

Imran, Qureshi indicted

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Special court on Wednesday against indicted former prime minister Imran Khan and PTI vice-chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi in cipher case. The special court Judge Abul Hasnat Zulfikarain heard the case against Imran and Qureshi. This was the second time that the PTI leaders were indicted.



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Terrorists already lost war, says PM

— reiterates unyielding ‘no surrender, no retreat’ policy

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said on Wednesday that terrorists had already lost the war, emphasizing the nation's unwavering resilience against this scourge and preparedness to deliver a fitting response to terrorism.

"I want to tell the perpetrators that you have already lost the war. Only the declaration is yet to be made and the time is yet to be finalised. They are fighting a lost war and we are fighting a war already won by us, Alhamdulillah," he said talking to the media at the Combined Military Hospital after inquiring about the health of the soldiers injured in a terrorist attack that took place on Tuesday.

He said he was amazed to witness the strong conviction of the soldiers who were resolved to fight the terrorists even while being injured. He said those supporting the war against terrorism would stand victorious in the world as well as the life hereafter but contrarily, the terrorists had not only destroyed their lives but would also rot in hell after their death.

The prime minister told the media that the Ulema stood with the state, peace and the whole society. "With whom they are fighting? Do they want to fight us with death? No one will be scared. They should fulfill the desire to fight us for any desired duration," he remarked.

He said the state was pursuing an unyielding policy of no surrender and no retreat. Prime Minister Kakar said many thousand people had already sacri-



ficed their lives in the war against terrorism and thousands more were ready to join the course. "If they carry out one attack, we will march 10 steps ahead. If they take 10 steps, we will advance by 100 steps. This is the war of the winners and we are with the winners, here in this world and the life hereafter," he commented.

He said the whole nation stood united against terrorism and was resolved to defeat the evil in all of its forms and manifestations. He said Pakistan was a strong and resilient nation and its Armed Forces would thwart the nefarious designs of the enemies. Caretaker Federal Interior Minister Sarfaraz Bugti, Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali and Caretaker KP Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah accompanied the prime minister.

Improving tax system holds key importance to boost economy: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar ul Haq Kakar on Wednesday said that improving the tax system of the country holds key importance for boosting the economy.

While addressing the 12th National Balochistan Workshop, he categorically

said that undocumented economy was diseasing our whole system and if we remained unable to improve our FBR then probably we would fail on many accounts. Premier Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar responding to queries relating Kashmir issue said this longstanding issue can only be resolved through the implementation of UN Resolutions and no court of any country can decide over it.

He reiterated Pakistan's continuously resolve to support Kashmir's just right to self-determination. He said for this purpose we will continue our efforts to highlight the issue at all international fora. Regarding improvement in Agriculture sector, the Prime Minister said it is a devolved subject after 18th Amendment but still we have some ambitious plans under the SIFC forum for this purpose. He expressed hope that these plans would give positive impact in future. To a question regarding culture promotion, PM Kakar urged the private sector to invest in this area through joint ventures with neighboring countries including China, Iran and Central Asian States.

Nawaz denies plotting against ex-army and spy chiefs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif said Wednesday he never conspired against ex-army and spy chiefs during his tenure as the country's premier.

Addressing the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) parliamentary board meeting in Lahore, the party supremo said: "I never conspired against Gen (ret'd) Bajwa and Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hamid [...] nor did I conspired against Gen (ret'd) Raheel Sharif."

The veteran politician, who came back home from four years of self-imposed exile in London in October, is eyeing to become the country's prime minister for a record fourth time after being able to secure notable relief from courts in multiple graft cases ahead of the upcoming general elections slated for February 8, 2024.

In his address, he expressed gratitude for his acquittal in "fake" cases. Calling for the conspirators' names to be brought forward, the PML-N supremo reiterated that he has no interest in seeking revenge, but nevertheless, stressed the need for those responsible for his ouster to be held accountable. "I have no right to pardon those who are the enemy of the people," he noted.

"Whatever happened to me [and my family] is now in the past," he said, but claimed that it wasn't just them who were punished, it was the entire nation of 250 million who suffered as a result. Commenting on the recent relief in Al Azizia and Avenfield graft cases, the former premier said: "There was nothing substantive in these cases, their hollowness was proved in the high court [...] When they did not find anything in Panama, they took up the iqama issue [to oust me]."

"They wanted to punish me by ousting me, but they couldn't rely on the Panama case for that," Nawaz said, adding that when no evidence was found against him, he was sentenced based on an iqama instead. Lamenting that remarks like "Sicilian mafia, God Father" were made by "judges" against him, the PML-N supremo wondered if it suited the judges to make such comments.

JUI-F ready to form govt with PML-N

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief of his own faction of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F), Maulana Fazlur Rahman has said that his party was ready to form a coalition government with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Talking to media persons on Wednesday, he said that JUI-F has not held talks with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) regarding seat adjustment and electoral alliance. Maulana Fazlur Rahman said that common citizens and law enforcers were being martyred in Dera Ismail Khan, Tank and South Waziristan daily. The Bajaur incident death toll has reached 80, he added.

The JUI-F was still demanding the timely organisation of fair and free general elections despite the deteriorated law and order situation, said Fazl. Fazlur Rahman said that Asif Ali Zardari raised objections to flaws in vote registration in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). He urged to investigate the alleged vote registration of Afghan citizens.

He admitted that he was unaware of such flaws in the voter lists until Zardari made the revelations. The JUI-F supremo said that a thorough probe should be held into Afghan voters even if general elections are delayed. Last month, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) had agreed on the seat adjustment in Punjab in upcoming general elections.

Bilawal pays rich tribute to Rehmat Shah Afridi

— Visits residence of late Chief Executive The Frontier Post



Ikram Ullah Khalil

PESHAWAR: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visited the residence of the Chief Executive The Frontier Post Late Rehmat Shah Afridi and offered fataha for the departed soul in highest ranks in the heavens, on Wednesday.

