections.

Rather, it has always been a complex, winding route through an intricate web spun by a confluence of domestic and foreign interests, energized by armed groups in the country. The persistent post-2011 governance vacuum has spawned a mosaic of hybrid actors, all jostling for power and influence while remaining deeply embedded within local communities, creating a rather unique dynamic.

These factions have progressively carved out their own fiefdoms, stifling the formation of the unified, civilian-led security institutions that are a critical component for long-term stability and effective governance. Their representatives are scattered throughout Libya's military, security apparatus and civilian government. Simultaneously wielding considerable power over critical appointments and the allocation of state resources, these groups are easily capable of placing private gain above the national interest. Such a potent blend has left an indelible mark on the sociopolitical fabric and security landscape of the country, with the principal casualty being the prospect of holding national elections by the end of this year. It is highly unlikely that Libya's apparent "Balkanization" will be resolved in the next few weeks and all the promises and endeavors in the world do not change the fact that the political impasse endures. A faux calm might have descended over the nation but this year, like the previous 11, has been one of multiple failed transitions that have taken their toll on Libyans.

Instead, there continues to be an entwining of internal divisions and external meddling that complicates any efforts to establish a unified, secure and stable Libyan state. Naturally, the local actors working to achieve such aspirations

are now cynical patrons, drifting from one so-called peace plan to the next, while watching the international community chide the exclusive, self-appointed elites who have no intention of making good on the delivery of local security and better governance. Curiously, though, with elections unlikely to materialize, the focus now appears to be shifting back toward the previously abandoned process of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration, as part of broader security sector reform. However, a monolithic demobilization, disarmament and reintegration approach could do more harm than good in a nation where political power is not only divided but also deeply stratified.

But a tailored, context-specific form of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration that offers flexibility and local adaptability might well prove to be an innovative, perhaps even revolutionary, approach to achieving a sustainable peace in Libya and even beyond. The unique nature of the armed groups in the country, specifically their deep integration with local communities, necessitates the adoption of such specially tailored approaches that take into account local security dynamics. Armed groups in Misrata, Zawia and Zintan, for example, offer a clear example of this complexity. Their evolution and influence are intertwined with community engagement and any attempts to dismantle said groups must recognize and work with these ties.

For any demobilization, disarmament and reintegration efforts to succeed, government actors and citizens must be empowered to shape a strategic, inclusive and sustainable action plan. This requires support for efforts to develop the necessary resources, skills and mechanisms needed to spearhead such a comprehensive initiative. The UN will be key to ensuring that such a shift in focus can succeed, but the fundamental approach to demobilization, disarmament and reintegration and reform of the security sector needs to be recalibrated, from a generic strategy

to one that is more flexible and adaptable to the demands of particular local contexts.

This is not just a matter of expediency. It is also about laying the groundwork for a sustainable peace that can be replicated and expanded, not only within Libya's borders but potentially in other conflict-ridden states. However, there is a material disconnect between the renewed interest in seeking unification of the military forces in the country as part of broader security sector reforms and the realities on the ground, which create unique challenges.

Given the politicization of armed units and the unrealistic expectation that state control might be established over private armies, the mere act of uniting them under a single command structure will not be effective. On the contrary, resolve is likely to increase among key actors to maintain their firepower so that they can secure and potentially expand their political influence, even as relationships with rivals become less hostile and more pragmatic. Recognition of these complexities at a national level, and the influence of local communities on armed groups, mean that building effective demobilization, disarmament and reintegration strategies should emphasize local implementation efforts, in which crucial elements such as peacebuilding, governance and dialogue are integrated.

As most armed actors operate within their own communities, the trust of the local population must be gained and increased to persuade those communities and other stakeholders to be more receptive to new demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programs.

In addition, addressing the proliferation of hybrid and nonstate armed groups in Libya requires the creation of spaces for local governance, while overcoming the capacity and knowledge shortfalls that are inhibiting the state's ability to respond to local needs and priorities. Key areas of focus must include the establishment of robust

administrative structures, the delivery of services and revenue generation.

Moreover, increased coordination between national, subnational and local governments will be a crucial factor in reaching remote areas and solidifying the state presence there. If the focus of UN engagement shifts, rightly, to demobilization, disarmament and reintegration, it should also prioritize the fostering of civic engagement and promote a culture of political participation. After all, dialogue among citizens serves as a powerful tool for building trust.

Locally led negotiations with armed groups have demonstrated their potential to positively influence their behavior, reduce the incentives for violence, encourage moderation and lay the groundwork for defection and disengagement. By embracing a strategy of localization within the implementation of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration and security sector reform in Libya, the UN could navigate the complex balance of power while building sustainable peace and stability, in pursuit of the even grander ambition of eventually holding free and fair national elections.

It might be premature to try to predict what the UN will do next, having missed the self-imposed goal of elections by the end of this year. However, even absent a political resolution to end Libya's woes, an opportunity remains to reenergize demobilization, disarmament and reintegration efforts that acknowledge the complexities of local security dynamics and weave them into a credible, participative action plan. Previous efforts fell short as a result of fragmented approaches, political malaise, conflict and a lack of inclusive platforms for diverse Libyan interest groups.

If there is to be lasting stability and any tangible hope of staging national elections at some point, Libya will require effective governance institutions. Security sector reform and demobilization, disarmament and reintegration will be indispensable factors in making that happen.

Georgia's EU candidate status will test its relations with Russia

Emil Avdaliani

THE European Union recommended on November 8 that Georgia be granted its long-awaited candidate status, an essential step to future membership of the bloc. The recommendation is, however, contingent on Tbilisi meeting nine conditions: a reminder that Georgia still has a long way to go before accession talks can begin. For now, the main sticking point is that carrying out the reforms the EU wants may damage the country's ruling party, Georgian Dream.

Candidate status is not a panacea, nor is it an iron-clad guarantee that a country will become an EU member state. Still, the announcement will likely calm political tensions in Georgia, and soothe the relations between Tbilisi and Brussels that have been marred by disagreements on how the country is progressing toward meeting EU recommendations. Georgian political life has become increasingly polarized in the last year. The opposition lacks financial resources, a viable political agenda, and charismatic leaders. The ruling party is more popular, but it too is facing significant challenges, including growing political apathy.

Candidate status will not solve these problems, which will persist in the run-up to the 2024 parliamentary elections. While Georgian Dream is likely to do well in the vote, it will be a challenge to balance Brussels' expectations and Georgians' desire for democratic and economic progress against the party's own political ambitions. Georgian Dream will, however, benefit from the fact that real progress on Georgia's path to the EU was achieved on its watch. One pressing issue will be addressing problems in Georgia's judiciary, which has been notoriously susceptible to political influence since the country regained independence in the early 1990s. Cleaning up the legal system is one of the EU's conditions for Georgia, and it will be extremely difficult for the ruling party to deliver. Government critics argue that an impartial judiciary would undermine Georgian Dream's ability to dominate political life.

Equally important is the requirement for Georgia to align its foreign and security policies with the EU. It's true that Tbilisi has long pursued a pro-Western foreign policy, and awarding candidate status goes some way to refuting allegations often heard in the West that the Georgian government is pro-Russian. At the same time, Tbilisi has explored a multi-vector foreign policy over the last year, building closer economic ties with the EU's systemic rivals. Expecting Tbilisi to abandon its close links with China, for example, would be futile. A major test will be to see whether the tender to construct a deep seaport at Anaklia—a critical infrastructure project for Georgia as it seeks to become a Eurasian transit hub—is awarded to a Western or Chinese company. But it is relations with Russia that will likely pose the greatest challenge to Georgia's EU aspirations. Tbilisi has trodden a difficult path since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, navigating between its support for Kyiv and a revanchist, aggressive Moscow. This has not always been successful, and there has been some tension with Western partners. After all, Georgia's economic ties

with Russia have strengthened, despite the war in Ukraine, the longstanding Russian occupation of 20 percent of Georgian territory, Moscow's apparent decision to open a naval base in some of that territory—Abkhazia—and the recent abduction and killing of Georgian nationals (on November 6, for example, a Georgian national was murdered by Russian troops while trying to visit a church in occupied South Ossetia).

So far, it is not clear how the Georgian government will be able to balance EU integration against relations with Russia. Moscow might downplay the significance of EU enlargement near its borders by outwardly focusing its ire on NATO expansion, but that is only half the story. Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014 because Kyiv was reorientating toward the EU. In other words, EU expansion is of no less concern for Moscow than NATO enlargement.

Notably, Georgia appeared alongside Ukraine in the infamous ultimatum that Moscow handed to the West in the months before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Among other demands, the Kremlin wanted Georgia to reverse its pro-Western trajectory. On paper, Russia could seek a military solution in Georgia. But Russia is already bogged down in Ukraine and suffering from Western sanctions. Opening a second front in the South Caucasus would only lead to further isolation, and perhaps reduce the chances of success in Ukraine.

A more realistic strategy would be for Moscow to pressure Tbilisi via sanctions that could hurt the Georgian economy. But even that would not be enough to force Tbilisi into a foreign policy U-turn. While Russia's share of Georgia's trade rose to 12.4 percent in the first six months of 2023—the highest figure for sixteen years—it remains relatively modest. In comparison, the EU is Georgia's main economic partner, accounting for 20.5 percent of overall trade. Whatever path Russia chooses, the announcement of EU candidate status for Georgia has broader implications for Europe and Russia in the South Caucasus. Going forward, the EU looks set to increase its engagement with the South Caucasus, an area of increasing geopolitical importance when it comes to energy diversification (as evidenced by the expanded gas deal signed with Azerbaijan in 2022); trans-Eurasian trade routes such as the expanding "Middle Corridor"; and broader Black Sea security. Georgia could even end up serving as an example for neighboring countries, especially Armenia, which is increasingly frustrated by Russia's unwillingness to honor its security commitments.

EU expansion in the South Caucasus fits into a broader trend of what could be termed Russia's managed decline in the region. Signs of Moscow's dwindling prestige were on show well before 2022, but the war in Ukraine has accelerated this process. Events leading up to Azerbaijan's seizure of the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region this year were a particularly vivid illustration of the shift in Russia's position. In the congested geopolitical space of the South Caucasus, Moscow is increasingly only one of several major powers vying for influence.

The Moscow Times

This is our final chance to deliver the Rwanda Bill voters want

Neil O'Brien

WE were elected in 2010 promising to reduce immigration to the tens of thousands. Under the coalition government we tightened immigration rules. Because of abuses of human rights law, in 2010 and 2015, our manifesto promised we would "scrap the Human Rights Act" to "break the formal link between British courts and the European Court of Human Rights".

I was proud to work for Lord Cameron when he was prime minister and delighted to have such a great talent back as Foreign Secretary. We must remember those promises we made during the Cameron years as we think about how to handle the migration crisis. Over 110,000 people have arrived illegally in the UK via small boats. This is destructive to the rule of law, lucrative for criminals, and risks lives. It's

unfair to those who play by the rules. Most arriving are young men, coming from France, a safe country. Despite arriving illegally, almost all will stay in the UK. They know that if you can make it to the UK, you can stay. As long as this is the case, this criminal trade will continue, and people get to stay for two reasons. First, almost all claim asylum. The final grant rate has risen to nearly 80 per cent, as courts have expanded the rights set out in the Refugee Convention.

The Convention originally applied narrowly: only in Europe, only to cases before 1951. Today, courts consider an expansive range of social rights and risks from non-state groups. This makes the job of an immigration officer near-impossible. Eritrea has had an asylum grant rate of over 90 per cent in recent years. An Eritrean man who leaves without an exit visa may have to

do military service on return. Should that mean we cannot turn down applications? Iran is oppressive, and around 80 per cent of claims are granted. But should anyone who claims they are a Christian or homosexual from Iran be allowed to stay? Should Albanians who say they're at risk from a blood feud back home always get to stay? On today's interpretations, the Refugee Convention confers a right to move to another country upon 780 million people worldwide. The second reason is that those refused asylum aren't removed. The Oxford Migration Observatory estimated that nine in every 10 people who were refused asylum in 2020 were allowed to remain. Removal rates are a third of the rate we saw in the Noughties. The Home Office admits it doesn't know the where-

abouts of more than 17,000 asylum seekers whose claims ended. The number of foreign national offenders subject to deportation living in the community has trebled since 2012, to nearly 12,000. One in eight prison places is taken up by foreign nationals.

A recent government consultation listed the absurd ways that the European Convention on Human Rights is used to block deportations. A violent Nigerian crack cocaine dealer can't be deported because he would face "obstacles" to "integrating back in Nigeria". A Turkish man found guilty of grievous bodily harm can't be removed, because of his marriage. Another violent drug dealer can't be removed "given their relationship with their child". This isn't what Winston Churchill intended when

he set up the Council of Europe. We're not alone. Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria are all looking to do things differently. Two camps are being built in Albania to house migrants who have been rescued by Italian boats.