PPP chairman paid tribute to the Late Rehmat Shah Afridi for his services in the field of journalism and for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan. He claimed that the Late Rehmat Shah Afridi was a beacon of journalism and media in the subcontinent, especially in Pakistan.

Former Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that Late Rehmat Shah Afridi was a true pioneer of English journalism in the frontier part of Pakistan. He was a luminary in the field of journalism, Afridi's legacy as the founder and Chief Executive of The Frontier Post has left an indelible mark on the landscape of media in the region.

Afridi was not just a journalist; he was a visionary, a mentor, and a trail-

blazer who paved the way for countless aspiring journalists, myself included, to find their voice and purpose in the world of news reporting. As the architect of The Frontier Post, he created more than a newspaper; he fostered a university of journalism, a place where knowledge was shared, skills were honed, and a commitment to truth and integrity was instilled in every journalist who passed through its doors.

His mentorship was a beacon that guided us through the complex landscape of media, inspiring a generation to uphold the principles he held dear. Beyond his professional achievements, Afridi was known for his unwavering dedication to the truth and fearless pursuit of justice. He was not one to shy away from challenging the status quo, and his journalistic endeavors often played a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and discourse. His courage, resilience, and unyielding commitment to the ideals of journalism will be remembered as a benchmark for generations to come.

As we mourn the loss of Rehmat Shah Afridi, let us

also celebrate the rich legacy he leaves behind. The Frontier Post, under his stewardship, remains a testament to his vision and commitment to excellence. His passing is not just a loss for the journalistic community but for the entire region that benefitted from his tireless efforts to bring forth the truth.

In the spirit of the journalistic values he championed, let us continue to honor Rehmat Shah Afridi's memory by upholding the principles of integrity, truth, and fearlessness in our pursuit of knowledge and justice. May his soul rest in peace, and may his legacy inspire countless others to follow in his footsteps.

The sons of deceased including Mahmood Ullah Afridi, Bilal Shah Afridi, Ahmad Shah Afridi and other family members paid thanks to PPP's chairman Bilawal Bhutto for visiting them to condole departure of Late Rehmat Shah Afridi to eternity. Moreover, The Frontier Post staff was also present at the fataha and paid homage for his condolence with Late Rehmat Shah Afridi family.

Kabul needs to handover TTP leadership to Pakistan: FO

ISLAMABAD (INP): Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch on Wednesday urged Afghan authorities to handover to Pakistan the terrorist leadership especially that of the TTP involved in terrorist activities inside Pakistan.

In an interview here, Mumtaz Zahra said Pakistan will take action against them according to its laws. She said we have sufficient evidence against them. She said the foreign secretary delivered a strong demarche to the Afghan Charge D'Affaires yesterday over the recent deadly attack in Dera Ismail Khan. She said the Foreign Secretary demanded that the Afghan government denounce this act at the highest level, conduct an investigation into it, and take stern action against those responsible.

The spokesperson said the Afghan government should fulfill its obligations

and not allow the use of its land against Pakistan. When asked about the Indian Supreme Court's judgment endorsing Modi government decision to abrogate the special status of illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, she said it has no legal status and Pakistan has rejected it.

Mumtaz Zahra said the Indian Supreme Court has no jurisdiction on internationally recognized disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir. She said no country in the world recognizes IIOJK as an integral part of India. She said the motives behind the Indian move are apparent. As part of a considered campaign, it aims to convert Kashmiris into a minority on their own land, which, she said, the Kashmiri people and Pakistan as a party, will never accept. The spokesperson said Pakistan will continue to raise the voice of Kashmiri people at

international level until they get their right to self-determination.

The spokesperson said Pakistan is ready for talks with India but on equal basis and without compromising on Kashmir cause. She said India will have to roll back the illegal steps of 5th August 2019 for talks with Pakistan. Kashmir dispute will remain a priority as and when talks take place with India. She said Pakistan will never leave alone their Kashmiri brothers and sisters. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said India was committing extra territorial killings and kidnappings in South Asia but now its network of espionage and terrorism has gone global. Alluding to the killing of a Sikh leader in Canada and the foiling of a plot to kill another Sikh leader in the US, the spokesperson said, gradually but surely, India is exposing before the world.

KP CM, Governor enquire after health of D I Khan victims

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah and Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali, on Wednesday paid a visit to district D.I Khan. They were also accompanied by the Chief Secretary Nadim Aslam Chaudhry and IGP Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur.

Both the dignitaries jointly chaired a meeting regarding law and order, held at the office of commissioner D.I Khan. The meeting reviewed in details law and order situation in the context of terrorist attack that took place in DI Khan the other day. The concerned authorities on the occasion, briefed the participants about overall security situation in DI Khan and various aspects of the previous day's incident as well as proposed action plan by the law enforcement agencies in order to maintain law and order in DI Khan.

It was informed that during the year 2023, police and other relevant agencies carried out some 194 Intelligence Based Operations, during which a total of 55 terrorists were killed and other 54 were arrested. The caretaker Chief Minister Arshad Hussain Shah strongly condemned the incident of terrorism and said that targeting security forces is an inhuman and heinous act adding that such cowardly attacks cannot demoralize our security forces and the people; the entire nation is stand by security forces in the war against terrorism and we are proud of sacrifices of the Pakistan Army.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali said that the Pakistan Army has always bravely faced the cowardly acts of terrorists and repulsed them. Terrorists will never be able to succeed in their nefarious purpose, the entire nation stands by its forces.

Abbasi not to participate in elections

KARACHI (INP): Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, speaking during the NAB court in Karachi on Wednesday, announced his decision not to participate in the upcoming general elections. He expressed frustration with the NAB and called for a justice system based on fairness and transparency.

Abbasi questioned the motives behind his five-year legal case, which culminated in his acquittal by the High Court earlier today. He demanded accountability for former NAB Chairman Javed Iqbal, who he accused of fabricating charges against him and other political figures.

Solangi rules out any change in election date

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday ruled out any change, amendment or extension in the polls date announced by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

"No extension, amendment or change in the election date given by the Election Commission is on the agenda," Murtaza Solangi said while addressing a news conference along with the health and IT (information technology) ministers after a meeting of the Federal Cabinet. The cabinet meeting was presided over by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

The information minister said, "So far, no such incident has occurred which leads to the postponement of the elections." Sharing the decisions of the Federal Cabinet, he said the forum had rejected the "unilateral verdict" of the Indian Supreme Court regarding the illegal annexation of Jammu and Kashmir by India as an illegal decision.

"Jammu and Kashmir is not an internal issue of India rather an international dispute that has been an unresolved agenda at the UN Security Council for over seven decades," he said, adding the so-called decision of the Indian SC would not have any impact on the Kashmir issue. Solangi said the Federal Cabinet called upon on the international community to strongly condemn the illegal Indian move that usurped the rights of Kashmiris.

He said that the Indian Supreme Court committed

a flagrant violation of India's international commitments and obligations by unilaterally dismissing the petitions against its illegal action of August 5, 2019. "We believed that the so-called decision will give boost to our efforts for the legitimate solution of the Kashmir issue," the minister said while quoting the prime minister as saying.

He said the Kashmir issue should be decided according to the resolutions of the United Nations and as per the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The minister said Pakistan would continue to extend political, diplomatic and moral support to the people of Kashmir. At the outset, the cabinet strongly condemned the D I Khan terrorist attack and prayed Allah Almighty to rest the souls of martyrs in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved families to bear the loss with fortitude.

Paying tributes to the martyrs, PM Kakar stated that they were pride of the nation and vowed that the war against terrorism would continue till complete elimination of the scourge. Minister Solangi said that the cabinet made it clear that such cowardly acts of terrorism could not deter the determination of the Pakistani nation.

While giving details of the cabinet decisions, he said that it gave approval to the Memorandum of Understanding on mutual political exchanges between the Republic of Gambia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan in the context of Pakistan's "Engage Africa" policy. The minister said that the cabinet approved the immediate termination of contract of the managing direc-

tor of the National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC) for misuse of the authority and directed for disciplinary action against him.

It also gave its consent that Mian Mohammad Shafiq, Chief Executive Engineer, would assume the charge as NTC's acting managing director till the appointment of new managing director, he added. The cabinet, he said, also approved changes in the rules and regulations to facilitate the Afghan nationals residing in Pakistan, who neither have any legal proof of entry nor processing fee, and want to leave for a third country.

According to the new rules and regulations, Solangi said, the Afghan nationals, who have to evacuate to a third country and do not have any legal documents or processing fees, would be fined \$400 for overstaying in Pakistan instead of \$ 800. The deadline for stay of such Afghan nationals in Pakistan had also been extended from December 31, 2023 to February 29, 2024, he said, adding the fine, after the due date, would be imposed at the rate of \$100 per month with a maximum limit of \$800.

He said the measures were aimed at encouraging the Afghans residing illegally in Pakistan to obtain legal documents or finalize evacuation agreements as soon as possible in a third country. Solangi said the cabinet also approved the first "National Space Policy", under which international companies would be allowed to provide services to customers through Low Orbit Communication Satellite in Pakistan.

ECP bans transfer of DCs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan on Wednesday imposed a ban on the transfer and posting of DC and ADC across the country. The decision was taken in view of the upcoming general elections scheduled for February 8, 2024, and the appointment of District Returning Officers (DROs), Returning Officers (ROs), and Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) for the polls.

IELTS One Skill Retake launched by IDP in Pakistan

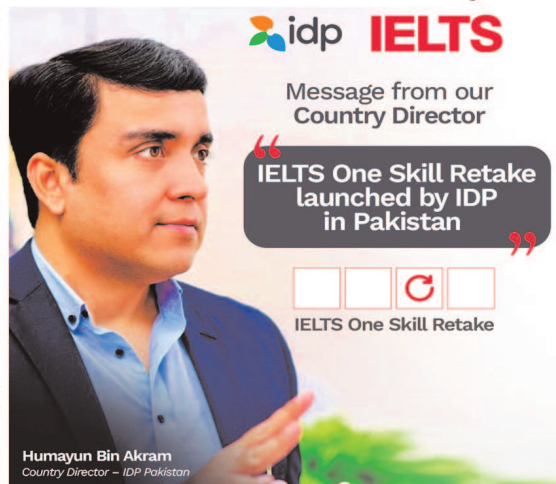
Test takers in Pakistan preparing to take the world's most popular English language test, IELTS, can now access a new feature to help them attain the score they need to achieve their global learning and career goals.

Now available in eligible IELTS test centres in Pakistan, IELTS One Skill Retake enables test takers to retake one of the four skills (Listening, Reading, Writing or Speaking) if they did not achieve the score they aimed for the first time around.

IELTS One Skill Retake is accepted by UK Visas and Immigration, the Australian Department of Home Affairs, the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency and an increasing number of universities and institutions each month. Test takers can determine whether their institution accepts One Skill Retake here.

Imad Chaoui, Regional Director, MEA, EU & CIS, said the launch of IELTS One Skill Retake gives test takers an additional opportunity to achieve their study and migration goals.

"We listened to our test takers who told us that instead of having to



retake the whole test, they wanted the ability to retake one skill of the IELTS test if they didn't get the score they were aspiring to on test day," said Mr. Humayun Bin Akram, Country Director Pakistan.

"IELTS One Skill Retake, which is available for both Academic and General IELTS, gives test takers in Pakistan a new option and increased flexibility as they get their plans on track. It is currently available in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Faisalabad and Gujrat, it

will be introduced to more centres over the coming months," Mr. Humayun Bin Akram said.