Nor is this idea new. Tony Blair tried to agree with EU members to have asylum processing in third countries. I will vote for the second reading of the Rwanda Bill on Tuesday. But I'm very concerned by Robert Jenrick's assessment that the Bill will enable so many individual appeals that it won't work as a deterrent. After two pieces of legislation in two years, this is our third and final go: we can't pass something that has any holes in it. The Supreme Court's verdict will likely embolden courts to be even more creative in refusing deportations than before. I hope the Government will find

ways to strengthen the Bill by amendment during passage. If the House of Lords try to block it, we must do whatever it takes to pass it, and keep faith with voters. I hope the Government will also look again at every other way we could deter people smugglers, so that Rwanda isn't our only solution. We should also look at other locations, other changes to rules and the strategic use of more detention, so people can't come and work illegally.

Issues about the cost of living and NHS are at least as important as the small boats, but this is very important, and represents an issue that normal voters care deeply about. It isn't a Westminster soap opera. It's an issue of fairness. We cannot have criminals bringing people to this country illegally and then allow those people to stay. Today's thicket of legal case law was never intended, and we must cut it back.

The Telegraph

Criticized over blogger arrests, Uzbekistan denies it's a free speech issue

IN 2017, when Uzbekistan's newly installed President Shavkat Mirziyoyev promised systemic reforms, his dialogue with citizens helped usher into prominence a new segment of the country's internet-savvy youth: bloggers. Part political and social critics, part influencers, they made a name airing oft-repressed grievances, and serving as a bridge between the people and the government.

Among them, Ferghana-based Olimjon Haydarov. Enticed by Mirziyoyev's democratic pledge, Haydarov returned from migrant work in South Korea six years ago. He wasted no time launching social media channels covering topics from politics to agriculture. But earlier this month the 34-year-old was convicted of extortion and defamation and sentenced to eight years in prison.

Haydarov's case is seen as a blow to the Uzbek media community, which has watched at least five members convicted this year. "We couldn't do anything," says Sharifa Murod, an independent reporter, reacting to Haydarov's verdict. "Public opinion did not matter." While debates rage about the allegations in each case, many Uzbek journalists and bloggers worry that the modest freedom Mirziyoyev seemed to offer is rapidly vanishing.

The Tashkent-based Ezgulik Human Rights Society reports more than 20 criminal cases concerning bloggers this year alone. Outspoken voices have no protection in Uzbekistan, wrote Samarkand-based reporter Shuhrat Shokirjonov on Facebook. Urging colleagues to not feel protected by the strength of their online popularity, he added, "The best ones are locked up. The rest keep mouths shut." In Haydarov's case, Ferghana police say they arrested the blogger while he was taking a bribe of \$2,500 in exchange for a critical article he had threatened to post about a local bazaar.

Authorities claimed that by the time of his arrest on June 29, 2023, Haydarov had extorted \$7,500 for

withholding coverage. Officials pointed to video and audio recordings of his conversations about the suspected scheme, which the defense portrayed as orchestrated and fabricated. Throughout Haydarov's trial, which played out over 10 hearings, the blogger protested his innocence. Other bloggers believe Haydarov's sharp social commentary made him a target. "This was a baseless trial, just to spread fear, so we all go silent,"

Supreme Court told VOA. Haydarov's trial was open to the public.

But when blogger Abduqodir Muminov was convicted of extortion and defamation over the summer, it was in a mostly closed process. He is now serving a seven-year prison term. In the fall, journalist-blogger Khurshid Daliyev and former government press service heads Mavjuda Mirzayeva and Siyovush

But like other bloggers, he entered into private arrangements with businesses to promote them. Such paid publicity in Uzbekistan often leads to conflicts of interest and in some cases to extortion and bribery accusations, despite bloggers' contention that the earnings come from honest work. In contrast to earlier prosecutions of media figures, Haydarov's trial was more accessible.

Farukh Samarkandi told VOA.

Another blogger, Khudoyberdi Zominiy, closely followed Haydarov's deliberations. "The whole thing seemed like retaliation for the intricate issues he had been raising," Zominiy told VOA. Haydarov often shed light on Uzbekistan's persistent energy shortages, the poor state of its healthcare system, and rights abuses. But like other bloggers, he entered into private arrangements with businesses to promote them. Such paid publicity in Uzbekistan often leads to conflicts of interest and in some cases to extortion and bribery accusations, despite bloggers' contention that the earnings come from honest work.

In contrast to earlier prosecutions of media figures, Haydarov's trial was more accessible. A spokesperson for Uzbekistan's

Hoshimov were found guilty of similar charges. Daliyev and Hoshimov each were sentenced to seven years, while Mirzayeva went home with a suspended sentence due to illness.

Veteran journalist Sharof Ubaydullayev, who also served in the government, defends bloggers as "the real voices of the people and reliable grassroots sources." "There is no law requiring bloggers to work for free," Ubaydullayev told VOA. In his view, President Mirziyoyev relies on bloggers to support his good governance agenda. However, Ubaydullayev worries that the nature of their activism makes them vulnerable. "Bloggers know the truth of our society and enlighten the masses. We call them bloggers now, but this segment has always made up the core of our media," Ubaydullayev said.

Like many Uzbek bloggers, Zominiy does not apologize for taking on other jobs, such as advocating for a youth organization, or advertising products in his posts. "We have families to feed and bills to pay," he told VOA. "And we continue to blog despite warnings from our managers at work." Still, Zominiy remains optimistic, saying "Today's conditions are better. Now we're able to push the authorities to be accountable and press for the rule of law." Uzbekistan's media regulator, the Agency of Information and Mass Communications (AIMC) told VOA in a written response that the government is "steadfast" in its support for the rule of law.

Stressing a commitment to media freedom, the regulator denied that actions against bloggers relate to the freedom of expression. "These cases are totally about verified criminal acts," such as blackmail and extortion, according to the agency. "Blogger or journalist, no one is above the law," said the statement. "We reiterate that no journalist or blogger should ever be locked up for free speech and expression." The agency pointed to 8,844 cases of fraud across Uzbekistan this year, charging judges, law enforcement officers, mayors, educators, and others. Referring to the prosecutions this year of bloggers, it said those cases were based on credible evidence.

When asked whether the legal action casts doubt on Uzbekistan's claims of reform, AIMC brushed off concerns raised by the human rights groups, pointing to a rise in the number of media outlets, journalists, and bloggers in the country. "More people in the sector means more problems," it said but added that the current media environment is vibrant and advancing. Ubaydullayev, a retired reporter and editor, hopes that Uzbekistan's media community will begin to adopt international standards and best practices. "They need support," he said. "Instead of imprisoning them, train these people. Turn them into professionals."

VOA

Fact or fiction: Is Israel really rounding up ' Hamas fighters'?

OVER the past few days, photos and videos of Palestinian men and boys stripped, lined up and taken away in trucks by the Israeli army have been circulating on social media. Israel has claimed that these are suspected Hamas fighters that it has rounded up in northern Gaza. It has even published photos and a video of a Palestinian man in his underwear walking past a row of stripped men and boys holding their ID cards, and laying a gun by the side of the road as "evidence" that these are indeed "militants".

But a closer look at this video reveals that it was staged. It makes no sense that the Israeli soldiers, upon discovering an armed fighter, would wait to strip and line up everyone, prepare to take a video and then order that person to surrender his weapon through a loudspeaker, calling him "habibi" (my dear in Arabic). Media reports later revealed that the Israeli army had forcibly taken the Palestinian men and boys after separating them from their families in United Nations-run schools which serve as shelters for the displaced in northern Gaza. Some of the men have been identified as UN workers, aid workers and at least one journalist. The man who was made to hold the gun is believed to be a shopkeeper.

While the video stunt with the gun may be another desperate attempt by the Israeli army to cover up its crimes before Western audiences, the release of the images and footage showing the humiliation of Palestinian men and boys serves another purpose. It aims to demoralise Palestinians while boosting the morale of the Israeli public. It is a clear reflection of the ideology of occupation, where Palestinians are seen as a people to be subdued and dominated, if not mercilessly killed.

The release of these images and footage comes amid a growing number of reports that the Israeli army is systematically separating Palestinian boys and men from their families in areas they control in Gaza and dragging them away to unknown locations. Those who have been released have described torture and beatings at the hands of Israeli soldiers. The fate of many remains unknown, but given the deaths of at least six Palestinian prisoners and reports of widespread torture and other ill-treatment, there is a high chance they will face abuse as well.

The videos and images circulating on social media have helped journalists and activists identify some of the detained, disproving Israeli claims that these are Hamas fighters. Hani Almadhoun, an employee at a US-based charity that

Marc Owen Jones

fundraises for UNRWA, has said he saw his brother Mahmoud, a shopkeeper, among the detained as well as his 27-year-old nephew Abood. He told the Guardian that his father and 13-year-old nephew Omar were also detained.

Diaa al-Kahlout, a correspondent for Al-Araby Al-Jadeed (The New Arab) who was also taken away along with his brothers, was recognised by colleagues in one of the videos. The outlet reported that Israeli soldiers detained them in their

Palestinian men and boys has been seen across the world. Digital technology has helped these acts of humiliation go viral.

Other videos that have gone viral since October 7 as well show Israeli soldiers defecating in the Palestinian homes they have invaded, smashing up toys in a Palestinian shop and laughing, and abusing Palestinian detainees. Publicising the abuse of Palestinian men and boys amplifies their humiliation. The act of arrest is distinct from the publication of images showing degrading treatment. By broadcasting

While the daily humiliation of Palestinians has perhaps remained unnoticed by the rest of the world, the degrading treatment of rounded-up Palestinian men and boys has been seen across the world. Digital technology has helped these acts of humiliation go viral. Other videos that have gone viral since October 7 as well show Israeli soldiers defecating in the Palestinian homes they have invaded, smashing up toys in a Palestinian shop and laughing, and abusing Palestinian detainees.

homes and expelled their wives and children before setting the homes on fire. The act of publishing these humiliating images is a violation of the Geneva Convention, which prohibits "cruel treatment and torture" and "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment". The images and videos have caused global outrage and comparisons of Israeli actions to the US "rendition" programme and torture at black sites, Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and Guantanamo detention centre, as well as to the genocidal practices of Serb militias in the Bosnian war.

Even Israeli insiders have balked at this behaviour. Retired Israeli Brigadier-General Shlomo Brom told NPR that the images shouldn't have been published on account that they were humiliating. So if these images and footage reveal yet another crime the Israeli army is committing in Gaza, why did it release them?

According to Brom, this was aimed at boosting morale in Israel and waging a "psychological war against Hamas". This systematic humiliation is not new in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As Palestinian scholar Ramzy Baroud has argued, "humiliating Palestinians is actual Israeli policy". Haaretz correspondent Amira Hass has described the humiliation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails as a "routine tactic". While the daily humiliation of Palestinians has perhaps remained unnoticed by the rest of the world, the degrading treatment of rounded-up

these images, the humiliation is not confined to the moment or to the individuals directly involved. Instead, it becomes a public display, viewed by potentially millions of people. American scholar Susan Sontag's insight into the role of photography in objectifying human suffering is particularly relevant here. She notes, "Photographs objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed."

In the context of these events, the photographs serve to objectify the victims, reducing them to mere images that can be shared and viewed detached from their humanity. This objectification strips the victims of their individuality and dignity, reducing them to symbols of humiliation. It also serves as an attempt to further dehumanise and "other" Palestinians in front of the Israeli public and the rest of the world. It is part and parcel of the global Israeli campaign to present the Palestinian people as "subhuman" and justify their mass killing. The publication of these photos and videos is not just a documentation of an act of humiliation; it is an act of humiliation in itself. It magnifies the impact of the initial abuse, transforming a moment of suffering into a public spectacle of degradation, thereby deepening the psychological and emotional wounds inflicted on the victims and their community. In the end, this is not about humiliating Hamas, but about humiliating all Palestinians and dehumanising them in front of the largest audience possible.

An American license to kill

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

Faisal J. Abbas

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!

Arab News

Why university presidents are under fire

WHEN one thinks of America's greatest strengths, the kind of assets the world looks at with admiration and envy, America's elite universities would have long been at the top of that list. But the American public has been losing faith in these universities - and with good reason. Three university presidents came under fire this week for their vague and indecisive answers when asked whether calling for the genocide of Jews would violate their institution's code of conduct. But to understand their performance we have to understand the shift that has taken place at elite universities, which have gone from centers of excellence to institutions pushing political agendas.

People sense the transformation. As Paul Tough has pointed out, the share of young adults who said a college degree was very important fell from 74% in 2013 to 41% in 2019. In 2018, 61% of Americans said higher education was headed in the wrong direction, and only 38% felt it was on the right track. In 2016, 70% of America's high school graduates were headed for college. Now that number is 62%. This souring on higher education makes America an outlier among all advanced nations. American universities have been neglecting excellence in order to pursue a variety of agendas - many of them clustered around diversity and inclusion. It started with the best of intentions. Colleges wanted to

make sure young people of all backgrounds had access to higher education and felt comfortable on campus. But those good intentions have morphed into a dogmatic ideology and turned these universities into places where the pervasive goals are political and social engineering, not academic merit.