Test takers who choose an IELTS One Skill Retake will receive a second Test Report Form (TRF) with their new score that can be used for migration and study purposes. Depending on their score, test takers can choose whether they would like to use their old or new TRF for the skill they retok.

Test takers should note that IELTS One Skill Retake is currently

still growing in recognition for migration or study. IELTS is working with countries and organisations to accept IELTS One Skill Retake and test takers are advised to keep an eye on our website for updates as they are announced. Warwick Freeland, Managing Director - IELTS, IDP Education, said this new option demonstrates IELTS' commitment to helping customers achieve their best scores and to supporting organisations to attract the right candidates.

"IELTS One Skill Retake improves fairness by providing an opportunity to retake a single skill if the test taker feels their original performance was not representative of their language proficiency level," he said.

"We are proud of this initiative that reinforces our commitment to helping test takers achieve their full potential," he said.

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Two arrested in drug peddling case

KARACHI (APP): Two suspects involved in drug peddling were apprehended in a drug operation within the precincts of the Rizvia Society police station.

According to the spokesperson of District Central Police, the individuals were wanted by the Rizvia Society police in connection with their alleged involvement in drug trafficking, operating discreetly within the vicinity. The arrested suspects have been identified as Hunain Mustafa and Muhammad Saleem.

During the arrest, 130 grams of hashish and cash were seized from the possession of the apprehended suspect Hunain, while suspect Saleem was found carrying 110 grams of hashish along with cash. The cases against the arrested suspects have been registered under the Control of Narcotic Substances Act, and the suspects have been handed over to investigative authorities for further interrogation.

PFA discards 300 diseased chickens

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) discarded hundreds of kilograms emaciated and sick broiler chicken after slaughtering while carrying out raids on different chicken shops in Tollinton Market, city's biggest chicken wholesale market on Wednesday morning.

PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javed led the operation along with meat safety teams, while teams have thoroughly inspected several chicken shops and vehicles to ensure the provision of hygienic meat in the provincial metropolises.

The DG PFA said that PFA took action against the driver of a vehicle due to carrying a flock of 300 diseased chickens for selling purposes in the city, whereas PFA ruined their unholy ambitions by taking timely action against the supplier in Tollinton Market.

He said that most of the broiler chickens were found to be suffering from various diseases. He said the use of unhygienic and underweight chicken meat is not fit for human consumption causing various diseases of the stomach, liver and intestines.

Punjab witnesses decline in dengue as 39 new cases reported

LAHORE (APP): In a positive turn, Punjab witnessed a decline in dengue cases, as only 39 new instances were reported on Wednesday. The latest Health Department data reveals a total of 14,931 confirmed dengue cases across 36 districts in Punjab this year.

However, the battle against the fever persists, with Lahore leading the unfortunate tally at 6,883 cases, followed closely by Rawalpindi with 2,651, Gujranwala with 1,575, Multan with 1,435 and Faisalabad with 899 cases. Lahore, with an additional 27 cases, continues to grapple with the fever, Rawalpindi with one, Multan with five and Faisalabad with four new cases.

Meanwhile, Sheikhupura and Bahawalpur each reported one case of dengue in last 24 hours.

CM chairs meeting for beautification of Shahr-e-Faisal, Choukandi graveyard

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar presided over a follow-up meeting on the beautification of Shahr-e-Faisal and Choukundi Graveyard and decided that the builder would start face-uplifting of all three buildings of Falaknaz located opposite airport within next six days meanwhile the architects would develop an over beautification plan of Shahr-e-Faisal right from airport to Regent Plaza.

The meeting was held at CM House and was added by Minister Culture Dr Junaid Shah, Mayor Karachi Muratza Wahab, Secretary to CM Raheem Shaikh, Secretary Culture Khalid Chachar, Commissioner Karachi Saleem Rajput, Architects Ali Naqvi, Arshad Faruqi, Yawar Jilani, Adil Kerai, Hafiz Habib, Kaleem Lashari and other concerned officers. The chief minister said that the concept of Shahr-e-Faisal beautification is aimed at enhancing visual appeal, improving advertising effectiveness, and create a cohesive urban environment. He added that the guidelines include design standards, dynamic signage, content rotation, lighting efficiency, maintenance, and community engagement.

Justice Baqar directed that the architects would ensure signage adheres to a

unified design language that complements the urban landscape. Prioritize standard size, integrating digital technology. LED screens and digital billboards for changing content. The CM said that by implementing these guidelines, the signage policy for Shahr-e-Faisal would create an engaging and visually captivating urban environment, enhancing the overall experience for residents and visitors.

The CM pointed out that the look of the Shahr-e-Faisal at the airport would improve when three Falaknaz buildings were renovated. He directed the SBCA DG to engage the builder and ask him to start face uplifting of its building within the next days, otherwise, he would take strict action.

It was pointed out that Shahr-e-Faisal right from the airport to Regent Plaza became 18 km and its both side, up and down, would be beautified. The KMC horticulture department would start planting trees, and developing lawns where needed while the architects would give them the plan to develop landscapes, construct sculptures, and install new and beautiful grills and similar globes for the streetlights would be installed. All the footpaths would be renovated with quality material.

Minister emphasizes pivotal role of research in societal impact

LAHORE (APP): In a compelling address at the Lahore Garrison University's two-day conference on Frontiers in Applied Biological Sciences on Wednesday, Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr. Javed Akram emphasized the pivotal role of research in societal impact. He underscored the importance of collaboration between academia and industry, particularly in the vast field of biological sciences.

Dr. Akram highlighted the urgency for Pakistan to focus on biotechnology, expressing concern over the absence of a single biotechnology plant in the country compared to China's 3,000 facilities. Propelled by the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi, Dr. Akram revealed plans to establish biotechnology parks in Pakistan.

Anticipating Pakistan becoming the

world's third-largest country in population within two decades, Dr. Akram emphasized the need for progress in gene editing and improving lab skills. He announced a comprehensive screening program, making Thalassemia screening mandatory for every class 10 student across the province.

Commending Lahore Garrison University's commitment to quality research, Dr. Akram announced its affiliation with teaching institutions to enhance the teaching department.

Vice Chancellor Major General (Retd) Khalil Dar, Dean Basic Sciences Colonel (Retired) Dr. Muhammad Amjad Khan, and distinguished guests including Prof Dr Shahida Hasnain and Prof Dr Tahir Yaqub were present at the conference, which drew a large participation from students.

LWMC teams deployed to combat smog

LAHORE (APP): In a proactive move to tackle smog, Lahore Waste Management Company's dedicated cleaning teams have been deployed across the city, actively working to ensure a cleaner environment.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Babar Sahib Din took immediate action by conducting emergency visits to various locations in the city here on Wednesday. During his visits to Nishtar Town and Iqbal Town, he meticulously reviewed sanitation arrangements, along with Deputy CEO Fahad Mehmood and Muhammad Aurangzeb.

The CEO urged formulation of a policy

penalising citizens, who dispose of construction material outside their homes, emphasising their responsibility for debris disposal costs. He also inspected cleanliness measures on crucial roads such as Kacha Jail Road, Madar-e-Millat Road, and PIA Road.

He also ordered for accelerating cleaning process for open plots along the PIA Road and personally oversaw the progress on Khayaban-e-Firdousi.

In a bid to combat illegal dumping, the LWMC CEO issued instructions for enforcement actions around Mian Plaza and Global Village.

‘Sindh Govt focused to timely complete schemes for welfare of minorities’

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Caretaker Minister for Information Minorities Affairs and Social Protection departments Muhammad Ahmed Shah on Wednesday said that the Sindh government is committed to ensure the timely completion of all the schemes for the welfare of the minority community in the province.

He was talking to Senator

Anwar Lal Deen and Sardar Ramesh Singh here. Ahmed Shah said that a wonderful program will be organized by the Sindh government on the night of December 24, in which all the notables of the Christian community of the province are being invited.

He said that Christmas and the birth anniversary of the founder of Pakistan, Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, will also be celebrated with traditional enthusiasm on December 25. On this occasion, Senator Anwar Lal

Deen and Sardar Ramesh Singh appreciated the services of Minister for Information and Minority Affairs for promoting inter-faith harmony.

Ahmad Shah said that the Caretaker Chief Minister of Sindh, Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar and the members of the cabinet are keen to implement all possible measures for the welfare of the minority community of the province and all the ongoing schemes for the minority community will be completed in time.

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Contact No. 091-2219569, 2563913, 2212391

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ShahidUllah Tower, Patang Chowk, Opposite Abasyn University, Main Ring Road, Northern Site, Peshawar

Letters for the same have been dispatched to all account holders.



LAHORE: Special Assistant to Prime Minister Allama Tahir Ashrafi and Chairman Pakistan Ulema-e-Islam Council addressing a press conference at Directorate of Hajj.

‘Govt framing National Maritime Policy for development of sector’

KARACHI (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Maritime Affairs, Vice Admiral (r) Iftikhar Ahmed Rao, Wednesday, said that government was framing National Maritime Policy to develop the sector for realizing the growth potential and reap benefits of blue economy.

He was addressing as chief guest at Passing out Parade of 60th batch of Pakistan Marine Academy (PMA). As many as 94 cadets graduated in disciplines of Nautical Sciences (48) and Marine Engineering (46).

The SAPM appreciated professional services of Pakistan Marine Academy for providing training in nautical and marine engineering fields as well as conducting compulsory seamanship training, certificate courses and post sea specialized courses. Vice Admiral (ret'd) Iftikhar Ahmad Rao appreciated the positive role Pakistan Marine Academy is playing in the country's shipping industry and also felicitated the graduating cadets who were ready to induce themselves into much desired process of national building.

Terming cadets as the backbone of the blue economy he stated that you have chosen a profession that has immense importance nationally as well as internationally as marine

transportation being the most economical and environment friendly medium occupied significance in global trade and nations who realized its importance became great powers.

Seafarers are backbone on this industry that offers opportunities of bright future to youth as it was expected that global requirement of seafarer officers in the industry would be around 90000 by 2026, he noted.

He urged the cadets that they will be the sailing ambassadors of Pakistan in the field of shipping across the world so they must excel while maintaining international standards and earn not only good name for the country but also contribute in development of national as well as global economy. Referring to efforts for upgrading PMA into higher education institution in fields of Nautical Sciences and Marine Engineering, the SAPM said that government was formalizing National Maritime Policy and we are recommending to establish National University of Maritime Sciences and Technology and PMA would be a hub of the university.

He expressed hope that PMA in the near future would achieve global recognition as a preeminent Maritime Research and Development Institute.

He also congratulated Commodore Rizwan Ali Munnawar SI (M)

Commandant PMA, Faculty and his staff for their hard work and dedication. Commodore Rizwan Ali Munnawar in his inaugural address felicitated the graduating cadets and appreciated their endeavor during the two years of professional training.

He urged the cadets to continue their strive with same zeal and zest and keep themselves abreast with the latest trends of the shipping industry to develop career skills required for future career building.

Later, the chief guest distributed awards and medals to the high achievers in the passing out term. Commandant Medal was awarded to Cadet Muhammad Owais Khan while Cadet Syed Shah Maknoon was conferred with title of PNSC Dagger.

Cadet Muhammad Zohair Mehdi Naqvi achieved the Chief of Naval Staff Silver Medal, Cadet Syed Ahmed Raza received the Minister of Maritime Affairs Gold Medal while Cadet Muhammad Bilal got the Presidential Gold Medal.

In the Category of Cash Prizes GRG overall best Cadet cash prize Rs. 100,000 received by Cadet Muhammad Rehan Humayun and GRG Runner up Cash Prize Rs. 50,000 won by Cadet Muhammad Bilal.