As the evidence produced for the recent Supreme Court case on affirmative action showed, universities have systematically downplayed the merit-based criteria for admissions in favor of racial quotas. Some universities' response to this ruling seems to be that they will go further down this path, eliminating the requirement for any standardized test like the SAT. That move would allow them to take students with little reference to objective criteria. (Those who will suffer most will be bright students from poor backgrounds, who normally use tests like the SAT to demonstrate their qualifications.) In the humanities, hiring for new academic positions now appears to center on the race and gender of the applicant, as well as the subject matter, which needs to be about marginalized groups. Based on conversations with dozens of academics, my impression is that today a White man studying the US presidency does not have a prayer of getting tenure at a major history department in America. Grade inflation in the humanities is rampant. At Yale College, the median

grade is now an A. New subjects crop up that are really political agendas, not academic fields. You can now major in diversity, equity and inclusion at some colleges.

The ever-growing bureaucracy devoted to diversity, equity and inclusion naturally recommends that more time and energy be spent on these issues. The most obvious lack of diversity at universities, political diversity, which clearly affects their ability to analyze many issues, is not addressed, showing that these goals are not centrally related to achieving, building or sustaining excellence. Out of this culture of diversity has grown the collection of ideas and practices that we have all now heard of - safe spaces, trigger warnings, and micro aggressions. As authors Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff have discussed, many of these colleges have instituted speech codes that make it a violation of university rules to say things that some groups might find offensive. Universities advise students not to speak, act, even dress in ways that might cause offense to minority groups.

With this culture of virtue signaling growing, the George Floyd protests erupted, and many universities latched on and issued statements, effectively aligning their institutions with these protests. By my memory, few took such steps even after 9/11 or during the Iraq War. In this context, it is under-

standable that Jewish groups would wonder, why do safe spaces, micro aggressions, and hate speech not apply to us? If universities can take positions against free speech to make some groups feel safe, why not us? Having coddled so many student groups for so long, university administrators found themselves squirming, unable to explain why certain groups (Jews, Asians) don't seem to count in these conversations.

Having gone so far down the ideological path, these universities and these presidents cannot make the case clearly that at the center of a university is the free expression of ideas and that while harassment and intimidation would not be tolerated, offensive speech would and should be protected. As CNN's Van Jones has eloquently said, the point of college is to keep you physically safe but intellectually unsafe, to force you to confront ideas that you disagree with passionately. What we saw in the House hearing this week was the inevitable result of decades of the politicization of universities.

America's top colleges are no longer seen as bastions of excellence but as partisan outfits, which means they will keep getting buffeted by these political storms as they emerge. They should abandon this long misadventure into politics, retrain their gaze on their core strengths and rebuild their reputations as centers of research and learning.

CNN

The China Daily

Fareed Zakaria



SCCI, CG agreed to improve economic ties

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Fuad Ishaq, President of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Shante Moore, US Consul General in Peshawar agreed on further improving Pak-US bilateral trade and economic relations, besides development of young entrepreneurs, enhancing their abilities and promotion of exports.

Fuad Ishaq invited US companies and investors to make investment in potential sectors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through joint ventures to further cement mutual trade ties between two friendly countries.

According to details, a

meeting was held between US Consul General in Peshawar Shante Moore and prominent members of the business community in residence of Ammad Rasheed, Honorary Consul General, Republic of Tunisia, Peshawar, Dean - Honorary Counselor Corps Peshawar KP chapter and former senior vice president of the SCCI said in a press release issued here on Monday.

Ayub Zakori, President of the Industrialists Association Peshawar, Nawabzada Fazal Karim Khan, Honorary Consul General of Japan in Peshawar, representatives and members of the busi-

ness community were present during the meeting.

Shante Moore on the occasion said they have committed to enhance bilateral US-Pak trade relations.

He said close liaison has been established with the business community to resolve issues with mutual consultation.

The US diplomat assured that further steps would be taken to improve the bilateral trade and economic ties between two friendly countries.

Fuad Ishaq in his remarks said prospects are brighter to further strengthen Pak-US bilateral trade and economic relations.

During the meeting, the

SCCI chief and US Consul General in Peshawar reviewed the enlargement of trade in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, development and progress of Chamber of Commerce and Industry, enhancement of locally manufactured products export.

The meeting also exchanged views regarding framing strategy for promotion of young entrepreneurs and provision of loans on low markup rate.

On the occasion, it was agreed that meetings between SCCI chief Fuad Ishaq and US Consul General in Peshawar and his teams would be held on the afore-stated theme.

PIDE MacroPoilcy Lab suggests reconsidering current stance of MP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Since June 26, 2023, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has chosen to keep the policy rate steady at 22%.

The last meeting of MPC's decision to keep the policy rate at 22% was influenced by the increase in headline inflation in September 2023, the volatility in global oil prices and the scheduled increase in gas tariffs starting November 2023.

A press release issued here on Monday stated that the MPC is scheduled to convene on December 12, 2023, to discuss and decide about the policy rate; whether the SBP should continue with the same policy rate or change it based on various economic indicators of Pakistan presented at the meeting.

Sector wise analysis and Progress: The indicators that play a crucial role in guiding the conduct of monetary policy span across different sectors, providing a comprehensive view of the economic landscape. In the real sector, the quarterly indicators serve as crucial benchmarks for assessing the performance of key sectors such as agriculture, industry, and services. For the first quarter of the current fiscal year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) revealed growth rates of 2.48%, 5.06%, and 0.82% for agriculture, industry, and services sectors, respectively. The overall first-quarter growth on a year-on-year basis is reported at 2.13%, signaling a positive trend for the economy.

External Sector Progress: While examining the external sector, MPC focuses on the current

account balance, which encompasses both exports and remittances, as well as the stability of foreign exchange (FX) reserves. The MPC meeting held on October 30 highlighted a significant improvement in Pakistan's current account balance. The current account deficit (CAD) witnessed a 58% year-on-year reduction to \$947 million for the period Jul-Sep FY24 after which for the month of September it was almost zero (balanced Current A/c). However, the data from October 2023 reveals a further reduction in the current account deficit to just \$74 million, marking a noteworthy 91% decrease compared to the same month in the previous year. Nevertheless, it's important to note a 61% increase in the deficit compared to the preceding month, attributed to debt servicing payment. Although the reserves have

been building, by November 2023, the SBP reserves declined by \$217 million, reaching \$7.180 billion.

Money Supply Dynamics: Money and credit aspects are vital components, incorporating measurements such as M2 growth, interbank and open market exchange rates, currency in circulation, and the Net Foreign Assets (NFA) and Net Domestic Assets (NDA). Moving on to the money and credit situation in the economy, the average money growth in October and November stands at approximately 13.5%, surpassing the previous two-month average.

The exchange rate has experienced fluctuations, ranging from 280 to 285 in October and November, in contrast to the range of 290 to 300 observed in August and September for the interbank rates.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Two ships namely, Basrah and Chem-road Quest scheduled to load/offload Rice and Chemicals, berthed at Multi-Purpose Terminal and Engro Vopak Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile four more ships, Stamina SW, Gascem Warnow, DSI Drammen and El-Giznur CEBI scheduled to load/offload Rice, Cement, Chemicals and Coal also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port during last 24 hours.

A total of six ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a bulk cargo carrier 'Armonia GR' left the Port on today morning and another ship Egret Bulker is expected to sail on today afternoon. Cargo volume of 54,456 tonnes, comprising 30,940 tonnes imports cargo and 23,516 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,087 Containers (164 TEUs Imports and 923 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are nine ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two ships, New Asoura and DSI Drammen & another ship, Kyparrissia schedule to load/offload Cement, Coal and Containers are expected to take berths at Multi-Purpose Terminal, Bulk Terminal and Container Terminal respectively on today, while another containers ship 'MSC Jemima' is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Tuesday.

Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggarr. Case No. 272/1. Institution 14/9/2022 date of hearing 5/1/2024. Azhar Shah etc Vs. Mst Jihan etc. Notice to No 3 Amar Ali Shah son. 4. Msts Parmen. 5. Warha daughters of Mian Madar Shah (late) residents of Charh Tehsil Daggarr Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the Court at 9 a.m dated 5/1/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Wheat sowing completed 92% areas: Commissioner

ISLAMABAD (APP): The wheat crop has been sown across more than 20.62 million acres of land in various crop-growing regions during the current Rabi season in order to meet staple food requirements as well as to maintain strategic reserves throughout the year.

The crop sowing targets for the current season (2023-24) were fixed at 22.23 million acres as the cultivation targets achieved by 92.77 per cent, said Food Security Commissioner Imtiaz Ali Gopang.

Talking to APP here on Monday, he said that the crop sowing was in full swing across the wheat-producing areas in the country as Punjab Province has surpassed its wheat sowing targets and completed cultivation of over 101 per cent areas against the set targets.

The Punjab, which is the largest wheat-producing province of the country has completed crop sowing

over 16.16 million acres as compared to the fixed targets of 16.00 million acres during the current season, he said adding that more areas to come under crop cultivation during the days to come.

Meanwhile, Sindh Province has achieved 87.54 per cent of its targets as wheat cultivation in different divisions of the province was completed over 2.60 million acres as against the set targets of 2.97 million acres, he added.

So far the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has achieved wheat sowing over 96.87 per cent of its set targets and crop cultivation was completed over 1.86 million acres as compared to the set targets of 1.93 million acres during the current sowing season, he added.

He informed the wheat cultivation data from the Balochistan Province was still awaited, adding that the province was assigned a task to grow wheat over

1.33 million acres during the current season.

The Food Security Commissioner further informed that approximately 729,000 metric tons of high-quality certified wheat seeds would be available to the local farming communities during the current season which comprises over 46 per cent of the total local demand.

In addition to seeds, the government was implementing various strategies to guarantee an ample supply of essential agricultural inputs, such as fertilizers, pesticides and access to finance to achieve the fixed targets of the season, he remarked.

To ensure the smooth supply of fertilizers at affordable prices across the country, the government has launched an anti-hoarding campaign, besides taking stern measures to curb the smuggling of commodities including wheat, sugar and fertilizers, he added.

Asian markets mixed ahead of US inflation data

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets diverged Monday as investors awaited key US data and a Federal Reserve policy decision after labour figures last week suggested the US central bank was on course to deliver a soft landing for the economy while reining in inflation.

A forecast-beating read on jobs on Friday -- and a pick-up in consumer sentiment -- tempered expectations for interest rate cuts in the new year but were not enough to jolt confidence that decision-makers have finished with their tightening cycle.

Readings on consumer prices and retail sales are due this week, as is the Fed's meeting and boss Jerome Powell's statement, which will be parsed for indications of officials' plans.

Investors will also be keeping an eye on decisions by the European Central Bank and Bank of England this week.

"The run of data that preceded Friday's non-farm payrolls data has mostly been softer, and equity mar-

kets appeared willing to overlook NFP as an outlier," said IG Australia's Tony Sycamore.

"However, the equity market is unlikely to be so forgiving if it gets another fright this week from either CPI, the (policy) meeting, or retail sales," he said, referring to the consumer price index. Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management said the Fed was walking a fine line.

"On the one hand, there's the concern that they might act too slowly to ease policy, leading to an economic downturn under the strain of higher interest rates, resulting in significant job losses for millions of people," he wrote.

"On the other hand, there's the fear of easing too early, which could result in inflation settling above three percent." He added: "Hopefully, by the week's end, investors will have some clarity on the Federal Reserve 2024 playbook."

All three main indexes on Wall Street rose Friday but Asian traders struggled to extend the rally, with sentiment jarred by figures

showing China slipped further into deflation last month as leaders struggle to kickstart the stuttering economy.

Consumer prices fell at their steepest pace in three years, data showed, fuelling fresh calls for the government to unveil more economic support measures.

"China's deflation situation is deepening with the triple whammy from domestic food prices, international oil price corrections and weak domestic demand," said economists at Citigroup. "There is no time for policy hesitation to prevent a vicious loop between deflation, confidence and activities."

Still, Shanghai chalked up gains, along with Tokyo, Sydney, Seoul, Taipei and Mumbai, but Hong Kong, Singapore, Wellington, Manila and Jakarta were in retreat. The dollar extended Friday's advance against the yen, having fallen sharply to a four-month low in the middle of last week on bets the Bank of Japan is about to shift away from its ultra-loose monetary policy.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce & Industry Fuad Ishaq and US Consul General in Peshawar Shante Moore in a group photo with officials.

Rupee sheds 02 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Monday weakened by 02 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs283.89 against the previous day's closing at Rs283.87.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs284 and Rs286.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 63 paise to close at Rs305.36 against the last day's closing of Rs305.99, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen went down by 03 paise and closed at Rs1.93; whereas a decrease of 84 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs355.83 compared to the last closing of Rs356.67.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paise each to close at 77.31 and Rs75.69 respectively.