LESCO detects 289 power pilferers on 95th day of anti-theft campaign

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) detected a total of 289 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) on the 95th day of grand anti-power theft campaign.

A LESCO spokesman told the media here Wednesday that the company had also submitted FIR applications against 289 electricity thieves, out of which 137 cases were registered in respective police stations, while 13 accused have been arrested.

On the 95th consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected. Among the seized connections were 13 commercial, one industrial and 275 domestic. All the power pilferers were charged with a total of 332,138 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 12.313 million. Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he explained that LESCO charged detection units worth Rs 5000,000 to an electricity pilferer in Shafiqabad Lahore; Rs

125,000 detection bill to another customer stealing electricity in Factory Area; Rs 100,000 fine to a power thief also in Shahpur; and Rs 100,000 detection bill to a power thief also Factory area. During the 95 days of grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned, the LESCO detected pilferage on 35,211 power connections and submitted 34,819 FIR applications against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations out of which 33,479 FIRs have been registered, while 15,858 accused have so far been arrested by the police. The LESCO has so far charged a total of 57,273,810 detection units worth Rs 2,243,927,577 to all the power pilferers.

LESCO recovers Rs 1.59b from 52,155 defaulters in 3 months: The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO), in collaboration with Tehsildars (Recovery), recovered more than Rs 1.59 billion from 52,155 chronic defaulters in all five districts - Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara - during three months of its recovery campaign.

A LESCO spokesman told the media here on Wednesday that during the 90 days, Chief Engineer O&M (T&G) Zafar Iqbal, with the support of Tehsildar City Mujahid Ziaand Tehsildar Shalimar Noraz Humayun, recovered outstanding dues of Rs 201.79 million from 6,713 defaulters in Northern Circle, and Rs 388.13 million from 6,750 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 213.63 million from 6,193 defaulters in Central Circle and Rs 84.40 million from 2,785 defaulters in South Circle, while Manager (Technical) Engineer Muhammad Farooq with the assistance of Tehsildar Nankana Sahib Muhammad Iqbal Rasheed and Tehsildar Sheikhupura Muhammad Aslam Gujjar recovered Rs 114.28 million from 4,820 defaulters in Nankana Circle and Rs 240.73 million from 6,018 defaulters in Sheikhupura Circle.



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER PESHAWAR IRRIGATION CIRCLE PESHAWAR

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NOTICE FOR INVITING E-BIDDING

SINGLE STAGE SINGLE ENVELOP PROCEDURE

Irrigation Department Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Warsak Road Peshawar through Executive Engineer Tubewells Irrigation Division Peshawar Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, invites electronic Bids from the eligible form / Contractors enlisted with Irrigation Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who have renewed their enlistment for the year 2023-24 and having registration with Pakistan Engineering Council for the year 2023-24 in the relevant category and registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa revenue authority and accordance with KPRA procurement rules 2014 on single stage single envelop procedure for the following works:-

S.#	Name of Work / Sub Works	E/Cost in Rs.	Earnest Money in name of Executive Engineer T/wells Irrigation Division Peshawar	PEC Relevant Code
Name of Work: Construction of Flood Protection works Irrigation Channels & Ponds & Installation of Solar Irrigation Tubewells in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ADP No. 2108/210455 dg 2023 -24				
01.	Installation of Solar Irrigation Tubewell at Telaband (Sehran) C/O Siraj Khan in District Peshawar	Rs. 7038707/-	140774/-	CE-09 CE-10 EE-11

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Bid Solicitation Documents containing all the terms and conditions and other relevant instructions for works can be downloaded from the department and or KPRA websites (www.irrigation.gkp.pk) / (www.kppra.gov.pk). For each Package separate Bid solicitation document are to be submitted by the interested Bidders.
- Electronic bidding shall be done on "above / below system" on BQO/Engineer's estimate.
- All the bids received shall be opened and evaluated in the manner prescribe in the bidding document.
- The bidder shall submit their Bids on the following address "Superintending Engineer Peshawar Irrigation Circle Peshawar" only through reliable courier service on or before the dead line along with required document as per details mentioned in bid solicitation document. The affixed labels of the courier service provider may be authenticated for tracking before opening. Fake courier delivery shall be processed as per law and would not be considered.
- All bidders are required to have valid registration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa revenue authority.
- The bidder shall submit 02% bid security, of the estimated cost as mentioned above, in the shape of deposit at call (Original) along with their bid before closing date and time in the name of Executive Engineer Tubewells Irrigation Division Peshawar.
- Notifications issued by KPRA pertaining to procurement process issued from time to time shall be applicable.
- If the evaluated electronic bid costs of two or more bidders are equal, then the successful bidder will be declared through draw / toss.
- Pre-bid meeting will be held 27-12-2023 at 11:00 AM in the office of the Superintending Engineer Peshawar Irrigation Circle Peshawar.
- The Last date & time for Submission of the Bid along with relevant documents is 04-01-2024 up to 2:00 PM which will be opened on the same day at 2:30 PM in the office of the Superintending Engineer Peshawar Irrigation Circle Peshawar in presence of Contractor and their representatives who wishes to attend.
- Bid security of 1st, 2nd and 3rd lowest bidders will be retained by the employer till the approval of bids by the competent Authority.
- All Govt: Notifications/ Rules/Taxes updated from time to time shall be applicable.

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
[INF(P) 2998/23]

SUIT NOTICE

In the Court of Miss Ambareen Navid Judge Banking Court-1 Peshawar Federal Judicial Complex, Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar. Case No: 111/1 of 2023 Date of hearing: 20-01-2024 Suit for the recovery of Rs. 2,396,748/- SME Bank Ltd: through its Chief Manager, Peshawar cantt: Branch Vs: Asadullah. Notice Versus:- 1. Asadullah s/o Nasruddin R/o:- P.O Karimpura, H.No. 2953, Mohallah Hajian, Androon Hashtnagri, Peshawar. 2. MIS Asadullah Food Grain Dealer, New Rampana gate, Peshawar. where as the plaintiff bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs.2,396,748/- Against you under section 10(2) of the Financial Institution (Recovery of Finance) Ordinance 2001, you are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/ publication of the notice in the newspapers. Failing which an ex-parte decree shall be passed in favour of the plaintiff Bank with costs. Issued today on 04-12-2023 under my signature and seal of the Court.