TikTok announces \$1.5b deal

JAKARTA (AFP/APP): Chinese-owned short video app TikTok on Monday announced a \$1.5 billion investment in GoTo group in a deal that would allow it to restart its online shop in Indonesia, the companies said in a statement.

Under the deal, TikTok Shop will be merged into GoTo's Tokopedia, and TikTok will have a controlling stake in that entity.

"TikTok has committed to invest over US\$1.5 billion in the enlarged entity over time, to provide future funding required by the business, without additional dilution to GoTo," the Indonesian firm said.

"TikTok, Tokopedia and GoTo will transform Indonesia's e-commerce sector, creating millions of new job opportunities over the next five years."

"The strategic partnership will commence with a pilot period carried out in close consultation with and supervision by the relevant regulators," GoTo said, adding that it expected the deal to close in 2024.

TikTok in October shut down its online shop in Indonesia, one of its biggest markets.

That came days after Southeast Asia's largest economy banned sales on social media to protect millions of small businesses.

The regulation means social media firms cannot conduct direct transactions but only promote products on their platforms in Indonesia, the first country in the region to act against TikTok's growing popularity as an e-commerce site.

Indonesia's e-commerce market is dominated by platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee and Lazada but TikTok Shop gained a significant market share since launching in 2021.

Indonesia, with 125 million users, is TikTok's second-largest global market after the US. The Indonesian ban came after calls grew for regulation governing social media and e-commerce, with offline sellers seeing their livelihoods threatened by the sale of cheaper products on TikTok Shop and other platforms.

The regulation was yet another setback for TikTok, which has faced intense scrutiny in the United States and other nations in recent months over users' data security and the company's alleged ties to the Chinese government.

Stock Exchange loses 211 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 211.31 points, a negative change of 0.32 percent, closing at 66,012.33 points against 66,223.63 points the previous trading day.

A total of 1,215,932,469 shares valuing Rs.33.423 billion were traded during the day as compared to 1,329,550,091 shares valuing Rs.33.377 billion the last day.

Some 386 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 159 of them recorded gains and 224 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 03 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric

with 164,643,140 shares at Rs.4.49 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 93,320,115 shares at Rs.1.71 per share and Kohinoor Spinning with 65,314,000 shares at Rs.4.74 per share.

Mari Petroleum Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.101.41 per share price, closing at Rs2,168.82, whereas the runner-up was Sapphire Fibres Limited with a Rs 98.27 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,603.50.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 350.00 per share closing at Rs 8,550.00, followed by Rafhan Maize Products Limited with Rs.291.00 decline to close at Rs.10,999.00.

Gold rates decline by Rs.200 to Rs. 215,400 per tola: The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.200 and was sold at Rs.215,400 on Monday compared to its sale at Rs. 215,600 on last trading day.

Price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.171 to Rs.184,671 from Rs.184,842 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.169,282 from Rs.169,439, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained stagnant at Rs.2,600 and 2,229.08 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$6 to \$2,018 from \$2,024, the Association reported.

Ejaz holds meetings with Chinese businessman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Commerce Dr Gohar Ejaz, who is leading a 20-member delegation to China, on Monday held meetings with Chinese businessman and exporters to boost trade and remove trade imbalances.

The minister met Chairman of the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Textiles (CCCT) Zhang Xinmin, and President of the COFCO Group Luan Richeng - a key player in China's food processing sector, a Commerce

Ministry press release said.

"The meetings denote the pivotal part of Pakistan's strategy to augment non-textile exports, leveraging the strength of COFCO Group's position as China's largest food processor, manufacturer, and trader," it added.

The delegation already held series of Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings, providing a platform for Pakistani and Chinese businessmen to engage in discussions that would fortify trade relations between the

two nations, the press release said.

Gohar Ejaz, in the meetings, underscored the importance of private sector collaboration, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which could bring prosperity in Pakistan.

"This visit comes after the successful trip of Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar to China in October, highlighting the commitment to further enhance the economic ties between Pakistan and China," the press release said.

Pakistan takes strides to boost banana exports

F.P. Report

Almaty.

KARACHI: Pakistan, renowned as one of the largest banana producers globally, has embarked on an ambitious initiative to expand its export footprint to Central Asian countries. Despite being a key player in banana production, with an annual output of approximately 216 thousand tons, the current export value stands at around US\$22.57 million.

In an effort to unlock the full export potential and formalize trade channels, Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export Company (PHDEC) and the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), with steadfast support from the Pakistan Commercial Section in Almaty Kazakhstan, have successfully secured an export order for 10 containers of bananas from the TandoAllahyar cluster to

Almaty.

This significant development materialized during the TDAP FoodAG Exhibition held in Karachi on 10-12 August 2023. The first consignment, consisting of Banana G-09 variety, is scheduled to be dispatched today, 11 December, 2023, from Karachi to Almaty. The consignment will be transported in refer containers provided by the National Logistics Cell (NLC), ensuring the preservation of the fruit's freshness during transit.

Recognizing the need for sustained efforts to maximize the potential of banana exports, PHDEC and TDAP will be jointly organizing a workshop in Hyderabad early next week. The workshop aims to provide valuable insights into the Banana Export Potential with a particular focus on Central Asian markets. Trade missions from the Central Asian

Republics (CARs) region will participate virtually, shedding light on the opportunities and demand for Pakistani bananas in their respective markets.

This proactive initiative not only signifies a boost to Pakistan's agricultural export sector but also addresses the challenges faced in the export of bananas to Iran.

Despite being the 4th largest supplier of bananas to Iran, accounting for 43 thousand tons and valued at 27.17 million US dollars, the exports have been occurring through informal channels due to peculiar situation.

The successful execution of the export order to Almaty marks a crucial step towards formalizing and expanding Pakistan's Banana exports, fostering economic growth and creating new avenues for collaboration in the agribusiness sector.

The Japanese currency surged almost four percent to 141.71 per dollar at one point after Bank of Japan boss Kazuo Ueda hinted that officials could shift away from their long-running ultra-loose monetary policy.

Among major shares, Toyota rose 0.93 percent to 2,705.5 yen and Nintendo added 1.35 percent to 6,890 yen, while Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing edged up 0.85 percent to 35,450 yen. Semiconductor-related Tokyo Electron jumped 3.44 percent to 23,005 yen, Advantest gained 3.06 percent to 4,343 yen and Sony rose 1.92 percent to 13,015 yen.



In brief

Alcohol-free Pakistan Bay

ISLAMABAD (APP): Cricket Australia (CA) has taken a proactive step to create an inclusive and unique experience for Pakistani cricket fans during the upcoming first Test of the Benaud Qadir Trophy at Perth Stadium on December 14. The event has already garnered significant interest, with over 18,000 tickets sold for the highly anticipated match. In an effort to provide a dedicated space for Pakistan supporters, Perth Stadium has allocated two zones surrounding the Pakistan dressing room, officially named the "Pakistan Bay." This designated area will serve as a focal point for fans to come together and passionately rally behind their team. Notably, Pakistan Bay has been designated as an alcohol-free zone, emphasizing a family-friendly atmosphere, as quoted by cricketpakistan.com.pk. To enhance the communal spirit within Pakistan Bay, attendees can enjoy a variety of amenities, including tea, Halal, and Desi food options. Pakistan cricketers Hasan Ali and Saim Ayub have invited fans to participate in a walk organized by Cricket Australia on the first day of the match.

England include 3 uncapped players

LONDON (Agencies): Three uncapped players have been included in England's squad for the five-Test series against India, which begins in January. Surrey fast bowler Gus Atkinson and spinners Tom Hartley of Lancashire and Somerset's Shoaib Bashir were selected in the 16-player squad announced on Monday. Atkinson helped Surrey retain their County Championship title this year by claiming 20 wickets in five matches at an average of 20.20, and was part of England's squad at the recent ODI World Cup in India. Hartley and Bashir trained with the England Lions squad in the United Arab Emirates in November. Rehan Ahmed, the 19-year-old leg-spinner, returns to the squad after his five-wicket haul against Pakistan in December 2022, when he became England's youngest-ever Test debutant. Ben Stokes will captain the squad, having recently announced he will not be available for next year's Indian Premier League in order to manage his workload and fitness. The series begins in Hyderabad on Jan. 25. England squad: Ben Stokes (captain), Rehan Ahmed, James Anderson, Gus Atkinson, Jonny Bairstow (wicketkeeper), Shoaib Bashir, Harry Brook, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ben Foakes, Tom Hartley, Jack Leach, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Joe Root, Mark Wood. Test series: 1st Test: India v England, 25-29 January, Hyderabad 2nd Test: India v England, 2-6 February, Vizag 3rd Test: India v England, 15-19 February, Rajkot 4th Test: India v England, 23-27 February, Ranchi 5th Test: India v England, 7-11 March, Dharamsala.

Pakistan women look to continue winning ways

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nida Dar-led Pakistan women's cricket team will be eying to repeat the heroics of the T20I series, when they take on New Zealand women's team in the first of the three-match ODI series on Tuesday at the John Davies Oval in Queenstown. The second and third ODIs will be played on December 15 and 18, respectively in Christchurch. The first ODI will start at 11am local time, while the remaining two matches of the ODI series will begin at 1400 local time.

Asad Shafiq retires from all forms of cricket

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Asad Shafiq, the former Pakistan Test middle-order batter, has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket and is expected to take up a position as a national selector.

Shafiq, 37, was a core part of the Misbah-ul-Haq Test side in the 2010s, playing a vital role in their rise to the top of the Test rankings in August 2016. He announced his retirement on Sunday, after captaining the Karachi Whites side to the National T20 title, beating Abbotabad in the final in Karachi.

He has agreed to play three games for his department side SNGPL (Sui Northern Gas Pipelines) in the returning Patron's Trophy - the first-class tournament for department teams - because they will be missing several players away on Test duty. But effectively, the T20 final was his farewell.

Shafiq played the last of his 77 Tests for Pakistan in 2020, nearly 10 years after his debut. He had been a regular on the domestic circuit since, though he said after the final that he was no longer feeling as excited about the game as he used to.

"I'm no longer feeling that excitement and passion that I did when I



first started playing the game," he said. "I wanted to thank all those who have helped me through my career."

"After being dropped in 2020 I kept on playing domestic cricket for three years in the hope of getting another crack at the Pakistan team. But before the start of this season, I had decided this would be my last season because I felt that closing in on 38 years of age this was time to retire instead of people telling me to step down."

Alongside Misbah, Younis Khan and Azhar Ali, Shafiq formed a middle order that was the bedrock of much of

Pakistan's success, especially during their years of exile in the UAE. He ended his career with 4660 runs at an average of 38.19, though in his best phases it hovered near the mid-40s. That was a function partially of him playing the majority of his Tests at No. 6, as a bridge between the engine room and a perennially fragile lower order. Famously, he has the most Test hundreds from that position; he went past Sir Garry Sobers' record after one of his most memorable centuries, a 137 at the Gabbra that nearly took Pakistan home in a mammoth chase of 490.

That hundred came soon after his 109 at The Oval, in a win that not only levelled the series but also took Pakistan to the top of the Test rankings. Shafiq had made his international debut in England, in the immediate aftermath of the 2010 spot-fixing scandal, playing his first ODIs on that tour and his first Test in November that year, as Misbah took over as captain. "It was quite difficult after the 2010 incident and we had to win the trust of the public back," he said.

A future as a selector in Wahab Riaz's new-look committee now awaits, as Shafiq waits for his contract to be finalised.

Pakistan wins two bronze medals in World MMA C'ship 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Mixed Martial Arts (PMMA) athletes have secured two bronze medals in the World MMA Championship 2023 which concluded in Bangkok, Thailand on Sunday.

Pakistani athletes Asim Khan claimed and Shahzeb Khan claimed bronze medals in their respective categories. It is for the first time in history that Pakistan won two bronze medals in the World Championship in mixed martial arts sports. Athletes from around 38 countries participated in the championship.

President PMMA Federation Zulfiqar Ali in a statement on Monday congratulated the young athletes on winning medals for the country. He also wished them the best of luck for future events and expressed the hope that they would make the nation proud in future as well.

Teams fume as Big Bash match abandoned

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Cricket Australia will conduct a "thorough review" into Sunday's abandoned Big Bash League (BBL) match in Geelong after the Melbourne Renegades-Perth Scorchers clash was called off with 6.5 overs bowled due to safety concerns about the pitch.

Heavy rain at the weekend had seeped under protective covers and left a wet patch at one end of the Kardinia Park wicket but officials cleared the match to go ahead after ground staff scrambled to rectify the situation. Umpires then suspended play in the seventh over with Perth 30 for two after Josh Inglis was subjected to a torrid, three-ball sequence from pacerman Will Sutherland.

Inglis was struck in the groin, played an inside edge and then missed a delivery that ballooned off the pitch and left wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock bemused. Boos rang out from the crowd of 6,601 when play was abandoned some 15 minutes later, the first time a match was called off due to an unsafe pitch in the BBL's 12-year history.

"CA will conduct a thorough review into the extremely frustrating circumstances that have resulted in the game being abandoned and a huge disappointment for fans and players," the governing body said in a statement. The teams will share the points if the match cannot be rescheduled, CA added.

Scorchers head coach Adam Voges said he had concerns about the wicket before the first ball. "They (the batters) still copped a few in the stomach but yeah, just thankful that no one's been seriously injured out of this," he said. "It's disappointing for all the people who have come out to watch tonight, but ultimately, I think they made the right call. "We came to win a game tonight and to split the points through no wrongdoing of our own is frustrating."

Pakistan not here to compete but beat Australia: Hafeez

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan men's cricket Team Director Mohammad Hafeez said on Monday the visitors had arrived in Australia not to compete but beat the home side, as the green shirts brace for a tough challenge against the World Test champions when their three-match Test series kicks off this week.

Pakistan face Australia in the first Test match at Perth on Dec. 14. The visitors have traditionally found playing in Australia harder than other venues around the world, having lost their last 14 Tests in the country, spanning five whitewashes.

Australia's pace battery, in the form of skipper Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Scott Boland and Mitchell Starc is one of the most feared in the world. Pakistani batters have fared poorly in the Test format, with its batters traditionally finding it difficult to bat on the bouncy Australia surfaces.

"Everyone is excited to take the challenge, performing in Australia would be great for them," Hafeez told reporters at the WACA ground. "As a Pakistan team, we are here to beat Australia,



not to compete here."

The former Pakistani cricketer said Shan Masood's side had done well in the training session.

"We have ticked most of the boxes in our training," he said. "Everyone on the team is excited to showcase their ability and eager to win. Unfortunately, Abrar Ahmed is unfit but everyone else is fit and ready to take on Australia."

Ahmed was ruled out of the Perth Test match last week due to a leg injury. Pakistani spinner Sajid Khan has been called up to be his replacement.

Hafeez seemed annoyed by the tour arrangements for Pakistan's four-day match against the PM XI side in Canberra last week, at one point implying it might have been tactical.

"That was the slowest pitch a visiting team could

ever play on in Australia," he said. "The disappointment was really high because we weren't expecting these kinds of arrangements. Maybe it's tactical but we're ready for it. We're not using it as an excuse, we're absolutely ready for the challenges coming up."

Squads: Pakistan squad: Shan Masood (captain), Aamir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Khurram Shahzad, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Mohammad Wasim Jr., Noman Ali, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Sarfaraz Ahmed (wk), Saud Shakeel and Shaheen Shah Afridi

Australia squad: David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins (captain), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood, Scott Boland, Cameron Green, Lance Morris

Series schedule
First Test: Dec. 14-18, Perth
Second Test: Dec. 26-30, Melbourne
Third Test: Jan. 3-7, Sydney.

Djokovic says young rivals have awoken his inner 'beast'

LONDON (Agencies): Novak Djokovic turns 37 next year but the Serbian says his appetite for success will only increase with young challengers awakening the "beast" in him.

The world number one enjoyed an extraordinary 2023 by winning three out of the four Grand Slams to take his tally to 24, two more than his great rival Rafa Nadal and four more than the retired Roger Federer.

Djokovic did not have it all his own way, however, with 20-year-old Carlos

Alcaraz denying him a fifth-straight Wimbledon crown in a thrilling final and 22-year-old Jannik Sinner dashing his hopes of Davis Cup glory.

"The young guys who are very hungry and very inspired to play their best tennis against me is an additional motivation," Djokovic said on CBS News program "60 Minutes".

"I think they kind of awoken a beast in me."

Djokovic beat Alcaraz in three of their four meetings this year - including

the French Open semi-finals where the Spaniard suffered full-body cramps - but the Serb said his young rival had become a real threat.

"He's as a complete of a player as I have seen in ages," Djokovic said, adding that he used his defeat in the Wimbledon final as motivation for the US hardcourt swing, where he won at Cincinnati and Flushing Meadows.

"It's a great opportunity for me to reinvent myself and really push harder than I ever did."

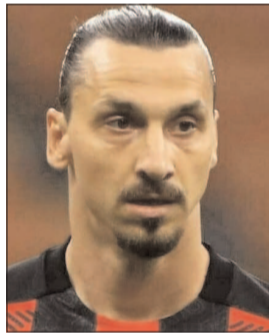
Zlatan Ibrahimovic returns to AC Milan as advisor

MILAN (AFP): Zlatan Ibrahimovic has returned to AC Milan as an advisor to the Serie A club's management, owners RedBird Capital Partners confirmed on Monday.

In a statement, American investment firm RedBird said that the former Sweden striker, who won a host of trophies as a player in Italy, will "serve as a senior advisor to AC Milan ownership and senior management".

The 42-year-old has also been hired as "Operating Partner" for RedBird's "sports and media and entertainment investment portfolio".

RedBird said that Ibrahimovic's mandate at Milan "will include player development and high-performance training, advancing AC Milan's global brand and commercial interests, and supporting special projects of strategic importance, including the club's new stadium."



Within RedBird, Ibrahimovic "will help source and evaluate new investment opportunities for the firm, and will advise RedBird portfolio companies on commercial projects, digital content strategies and strategic brand building initiatives".

Ibrahimovic brought the curtain down on his eventful playing career at the end of last season, in which he was dogged by injury and netted just once for Milan.

That goal came in a 3-1 win at Udinese in March and

made him the oldest goal scorer in Serie A history.

Ibrahimovic was a key figure in Milan's resurgence to the top of Italian football after his return as a veteran forward in 2019, helping to bring them back from the doldrums and eventually win the Serie A title in 2022.

He was also key to the club's previous Scudetto 11 years before, which was followed by a long period of stagnation and financial problems before revitalisation under current coach Stefano Pioli.

Over the course of his career Ibrahimovic won league titles in the Netherlands, Italy, Spain and France, although his only major European trophy was the 2017 Europa League with Manchester United.

He rejoins Milan with the team nine points behind Serie A leaders Inter Milan and facing a group stage exit from the Champions League.

Girona beat Barcelona to top La Liga table

MADRID (Agencies): Girona made a strong case to be considered genuine contenders for the Spanish league title by beating Catalan rivals Barcelona 4-2 and overtaking Real Madrid at the top of the standings.

Ukraine forwards Artem Dovbyk and Viktor Tsygankov teamed up for Girona's opener, and Miguel Gutierrez, Valery Fernandez and Cristian Stuani scored a goal each to seal the away victory against the defending league champions on Sunday.

Robert Lewandowski and Ilkay Gundogan scored Barcelona's goals. The statement win moved Girona two points ahead of Madrid, who drew 1-1 with Real Betis on Saturday. Barcelona dropped to fourth place, seven points behind their regional rivals and five behind Madrid. Atletico Madrid regained third place with a 2-1 win over last-place Almeria to extend their winning streak at home in the league to 17 matches.

Atletico have the same 34 points as Barcelona with a game in hand.

Barcelona had never lost in six matches against Girona in the league, with four wins and two draws.

"Girona deserve a lot of credit. It has a great team,"

Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez said. "It was an even match, it could have gone either way. It also would have been a fair result if we had won it."

Girona, partly owned by Manchester City's Abu Dhabi ownership, never looked like the minnows, showing maturity and poise from the start at the Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium.

"Special victory" The team coached by Michel Sanchez, sporting a white-and-blue uniform with similar colours to Man City, have been playing some of the best football in Spain and holding on to a position near the top from the start of the season.

"It's a special victory, it gives us the lead," Michel told reporters after the match. "Very happy with the result because we faced a great Barca team," he said. "I don't know if we have the ability to win La Liga, but we are able to beat any opponent."

Girona had won 12 of their first 15 league matches, though they had failed in their first big test when they lost 3-0 to Real Madrid at home in September. There was no problem against Barcelona, though.

In La Liga for only the fourth season in their histo-

ry, they played without any fear of their more illustrious neighbours and took the lead early on as the game seasawed deliciously from end to end.

The visitors opened the scoring in a breakaway in the 12th minute. Dovbyk found the net from close range after completing a low cross by his countryman Tsygankov. Barcelona equalised with a header by Lewandowski off a corner kick taken by Raphinha in the 19th, but Girona retook the lead in the 40th with a nice shot by Gutierrez into the top corner from inside the area.

Fernandez scored Girona's third in the 80th before Barcelona pulled closer with Gundogan's goal two minutes into stoppage time. Stuani restored Girona's two-goal advantage five minutes into injury time.

Barcelona's title defence is on the ropes. "We're seven points behind, which is a lot, but there's more than half a season to go," de Jong told DAZN. "There's time, but we have a lot to come back from."

Fan death at Granada The game between Granada and Athletic Bilbao was suspended after a fan suffered a cardiac arrest and died in the stands.





In brief

IRSA releases 85,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 85,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1486.14 feet and was 86.14 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 20,400 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1166.80 feet, which was 116.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 52,600 cusecs and 26,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 52,600, 41,100, 37,600 and 8,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Int'l mountain day observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Mountain Day, themed "Restoring Mountain Ecosystems," on Monday observed 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 pivotal 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.

CDA decides to build citywide bicycle lanes

ISLAMABAD (APP): To reduce carbon emissions and promote cycling in the federal capital, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to build citywide bicycle lanes along major routes in three phases. A PC-I in this regard has been prepared, and the CDA board will take up this summary. Only 2.73 per cent of the population is above 65 years of age, so the majority is young enough to make use of this project," senior official CDA said while talking to APP. For everyday mobility, a large number of capital residents rely on public transport, such as metro and vans, or ride-hailing services, the official said, adding that the project would facilitate people who do not own vehicles by providing them with a safe, convenient, and equitable commute option in the city. He said that the objective of this project was to establish a secure citywide bicycle route network to promote safe and accessible cycling across Islamabad as well as an equitable commute option for citizens. According to the proposed PC-I, the project through infrastructure interventions would introduce cycling as an alternative mode of transportation in Islamabad. "The aim is to invest in building bicycle lanes on the roads of Islamabad so people can have a viable option of using bikes as a mode of transportation, rather than solely relying on cars."



ISLAMABAD: The UAE Ambassador, HE Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al-Zaabi called on the Federal Minister for Privatisation, Fawad Hasan Fawad.

‘Sehat Card Program to remain functional’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan on Monday inaugurated the groundbreaking OPD pilot project under the Federal Sehat Sahulat Program.

Addressing the ceremony, he said that this project marks a crucial step towards universal health coverage for all Pakistani citizens. He emphasized that Federal Sehat Sahulat Program will continue as per the Prime Minister's vision of unified universal health insurance for every citizen of the country with a similar co-payment mechanism

for an affordable segment of the population to make it sustainable.

Dr Nadeem said, "We will strengthen the public health system and integrate Qaumi Sehat Card Program with primary healthcare to make it more sustainable for the government."

He expressed sincere appreciation for the SSP team's tireless efforts and the pivotal role of the Federal Sahulat Program in the research's success.

He thanked the WHO Representative in Pakistan for their invaluable partnership. Dr. Nadeem

acknowledged the guests for their significant contributions to advancing healthcare in Pakistan. During the OPD dissemination event, senior representatives from Punjab and Balochistan, Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, World Health Organization (WHO) international experts, technical partners, and various international agencies and donors actively participated.

These participants took an active role in the event, highlighting the collaborative and inclusive essence of the project.

ANF seizes 1416 kg drugs in 12 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 12 operations across the country managed to recover 1416 kg of drugs and arrested 12 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 500 grams of hashish and three kg of opium were recovered from the possession of three suspects arrested from a bus at Chongli number 26, Islamabad.

18 kg hashish was recovered from three suspects coming from Quetta to Karachi on a bus intercepted on RCD Road Hub.

A total of 48 kg hashish was recovered from two accused going in a vehicle and a rickshaw, netted from Ring Road Peshawar.

Three kg of heroin, 1370 grams Ice and 7 kg of 200 grams of hashish were recovered from a house in Rawat. 950 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Yaro Chowk Pishin while an accused was also arrested during the operation.

55 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle near Jamshoro Toll Plaza Sukkur and two accused were arrested.

ANF also recovered 54 kg of hashish from the pos-

session of an accused rounded up near Sher Shah Karachi.

105.5 kg hashish was recovered in two separate operations conducted in an uninhabited area of Zakhakhel, Khyber.

10.8 kg hashish concealed for smuggling was recovered near Meetha Khan, Kohat while 160 kg heroin hidden in bushes was recovered from an uninhabited area of Qila Abdullah.

Separate cases were registered under the Anti-Narcotics Act against the accused and further investigations were under process, he added.

Ministry allocates Rs 5.80m for electricity bill of Qasr-e-Naz lodge

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Housing and Works has allocated an amount of Rs 5.80 million in the current financial year 2023-2024 for electricity bills of Qasr-e-Naz Lodge, South Zone Karachi due to financial constraints.

"Out of the total Rs 5.80 million, only an amount of Rs 0.87 million have been released at the rate of 15 percent in this regard so far," an official source told APP. He said that the Karachi Electric Supply Company bill was Rs 7.26 million for the month of September, 2023 along with

arrears and the electricity connection had been disconnected in June, 2023.