Banking Court,1 Peshawar

نوٹس اشعار

تعداد جناب جاگیر خان چنگلگ کوٹ ۱۱ خیر بختو اپنا پڑاؤ فیڈرل جڈیشنل کمپنس کیس 7 حیات آباد چٹا کوٹ بھٹماڑی آئی نان مندربر 118/1 ریمو 25-11-23 داتا تاریخ 23-1-24 HBL مرانے کر شہزادہ بختو منجمدی بھٹماڑی ند عالم شیر پرہیز M/S ماسر کر پڑو ٹومرو فاولد و سرائے کر شاطن بختو مقدمہ مندرجیل میں تک کے کے خلاف مذکور ہا پائے مسئلہ 2124600/12 رے پٹو چہ مقدمہ مار (Mark Up) جات وکیل رقم راز کیا ہے، الہا آپ کو پڑو شاطن کی پائے کے آپ شہزاد کی شاطن کے 30 دن کے اندر برطانیہ کشن 10 (2) ناقل شفیعی ٹیخو (ریکوری آف قاضی) آزادی تین مجریہ کی ہائے درخواست منقل جواب دہی عروہہ نہایت، بیان منقل تقدیر پان مشوہوہو جس سے معلوم ہو سکے کہ خلاف مقدمہ کے لے کی مل جل بھوہوہو ہے آپ کو برطانیہ کیا پائے کہ مقدمہ نہایت کے خلاف کیڑو نہایت ہائی پائے کیا۔

آج تارخ 25-11-23 برت میرے مقدمہ عروہات ہادی کیا گیا۔

جج بینگلگ کوٹ ۱۱ پشاور

Govt spending hefty amount on health sector

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali Thursday said that government is spending hefty amount to improve healthcare system for facilitation and benefit of masses.

He was addressing convocation of Rehman Medical College as a Chief Guest. The ceremony was also attended by caretaker health minister, Qasim Jan, health advisor, Dr. Riaz anwar, Vice Chancellor Khyber Medical University, Dr. Zia-ul-Haq, Chairman RMI, Dr. Muhammad Rehman, faculty members and students.

He said that maximum portion of budget was being spent on health as it is duty of government to ensure provision of health facilities to people.

Governor lauded position of RMI

in medical field and said that medical profession is being given due respect by the society and it is duty doctors to work for maximum relief of ailing community adding dedication and attitude of doctors is of supreme importance for patients and their recovery.

He advised doctors to be more polite and cooperative and listened to ordeal of their patients with patience. He also urged doctors to venture into field of research and innovation for benefits of patients.

He also distributed degrees and commendation certificates among students and congratulated parents for success of their children.

Later, Governor met with a delegation of All Pakistan Marble Industries Association that was led by Asghar Khan Umankhel. The delegation informed governor about their problems relating to mining material, under construction roads in Mohmand district, and granite and marble mining.



PESHAWAR: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in a group photo with the staff of The Frontier Post. — F.P. photo

PHC orders appointment of competent officer at NHS

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice SM Attique Shah ordered federal's government for appointment of competent officer in Basic Pay Scale (BPS-19) at National Health Services (NHS) within three months.

The counsel Malak Shahbaz Khan advocate argued that the federal's government has appointed BPS-17 officer named Syed Murtaza Shah as Director Central Services Branch in BPS-19 at National Health Services on Acting basis which was challenged by Hafeez Ullah at PHC.

The counsel argued that Syed Murtaza is working from one and half year on Acting Basis/extra charge but the law allows Acting appointments/charge for six months in extraordinary situation under promotion quota's regulations. He added that federal's government is taking such actions which is depriving senior doctors from their due rights.

The counsel Malak Shahbaz Advocate argued that the courts had already declared such appointments illegal in several pleas and added that if competent officers are available, how can be a junior officer to be appointment as highest position.

However, the federal's government representative informed that the appointment has been made as per Staff Gap Arrangement and permanent appointment would be made on the availability of competent officer.

In the meantime, PHC observed that how a junior is holding additional charge for such longtime on a strategic position which shows ignorance of federal government in this regard, PHC's ordered federal's government for appointment of competent officer within three months and dispose of writ petition after conclusion of arguments.

Speakers ask for investing on girls education

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Stakeholders on the occasion of International Human Rights Day 2030 commits to invest in girls education for solving gender-inequalities and eradicating GBV.

In a remarkable display of commitment towards gender equality and girls' education, the National Commission of Human Rights (NCHR) & Blue Veins, in collaboration with Pakistan Education Champions Network (PECN), Directorate General of Law and Human Rights Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Child Welfare and Protection Commission, Right to Information Commission & Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on Status of Women, organized the Girls Summit on the occasion of International Human Rights Day.

The event, marking the culmination of the 16 days of activism campaign, witnessed an exceptional participation of diverse stakeholders, including representatives from Government departments, lawyers, UN agencies, civil society organizations, academia, students, and the business community.

ROs and DROs training session started

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: After the appointment of Returning Officers (ROs) for General Election 2024, their three-day training has started on Wednesday. The Election Commission has completed all the arrangements for the training. The senior officers of Election Commission are giving training to all District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs).

These officers are being given training on election process, election rules and other administrative matters related to elections. The one-day training has been arranged on Wednesday. 36 DROs will be trained. ROs are being given three-day election training at the divisional level which will be continued till Friday.

A total of 160 ROs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are being trained. The Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shamshad Khan on Wednesday visited the training sessions of ROs of Peshawar and Mardan divisions at a local hotel in Peshawar.