As per the statement of K-Electric, the official said that the electricity connection would be restored after payment of complete amount along with arrears.

To a question, the official source said that the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) had opened registration to allot plots to general public in sectors G-12 and F-12, Islamabad in August 2023.

He said the award of land of Sectors F-12 and G-12

was announced by the Deputy Commissioner Capital Development Authority (CDA) in April and June 1985 under section 25 of CDA Ordinance 1960.

The official said the said sectors were allocated by the Federal Cabinet to the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) in July 2020. Since, he said there is no provision for de-notification the award once announced. Neither is there any provision in the Land Acquisition Act 1894, which allows for setting aside of an award.

Railways to restore Awam Express in next week

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has finally decided to restore Awam Express next week which was closed by the department after the deteriorating flood situation of 2022 in Sindh and other parts of the country. "The decision to reinstate this crucial train service has been made after the suspension due to the severe flood situation in 2022, promising a renewed connection between major cities," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said the Awam Express, operating on the route from Karachi to Lahore and Lahore to Peshawar, is set to resume operations following directives issued to the carriage factory officials at the Railway Headquarters.

The official said that the department would prepare

18 bogies, accommodating economy class, lower AC, and AC business class coaches for the relaunched scheduled in December. He said the Awam Express is one of the longest continuous running services, covering a published distance of 1,721 kilometres along the Karachi-Peshawar Railway line. The train journey typically spanned approximately 33 hours and 30 minutes, serving as a crucial link between these prominent cities, the official added.

To a question, he said the department has granted a one-month extension in services of the Shalimar Express train that operates on the Karachi-Lahore route. In May 2023, Pakistan Railways revived the high-speed Shalimar Express passenger train after eight months.

Fog/smog likely to persist in plain areas of country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Fog/smog is likely to persist in plain areas of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and upper Sindh during morning and night hours, as per Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast. According to the synoptic situation, continental air was prevailing over most parts of the country.

During the next 24 hours, mainly cold and dry weather is expected for most plain areas of the country. While very cold and partly cloudy is expected in northern districts.

During the last 24 hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country, while very cold in northern areas. The lowest minimum temperatures recorded during the period were Leh -10 C, Skardu -07, Kalam, Gilgit, Srinagar -05, Gupis -04, Kalat and Astore -03 C.

Advanced breast cancer cases declining amidst ongoing awareness campaign: Begum Alvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): First Lady Begum Samina Alvi on Monday said the ongoing breast cancer awareness campaign in the country is helping reducing the number of cases being reported at the advanced stages (third and fourth stages) of the disease but still more efforts are required in this regard.

"I feel pleasure when I see a commendable surge in first and second-stage patients seeking medical attention," she said while addressing an event after a cricket match here.

She said that the world overall had a 98 percent recovery rate from breast cancer, however, pointed out that in Pakistan, insufficient mammographic facilities led to a high mortality rate due to the detection of malignancy at a late stage.

Begum Samina Alvi said that 44,000 deaths due to breast cancer in Pakistan was an alarming situation that needed raising constant awareness about early diagnosis of the disease.

She emphasized the need for collective efforts in raising awareness about breast cancer, especially through healthy activities to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

She also called for promoting awareness about mental health and well-being, as well as advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities to enable them to become productive part of society.

"These topics should be openly discussed throughout the year, whether it is breast cancer, rights of differently abled person or mental health," Begum Samina Alvi said. "In this regard, we will need the support of not only the government but also the society as a whole," she said adding that there was a need to work to increase the existing facilities in Pakistan.

The first lady said that a five-minute self-examination every month could help detect breast cancer at an early stage, thus saving thousands of the lives of women in the country. She said that women of all ages including teenage girls of 12-14 years were also being diagnosed with breast cancer. She urged the women and girls to learn the five-minute routine of self-examination and spread the word among at least 10 other womenfolks in their circle. She also got a pledge from all the participants to spread her message about the importance of mental health and the rights of persons with disabilities.

The first lady said that about mental health, a mobile app "Humraaz" was being developed through which people could seek guidance about their mental health.

She said that 24 percent of the total population was suffering from mental health problems but the number of related health professionals and psychiatrists was very low which needed to increase.

She also called for accommodating the differently-abled persons with facilities of education and employment for mainstreaming them in society.

Begum Samina Alvi appreciated the media which was playing a vital role in effectively disseminating awareness messages about breast cancer, mental health issues and persons with disabilities to the masses. She also hailed the efforts of Margalla Tennis Club for organizing such a healthy activity aimed at breast cancer awareness saying such activities should be continued in future.

She distributed awards/shields among the organizers and media teams of the event, and cricket players of both men and women teams.

Pakistan's wonderful global mountain tourism destination: MD PTDC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) Managing Director Aftab ur Rehman Rana on Monday highlighted the country's potential as a global mountain tourism destination with its diverse landscapes, rich heritage, and archeological sites.

Addressing the sustainable mountain tourism conference in connection with International Mountain Day organized by PTDC in collaboration with Hashoo Group and Lakeshore City at the Pakistan National Council of Arts here, he said the day highlights the crucial role that mountains play in our lives and the need to protect them.

He further said that this

year, the theme of Mountain Day is Restoring Mountain Ecosystems. Mountains cover around 27 percent of the Earth's land surface and host about half of the world's biodiversity hotspots. As the water towers of the world, they supply freshwater to almost half of humanity.

MD PTDC emphasized the government's commitment to prioritizing tourism development in mountain areas, intending to catalyze economic growth and employment opportunities.

He stated that the fast melting of our glaciers has enhanced the Climate change threats and changed the pattern of flow of water in the country's rivers, and fast-rising temperatures are

forcing mountain species and the people that depend on these ecosystems to adapt or migrate.

Focused on the theme "Restoring Mountain Ecosystems," the conference served as a platform for insightful discussions and initiatives. It featured two enlightening panel discussions. The first, themed "Restoring Mountain Ecosystems," saw the participation of representatives from IUCN Pakistan, WWF Pakistan, IWMB, and the Ministry of Climate Change.

The second discussion, centering on "Sustainable Mountain Tourism Development," brought together senior figures from the private sector and relevant government departments.

Panelists emphasized the critical importance of restoring mountain ecosystems for environmental equilibrium, shedding light on the escalating threats posed by climate change and human activities. The discussions emphasized the role of collective efforts, stressing that ecosystem restoration not only safeguards biodiversity and protects endangered species but also ensures the resilience of communities dependent on mountain resources.

As part of the festivities, PTDC hosted the 'Salam Pakistan' photography and short tourism documentary film competitions, emphasizing the intrinsic link between vibrant mountain ecosystems and sustainable tourism.

HEC announces Pak-Sri Lanka university faculty exchange programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced Pak-Sri Lanka University Faculty Exchange Programme under Pak-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme.

According to the official sources, HEC, in that regard, has invited applications from Pakistani and Sri Lankan faculty members to establish professional linkages between universities of the two countries.

The sources said that the programme supports annual faculty exchange visits for a duration of upto 2 weeks to participate in teaching, international curricula, research seminars, conferences, and collaborations through academic & research activities with impact.

To increase people-to-people contact, the faculty members will have various opportunities to learn about cultural, regional and historical val-

ues of bilateral interests while gathering international reputations and respect for their respective universities, they added. Sharing the funding details, they said that the funding for Boarding & Lodging will be paid by the Host University, while Air Travel - Economy Class Return Airfare and daily allowance will be given by Higher Education Commission.

Meanwhile, as per Eligibility Criteria the candidates must be a Pakistani/Sri Lankan national. He/she should be Full-time faculty member of renowned public/private university/degree awarding institute of Pakistan/Sri Lanka.

However, the candidates must also have invitation letter from the host university/degree awarding institute.

It was stated by HEC that the candidates will have to take NOC from the parent university/degree awarding institute. However, selection of disci-

pline/subject will be based on national needs of both countries and relevance to the contemporary area of research. The applicants are expected to have prior research record and relevant experience.

To apply online, the interested applicants should visit www.hec.gov.pk/site/UFE for the Project terms and details, and to apply through prescribed Application Form. Following documents should also be attached along with the application form in PDF format and sent at info.paksl@hec.gov.pk.

The invitation letter from the host university/degree awarding institute and NOC from the parent university should be attached. The submission of the academic documents, Proposal/Planned activities of visit must be attached with the applications. HEC announced the Deadline for the program as December 30, 2023.



ISLAMABAD: Managing Director PTDC Aftab Ur Rehman Rana presenting certificate to the Mountaineer during the conference on "Sustainable Mountain Tourism in Pakistan" organized by Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) on the occasion of International Mountain Day 2023 at PNCA.

WHO: 2,513 deaths recorded

KABUL (Ariana News): The World Health Organization (WHO) has said in a report that since the beginning of this year, 2,513 deaths due to acute respiratory diseases have been recorded in Afghanistan. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) report, 82.2% of these figures are children. Since January 2023, 1.2 million cases of this disease have been registered throughout Afghanistan, the report said.

Helicopter parts discovered

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of National Defense reported the discovery and seizure of helicopter parts which were illegally stored in Kandahar province. According to a statement released on Monday by the Defense Ministry, officers from the Al-Badr Army Corps recovered 30 varieties of helicopter parts, including those for American Black Hawk helicopters, and 17 types of AM-1 missiles that were unlawfully kept in Kandahar's fifth district.

‘Much development made in past 2 years’



KABUL (TOLONews): The acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, on his trip to Paktia, talked about the Islamic Emirate's efforts to implement major reconstruction and development projects.

Sirajuddin Haqqani says that in the last two years, the Islamic Emirate has been able to disprove false claims of some

countries that they are “destroyers.” “In the world when a country reaches independence, that country can’t be rebuilt in 50 to 100 years and celebrate their independence. Alhamdulillah, it’s been two years and we have had much development and we proved their claims false,” he added. Haqqani also requested that people help the government in the implementation of the reconstruction projects. “We are accepted among the people and the world knows us by Jihad and now our statements are also accepted. In the country, we tell a Muslim that this is your country, if the road, mosque or madrasa is destroyed, work on that and rebuild that. Don’t leave it to the government, in building the country, don’t expect it from anyone,” said the acting minister of interior. Before this, Sirajuddin Haqqani in a meeting with religious scholars of some Islamic countries also expressed that now the leadership of the country is in the hands of religious scholars, and they can realize the priority of the country.

Taliban should be guided by what Afghans want



KABUL (TOLONews): Karen Decker, Chargé d’Affaires of the US Mission to Afghanistan, urged the “Taliban” to be guided by what the Afghan people want, saying that the international community must also “listen to what the Afghan people say.”

In an interview with TOLONews, on the sidelines of the Doha Forum, Decker said that Afghanistan is the only country in the world that “does not allow girls to go to school.”

She also said that the relationship to focus on is the relationship between the American and the Afghan people “which remains incredibly strong.”

Decker said the US is engaged with the

“Taliban leaders on a range of issues in a very pragmatic way in order to talk to them about the issues like counter-narcotics, economic resilience and recovery as well as the release of Americans who are “wrongfully detained.”

She said that despite the closure of the embassy in Kabul, all activities of the US mission for Afghanistan are functioning. “We do not have an embassy open in Kabul right now. I lead the embassy in exile based here in Qatar. But we still have all of the functions of an embassy,” she added, saying that a US team is also based in Kazakhstan.

“There is no checklist for recognition... I have already explained. That is not a process that has a list of requirements attached to it. We are going to continue to focus on helping the Afghan people. Part of that is supporting the Afghan women and girls on a range of issues,” Decker said. The US top diplomat for Afghanistan highlighted the situation of Afghan women.

“I think we have to be honest about the fact that Afghan women cannot work, Afghan girls cannot study and that is unacceptable,” she added.

Decker said that the US is in talks with Pakistani officials to make sure the Afghans have every protection available to them under the law and are treated with dignity and respect.

345,000 refugees deported

KABUL (TOLONews): A senior official of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation said that more than 345,000 Afghans have been deported from Iran to Afghanistan over the past three months.

Iran and Pakistan both escalated deportation of the Afghan refugees with thousands of them crossing to Afghanistan.

“Since the first of Mizan (23rd September) till 17 Qaws (December 8) there were approximately 345,000. Each family have been provided with 10,000 Afs cash assistance by the Islamic Emirate,” said Abdul Rahman Rashid, deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriation.

TOLONews interviewed the Afghan deportees who were expelled from Iran.

Mohammad Yousuf and Fatih Khan left Afghanistan for Iran in a bid to make ends meet but both were deported by the country's police.

They also complained about the mistreatment of Iranian forces towards the Afghan refugees.

“There was no work here, then we went to Iran through illegal paths. They beat us and detained us,” Yousuf said.

“They captured us and beat us. They beat us badly and forced us to return,” Khan said.

The deportees also voiced concerns about the lack of employment in the country and called on the Islamic Emirate to make efforts to create jobs for the citizens.

“We call on our government to provide us with work so the people are not forced to leave,” said Shirin Agha, a deportee.

“We call on the Islamic Emirate to provide us with work. Provide us with work here,” Ahmadullah, a deportee.

This comes as Iranian officials have recently announced that Afghans without legal documents will be deported from Iran.

Shaheen meets Potzel in Qatar

KABUL (BNA): Sohail Shaheen, Chief of the Political Office of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in Doha, discussed the treatment of drug addicts and alternative projects to poppy cultivation in the country with the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations for Afghanistan.

Sohail Shaheen, Chief of the Political Office of the Islamic Emirate in Qatar, met with Markus Potzel, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations for Afghanistan, according to the Political Office of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

The conversation covered topics such as Afghanistan's present conditions, drug addiction treatment, and alternative poppy farming programs for farmers, humanitarian help, and the necessity of communication in finding solutions to common problems.

Hanafi: Opportunities for investment provided



KABUL (TOLONews): Second Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi in the meeting with the President of the Arifan Organization of Turkey, and religious scholars and businessmen of that country, discussed investment in Afghanistan.

Hanafi said in the meeting that currently the field for investment in Afghanistan is prepared for everyone, and the President of the Arifan Organization said that Turkey is ready for investment in various sections in Afghanistan.

“We call on traders and investment to come and invest in Afghanistan, the Turkish traders’ meeting with Hanafi was about how to invest in Afghanistan and Hanafi assured them about investment here,” said Zabiullah Mujahid, spokesman for the Islamic Emirate.

The acting Minister of Industry and Commerce also requested the establishment of a business center to solve the challenges of businessmen in Turkey and Afghanistan in a meeting with the head of religious scholars and some

Turkish investors.

“The acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, emphasizing the investment opportunities, said that the investment provisions in Afghanistan are about 50% and the Islamic Emirate is committed to cooperation and support for investors,” said Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesman for the ministry.

Some economists said that to attract investment in the country, it is necessary to provide banking facilities for investors in the country.

“In Afghanistan, the country needs domestic and foreign investment, most of the materials are imported from outside Afghanistan, so foreign investors who want to start their activities in Afghanistan in different sectors need a good banking system,” said Abdul Zahur Mudabir, an economist.

Earlier, the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum said that after the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate, contracts worth seven billion dollars have been signed in the mining sector alone.

UN agency warns of Afghans dying in harsh winter conditions

KABUL (AP): The UN refugee agency has warned that Afghans could die in harsh winter conditions if they don’t get adequate shelter once they cross the border from Pakistan.

Almost half a million Afghans have left Pakistan since early October, when the Islamabad government announced it would arrest and deport foreigners it said were in the country illegally.

The overwhelming majority of them are from neighboring Afghanistan, though Islamabad insists the policy doesn’t target a specific nationality.

The forced returns are piling pressure on Afghanistan and aid agencies, which are providing the bulk of essential services like health care. Freezing temperatures are setting in and conditions at the border remain dire.

“Many Afghan returnees

are vulnerable, including women and children, who could lose their lives in a harsh winter if left without adequate shelter,” the UN refugee agency said in a report published Friday. “People arriving at the border are exhausted and require urgent assistance as well as psychosocial support.”

Families told the agency they were worried that colder winter temperatures in certain areas, particularly mountainous regions, may prevent them from returning home right away.

“Many are arriving with illness, for example bronchitis, as a result of the cold weather and the difficult journey from Pakistan,” the agency said in a message to The Associated Press on Sunday. “They may not have all their belongings, including clothing, and therefore be unable to protect themselves from the

elements.”

It said that among those returning to Afghanistan are families who have never lived in the country. They have been living in Pakistan for one or more generations and may not have homes or extended family to return to.

Cash to pay rent is needed, while families with some existing social networks could stay with family or friends. Others may return to homes needing repair. The agency said it will provide tents to such households. “For those who have nowhere to go, with limited means, they may stay in camps, established near the border,” the refugee agency said.

A Taliban committee said it is distributing food, water, SIM cards, clothing and cash at two key border crossings: Torkham and Spin Boldak. Families are

also learning about Afghanistan, the Islamic system, temporary living arrangements, registration and relocation, the committee said Sunday. But extreme temperatures and limited access to clean water and sanitation have led to a surge in infectious diseases and malnutrition.

UN Women said there are additional challenges for Afghan women and girls leaving Pakistan as they have to deal with Taliban restrictions that could affect their mobility and access to information and services if they don’t have a male relative. It expressed similar concerns after October’s deadly earthquakes in Afghanistan’s west.

The agency said around 80% of Afghans returning through Torkham and Spin Boldak are women and children.

Minister discusses migrants issues with Turkish Chargé d’Affaires

KABUL (Ariana News): The Acting Minister of Refugees and Returnees has discussed the problems of migrants and the release of Afghan prisoners in Turkey in a meeting with Cenk Unal, the Turkish Chargé d’Affaires in Kabul.

At the meeting Khalilur Rahman Haqqani said that a joint committee should be established to deal with the situation of immigrants.

The Turkish Chargé d’Affaires said that his country wants good relations with Afghanistan and the two countries have good diplomatic relations.

Cenk Unal has also said that the statistics of inappropriate behavior of the Turkish police with Afghan immigrants has decreased.

“Turkey has good and deep relations with Afghanistan, the presence of Afghan diplomats in that country and the movement of dele-



gations show Turkey’s good intentions towards Afghanistan. Reports of inappropriate police behavior with Afghan immigrants in Turkey have decreased, and if there are complaints in any place, action will be taken,” Cenk Unal said.

However, experts say that including Turkey, the majority of host countries of Afghan immigrants misbehave with immigrants, and the host countries act against international migration laws.

More than 100,000 Afghan immigrants live in

Turkey legally and nearly 300,000 live illegally. However, many reports have been published about the Turkish police’s ill treatment if Afghan immigrants and the forced deportation of Afghan immigrants from Turkey continues.

Afghan Ministry refutes US allegations

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Vice and Virtue of Afghanistan issued a statement dismissing the United States’ allegations against Sheikh Mohammad Khalid Hanafi as unfounded.

According to the ministry, certain entities acting within oppressive and oppressive regimes make repeated attempts to destroy the reputation of respectable figures of the Islamic Emirate through unfounded accusations.

The statement also notes that the accusations leveled against the Acting Minister of Vice and Virtue are without evidence, highlighting the importance of independent and impartial agencies thoroughly investigating these unfounded claims and communicating the findings based on facts.

The Ministry of Vice and Virtue of Afghanistan underscores its commitment to following the guidance of

Islam in promoting virtues, eliminating vices, and addressing people’s complaints.

It highlights the widespread support from the people of Afghanistan across its 34 provinces, districts, and villages for the unprecedented services of the ministry.

These statements from the Ministry come in response to sanctions imposed by the US Departments of Treasury and State on Khalid Hanafi, the Acting of Minister of Vice and Virtue, and Sheikh Fareduddin Mahmood, the head of the General Academy of Sciences, ostensibly for violating women’s rights.

The Islamic Emirate’s spokesperson, Zabiullah Mujahid, condemned these sanctions, stating that applying pressure and sanctions is not a solution, saying that the United States (US) is practicing failed and futile experiments.

US provides \$77m aid to help Afghan refugees

KABUL (Ariana News): The Special Representative of the United States for Afghanistan Thomas West has announced a \$77 million contribution to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to support Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

West said in a post on X that during his trip to Pakistan, he held discussions and meetings with the leadership of UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

“I am proud that the United States has contributed \$77 million to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for these efforts and \$9 million to the International Organization for Migration this year,” he stressed.

According to West, the purpose of this meeting was to support vulnerable citizens and those at risk, with a particular focus on Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

100,000 posts to be created for teachers

KABUL (TOLONews): The deputy Minister of Education (MoE) said that 100,000 posts are expected to be created for school teachers in the near future in various provinces.

Mohammad Khalid Sadiq made the remarks in a graduation ceremony of 350 students from a high

school in Kabul. “240,000 people are working in the Education Ministry. All of them are serving the schools,” he said.

Speaking at the same ceremony, the principal of a high school named Zabiullah Esmatt urged the people to be cooperative with the Educational

Ministry. “The parents are not asking about their children’s status,” he said.

The graduates meanwhile called on the Islamic Emirate to provide the means for female education in the country.

“We call on Islamic Emirate officials to reopen

the schools for our girls within the Islamic structure,” said Mansour, a high school graduate.

“We call on the government to reopen the schools for our sisters within a legal or Islamic structure, so they can study and have a bright future,” said Mohammad, a high school graduate.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior, Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti in a meeting with Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Pakistan rejects Indian SC verdict on Article 370

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilil Abbas Jillani has slammed the Indian Supreme Court's verdict that validated the Narendra Modi-led government's unilateral move to scrap Article 370 — the constitutional provision that granted semi-autonomous status to the Muslim-majority region.

Addressing the media to share Pakistan's response to the Indian Supreme Court's verdict in Islamabad on Monday, the interim foreign minister read out Islamabad's official response to the verdict saying Pakistan categorically rejects the judgment on the status of IIOJK.

"Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally-recognised dispute, which remains on the agenda of the UN Security Council for over seven decades. The final disposition of Jammu and Kashmir is to be made in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and as per the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. India has no right to make unilateral decisions on the status of this disputed territory against the will of the Kashmiri people and Pakistan," he added.

The FM said Pakistan does not acknowledge the supremacy of the Indian Constitution over Jammu and Kashmir and added that any process, subservient to the Indian Constitution, carries no legal significance. He further said: "India cannot abdicate its international obligations on the pretext of domestic legislations and judicial verdicts. Its plans to annex IIOJK are bound to fail.

"The judicial endorsement of India's unilateral and illegal actions of August 5, 2019, is a travesty of justice, based on distorted historical and legal arguments. "The Indian Supreme Court's verdict fails to recognise the internationally-recognised disputed nature of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. It further fails to cater to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, who have already rejected India's illegal and unilateral actions of August 5, 2019. The judgement is yet another manifestation of the pliant judiciary under India's ruling dispensation.

"Restoration of statehood, conduct of State Assembly elections or similar steps cannot serve as a substitute to the grant of the right to self-determination to the Kashmiri people. "The judgement cannot distract the international community's attention from the gross and systematic human rights violations being perpetrated in IIOJK.

"India's unilateral and illegal measures since August 5, 2019, have been aimed at changing the demographic structure and political landscape of the IIOJK, in flagrant violation of international law and the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, especially Resolution 122 (1957). They remain a matter of grave concern for Pakistan as their ultimate goal is to convert the Kashmiris into a disempowered community in their own land. These measures must be rescinded to create an environment for peace and dialogue. "Pakistan will continue to extend its full political, diplomatic and moral support to the people of IIOJK for the realisation of their

inalienable right to self-determination."

India's top court on Monday upheld a move by PM Modi's government to revoke the limited autonomy of Muslim-majority IIOJK, where an insurgency has raged for decades, and ordered elections within a year. The 2019 declaration was "a culmination of the process of integration and as such is a valid exercise of power", the Supreme Court said in its verdict.

The move was accompanied by the imposition of direct rule from New Delhi, mass arrests, a total lockdown and communication blackout that ran for months as India bolstered its armed forces in the region to contain protests. Modi's muscular policy has been deeply controversial in IIOJK, with the insurgency that claimed tens of thousands of lives over decades largely quietened.

The removal of Article 370 of the constitution, which enshrined the special status of the disputed region, was challenged by Kashmir's pro-India political parties, the local Bar Association and individual litigants, culminating in Monday's verdict. The court upheld removing the region's autonomy while calling for IIOJK to be restored to statehood with the same status as any other Indian state "at the earliest and as soon as possible".

The court also ordered state elections to take place by September 30, 2024. Security was stepped up across the disputed territory ahead of the verdict, with authorities deploying hundreds of soldiers, paramilitary troops, and police in the main city of Srinagar to thwart any protests.

Jawwad S Khawaja against the military trials of civilians.

On October 23, a five-member apex court bench headed by Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan unanimously admitted the aforesaid pleas and nullified the government's decision to try civilians in military courts. Following the SC verdict, federal and provincial governments along with the defence ministry filed intra-court appeals (ICAs) against the said verdict.

In his petition filed today, ex-justice Khawaja contends that Justice Masood had already expressed his views on the said matter — non-maintainability of the petitions filed against civilians' military trials — via his written note and so must recuse himself from the bench from hearing the pleas filed against the SC verdict. "These four petitions have been filed by those who apparently are not detained, nor facing trial with regard to the offences, allegedly committed on 9th May 2023 [...] The said persons had attacked, destroyed and/or burnt public property and the property of the armed forces [...] If a law is challenged, usually, it is before the High Court under Article 199 of the Constitution however these petitions have been filed in this court under Article 184 (3) of the Constitution

which jurisdiction can only be invoked in the public interest for the enforcement of fundamental rights," Justice Masood's note had read.

Khawaja's petition further argues that since Justice Masood considers the petitions "unusual", it indicates "a predisposition which compromises, possibly substantively and certainly as a matter of perception, independence and unbiased adjudication." It also contends that Masood, in his note, found that each case has to be considered on facts, he therefore, reached the conclusion that the petitions against civilians' military trial were not maintainable under Article 184(3) of the Constitution.

Stressing that a judge who has, without hearing the parties, made a public and written finding in respect of a specific issue between the parties, the plea highlights that it would not be fair for Justice Masood to hear this matter. In his petition, the former judge has called for Justice Masood to recuse himself from the said case and not head the bench in the interest of justice, and to refer the matter back to the committee constituted under the Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Act 2023 for reconstitution of the bench which is to hear the ICAs.

for attacking Pakistani land from Afghanistan were also released there. Then, they were invited by Imran Khan to settle in the tribal areas of the country in huge numbers, the very same regions they had been chased out from. Imran Khan, while in opposition during the unity government, publicly accepted that terrorists were resettled in Pakistan which is the cause behind the country having to suffer through the same crisis yet again. Our Army and Police are still targets of terrorism and the state of Pakistan should ponder upon how this can happen through a U-turn taken overnight without the permission of the Parliament and the people despite the country's continuous struggle to rid the land of terrorism. Once again, our Army soldiers, Police and the people would have to combat terrorists and defeat them, Bilawal said.

Responding to questions, Bilawal said that those involved in the process and decision should be investigated and their intentions should be made clear. It should also be ensured that such a decision is not taken in the future, otherwise it would be difficult for us to convince our people to fight if they are under the impression that a U-turn will be taken again and their efforts would be futile. Our demand is for

this issue to be investigated, because such a momentous decision was taken without taking the Parliament or the people into loop. This is imperative for ensuring that a decision with such grave consequences is not taken again. Bilawal said that the country's priority should be to bring the terrorists involved in grave crimes against our country to book. We will continuously engage with Afghanistan, as we did during the unity government. Neither Pakistan nor Afghanistan can get rid of terrorism without working together. We believe in free and fair elections as well as 'One Man, One Vote', he said.

Bilawal said that it has once again been proved that India is grossly violating the international law and norms, as well as the resolutions of the United Nations. International powers would now need to review their support of India, when the country is repeatedly abusing international laws. Be it the Parliament or Judiciary of India, they cannot rewrite UN resolutions and international agreements. No matter how many times they reiterate their claim over Kashmir, as far as international law is concerned, Kashmir is a disputed territory and the matter is to be resolved as per the law and resolutions.

PTI's intra-party election: PHC stops ECP from final decision

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Shakeel Ahmad stopped Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) from final decision on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) intra-party elections as well as ordered for submission of reply while adjourned further hearing till 19th December, on Monday.

PTI chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, Qazi Muhammad Anwar, Syed Sikandar Shah and Nauman-ul-Haq Kakahel advocates appeared before PHC during hearing of the writ's plea.

Barrister Gohar Ali argued that PTI intra-party election was held on 2nd December in which he was elected as chairman unopposed at Peshawar. He added that Akbar S Babar had challenged PTI's intra-party election despite he isn't the party's member.

PTI's intra-party election concluded under sections 208 and 209 of Election Act 2017 which is to held within five years as per party's constitution. A complaint was lodged at ECP against PTI's intra-party and it is enlisted for hearing on today (Tuesday) beyond jurisdiction while the commission had declared that decide the matter if PTI representative didn't appear.

Barrister Gohar Ali argued that PTI had victimized in every case it may be in foreign funding case, jail trial or any other case by ECP. He added that ECP didn't issued certificate to PTI after submission intra-party's result which necessary before election scheduled.

However, Justice SM Attique Shah remarked that it is enough that your are party's chairman while Barrister Gohar Ali argued that if ECP declare PTI's intra-party election null and void, then the commission will announce election schedule on next day which create problems.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Shakeel Ahmad ordered ECP for submission of reply within seven days and stopped from final verdict on PTI's intra-party election while adjourned further till 19th December.

Naval Chief visits coastal and creeks areas

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf visited Creeks and Coastal Areas and PN Ships to review operational preparedness and combat readiness of the units.

Upon arrival at Creeks Brigade Sujawal, a comprehensive operational brief was presented to CNS on prevailing threat environment and defences of Creeks Area. During the visit at forward posts, CNS interacted with officers and men and appreciated their readiness to respond any misadventure by the adversary. On the second leg of his visit, Chief of the Naval Staff arrived at PNS AKRAM at Gwadar and interacted with the troops deployed for the security of Gwadar Port.

He also visited Jinnah Naval Base, Pakistan Navy Hospital Dar Maanjah and Cadet College at Ormara. Later on, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf arrived on PN Ships at PN Dockyard Karachi to review the operational preparedness and combat readiness of PN surface ships.

During interactions with troops at Creeks and Coastal Areas and onboard ships, Chief of the Naval Staff expressed satisfaction on operational readiness of deployed elements. He also appreciated the professional prowess and dedication of officers and men in ensuring impregnable defence of the motherland in challenging harsh environment of Creeks and Coastal Areas and amidst prevailing regional challenges in maritime domain. Chief of the Naval Staff appreciated the morale of troops and directed the field units to ensure optimal utilization of latest weapons and equipment with motivation and alacrity in order to ensure defence of the motherland.

Palestinians go on strike over Gaza onslaught

RAMALLAH: Shops, schools and government offices shut across the occupied West Bank and annexed east Jerusalem Monday as Palestinians staged a general strike protesting against Israel's relentless onslaught in the Gaza Strip. The bloodiest ever war in Gaza has killed more than 18,200 Palestinians in the territory, mostly women and children, and 104 Israeli soldiers, according to the latest reported death tolls.

Activists had called for a strike in solidarity with the besieged territory covering businesses, public workers and education. Many Palestinians took part and rallies were staged in the West Bank, according to Essam Abu Baker who coordinates Palestinian factions in Ramallah. He described the protest as part of a global effort to put pressure on Israel to stop the war, reporting strikes taking place in parts of Jordan and Lebanon.

In Lebanon, public institutions, banks, schools and universities closed after the government decided on a nationwide strike in solidarity with Gaza and with border areas in the south, which have seen intensifying exchanges of fire, mainly between Israel and Hezbollah. The stoppage was also observed in Istanbul's western Esenyurt district, where many businesses are owned by residents from the Palestinian territories, Syria, Yemen and Iran.

Footage on social media showed deserted streets and Palestinian flags billowing. "The strike today is not only in solidarity with Gaza, but also against the USA which used its veto in the Security Council against a truce," Abu Baker said in Ramallah, referring to the US rejection of a cease-fire resolution on Friday. Overnight in Gaza, more Israeli air strikes targeted the biggest southern city of Khan Yunis, while deadly fighting and bombing were also reported in the center and north of the narrow territory.

Hamas, which triggered the war with its October 7 attacks in which 1,200 people were killed in southern Israel, warned that the remaining 137 hostages held in Gaza would not survive the conflict unless Israel meets its demands and frees more Palestinian prisoners. At a rally in Ramallah, seat of the Palestinian Authority, demonstrators unfurled a huge list of names of the victims in Gaza. Whole families came out to protest, with parents carrying children on their shoulders.

"All we can do is take part," an elderly man in the crowd told AFP. "We don't have anything else." AFP photographers also saw the work stoppage being observed in the northern West Bank city of Nablus and Hebron in the south, where another rally was held.

In east Jerusalem's Old City, many shops were closed. The sound of keys echoed in the bazaar as Palestinian business owners locked their brightly painted doors. "We want the war to stop," said Nasser, a 65-year-old coffee shop owner who gave only his first name. He has not heard from friends in war-torn Gaza for weeks, and doesn't know if they are dead or alive.

He said he had little to lose by closing his shop along the Via Dolorosa, a Christian pilgrimage route. "We've had no business anyway since the war started," he said, after the outbreak of violence prompted visitor numbers to plummet. The few shopkeepers who did open said they had strong reasons for doing so.

Florist Raja Salama, 62, came to work to prepare wreaths of white roses for an elderly relative's funeral. "I'm only open because the funeral is today," he said. "When I've taken the flowers over, I'll close." Others were desperate for business. "I need to work to feed my baby son," said a young Palestinian barber. He did not give his name, explaining that he was ashamed to open his shop in the Old City. "I should respect the strike, but I have no choice. I have a one-year-old at home and I haven't had work since the start of the war. That's the ugly truth."

Meanwhile, Hamas said it was striking back against Israeli forces across Gaza on Monday and Palestinians and international relief agencies said public order was disintegrating as hunger spread, fueling fears of a mass exodus to Egypt. The narrow coastal strip has been under a full Israeli blockade since the start of the conflict more than two months ago and the border with Egypt is the only other way out.

Most of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been driven from their homes and residents say it is impossible to find refuge, or increasingly food, in the densely populated enclave, with around 18,000 people already killed and conflict intensifying. Gazans said people forced to flee repeatedly were dying of hunger and cold as well as bombardment, describing desperate attacks on aid trucks and sky high prices.

"Had any of us expected that our people may die of hunger, had it crossed anyone's mind before?" said Rola Ghanim, among many expressing bewilderment on social media. Aid trucks risked being stopped by desperate residents if they even slowed down at an intersection. Carl Skau, said deputy executive director of the UN World Food Programme. "Half of the population are starving, nine out of 10 are not eating every day," he told Reuters on Saturday.

One Palestinian told Reuters he had not eaten for three days and had to beg for bread for his children. "I pretend to be strong but I am afraid I will collapse in front of them at any moment," he said by telephone, declining to be named for fear of reprisals. After the collapse of a week-long cease-fire on Dec. 1, Israel began a ground offensive in the south last week and has since pushed from the east into the heart of the city of Khan Yunis, with warplanes attacking an area to the west.

On Monday, militants and some residents said fighters were preventing Israeli tanks moving further west through the city and clashing with Israeli forces in northern Gaza, where Israel had said its tasks were largely complete. Israel said dozens of Hamas fighters had surrendered and urged others to join them. The armed wing of Hamas said it had fired rockets toward Tel Aviv, where Israelis fled to shelters.

UN officials say 1.9 million people — 85 percent of Gaza's population — are displaced and describe the conditions in the southern areas where they have concentrated as hellish. "I expect public order to completely break down soon and an even worse situation could unfold including epidemic diseases and increased pressure for mass displacement into Egypt," UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said on Sunday. Philippe Lazzarini, the commissioner general of UNRWA, the UN body responsible for the welfare of Palestinian refugees, wrote on Saturday that pushing Gazans closer and closer to the border pointed to "attempts to move Palestinians into Egypt." — Arab News

State will not negotiate

(Continued from Page 1)

Chairman All Pakistan Textile Processing Mills Association Saleem Parekh, Patron-in-chief Bin Qasim Association of Trade and Industries Mian Muhammad Ahmed, and President North Karachi Association of Trade and Industries Faisal Moiz.

The meeting was held in continuation of the prime minister's earlier meetings with businessmen and industrialists during his visit to Karachi. Caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Minister for Energy, Power and Petroleum Muhammad Ali, Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori and senior government officials were present.

PM directs to ensure supply of urea fertilizer on controlled rates: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar directed the departments concerned to prepare and submit an action plan immediately for uninterrupted supply of urea fertilizer on priority basis.

He also ordered to ensure its availability to the farmers at government controlled rate and submit a report in this regard by tomorrow (Tuesday). "To ensure uninterrupted supply of urea fertilizer during crop sowing, a comprehensive framework should be prepared and presented in consultation with the provinces and the relevant industry," he said while chairing an emergency review meeting regarding demand and supply, and price of urea fertilizer in the country.

During the meeting, the prime minister asked the district administrations to take immediate action against the hoarders of the fertilizer, and identify and punish those responsible. He said the government

subsidy on urea fertilizer must reach the deserving farmers.

The prime minister directed the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Food Security to provide the production and supply statistics of urea fertilizer to the provincial governments, and ensure coordination in operations against its hoarders. He said the transportation of fertilizer should be monitored at all provincial borders, while ensuring that no hurdle was made in its supply to meet the provincial requirements.

He said all the provinces should bear the burden of subsidy on urea fertilizer in proportion to their consumption. Earlier, a detailed briefing was given in the meeting on the recent production, demand and supply of urea fertilizer to farmers in the country. The meeting was told that the production and stock of urea in the country was sufficient for the wheat crop, whereas 220,000 metric tons was being imported for buffer stock, and its first consignment would reach Pakistan by next week.

The provincial chief secretaries briefed the meeting on the steps taken by the district administrations to ensure the supply of fertilizer to the farmers at the government controlled prices. The meeting was informed that the summaries for subsidy on fertilizers would be presented in the cabinets of all provinces for approval soon. Caretaker ministers Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Captain (ret'd) Shahid Ashraf Tarar, Dr Kaushar Abdul Mulk and Muhammad Ali, relevant high officials and chief secretaries of all the provinces attended the meeting.