Speaking on this occasion, the PEC informed the ROs that the Election Commission has selected you as the ROs keeping in mind your abilities. Therefore, a great responsibility has been imposed on you people. I am sure that you will play your role in conducting peaceful and transparent elections by using your skills.

Al-Azizeya case: Nawaz's acquittal political, moral victory

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial President PML-N Lawyers Forum KP, Kifayatullah Khan advocate Supreme Court and General Secretary Akbar Yousaf Khalil advocate on Wednesday said that the acquittal PMLN supremo, Nawaz Sharif in Al-Azizeya case has vindicated party stance of his innocence.

In a statement, they termed the acquittal of former Prime Minister as political and moral victory of PMLN.

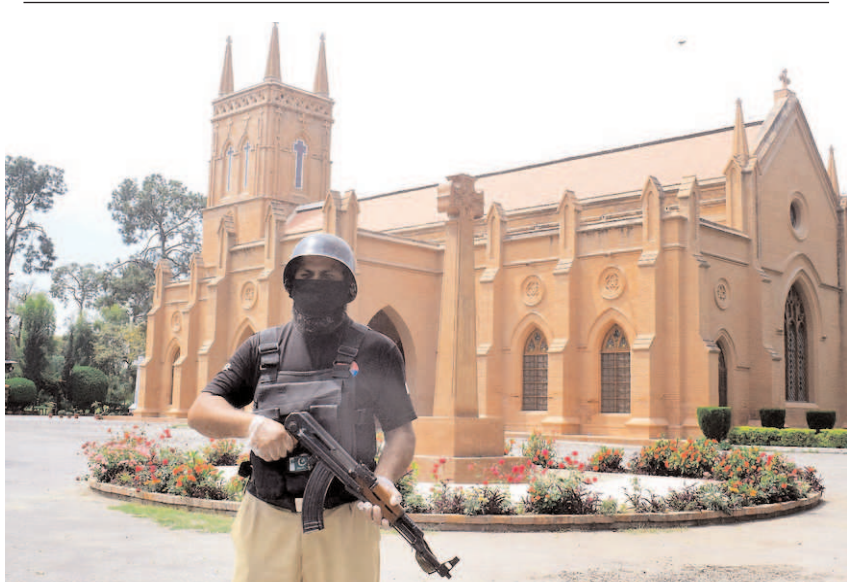
They said that the cases against Party leadership were politically motivated so as to deprive the country from progress and reversed the process of development.

ment. PMLN leaders regretted that a conspiracy was hatched to destabilize the party government and paved way for an incompetent person.

They said that the incompetent person was installed through rigged elections who played havoc with national economy and his flawed policies had resulted in unprecedented price-hike. They added that PTI government had destroyed state institutions and created hatred in society.

The PMLN stalwarts said that if voted to power the party under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif would change the lot of masses.

They contended that only PMLN has the potential to bring prosperity and tranquility in the country.



PESHAWAR: A policeman stand alert at Saddar Church on ahead of start Christmas prayers ceremonies.

Minister chairs steering committee meeting

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged Districts, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Dr. Aamir Abdullah chaired a meeting of the Special Steering Committee formed regarding Newly Merged Districts here at Civil Secretariat here on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the committee reviewed progress on various tasks assigned to relevant departments by the Special Task Force and Steering committee in previous decisions.

In the meeting, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Department Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah, officers of Pakistan Army, secretaries of the Department of Health, Industry, Irrigation, Communications and Works, Police and other sectors was also reviewed, while the committee asked all the departments to fulfill their professional responsibilities in an efficient manner and speed up the work of the necessary stages of the development process.

Similarly, matters regarding improving the efficiency of police were discussed, while the financial affairs of necessary communication projects in different districts were also reviewed.

It was directed to take effective measures to resolve the financial problems of Governor Model School Mohmand and to prepare a reasonable plan in this regard.

In the meeting, it was directed to speed up the steps required for the establishment of a Small Industrial Estate in Bajaur, while it was emphasized to expedite the process of agriculture and tourism projects in the area.

Speaking on this occasion, the caretaker minister said that the purpose of setting up the committee is to speed up the performance of various sectors for the development of the merged districts and there should be such decisions that have a direct impact on the people of these areas.

PHC orders promotion of 67 clerk Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice SM Attique Shah ordered federal's government for promotion of 67 Accounts Clerk of Communication & Works (C&W) to BPS-14 and above, on Wednesday.

The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate informed that other departments had promoted Account Clerks to BPS-14, 15 & 16 expect C&W while Asif Ali along 66 others approached PHC for redressal of their grievances.

After PHC's decision in 2014 other departments had promoted Accounts Clerk expect C&W employees didn't obtained upgradation in this regard, the counsel added.

'Corruption damages social fabric' F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Corruption had damaged social fabric of Pakistani society and it is high time for elimination of malpractices by ensuring accountability public office holders indiscriminately.

This was said by Principal Government Girls Degree College Zaryab Colony Nihayat Safi while addressing an event regarding Anti-Corruption Day at the college and added that corruption has been engulfed public sector in last few decades which had faced nation with the crisis.

Principal Government Girls Degree College Zaryab Colony argued every citizen to play their role for elimination of corruption as a moral and national obligation. She added that Anti-Corruption Day is observing every year with the aim to bring awareness among public for curtaining malpractices.

Industrial units start shifting

PESHAWAR (APP): Small industrial units in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have started shifting on solar energy to compete with the growing prices of the power tariff and so far, 8 units at Small Industrial Estate, Peshawar have already been solarized.

According to sources in the Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the trend of the solarization of industrial units is on rise due to higher power tariff.

He said that 8 units had solarized while the solarization of more is in process.

Major operations against smugglers conducted



Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: In a significant crackdown on drug trafficking, Capital City Police Peshawar has intensified its efforts against smugglers and narcotics vendors across the district.

As part of these operations, a luxury vehicle intercepted by Golbarg Police Station in Cantt Division yielded a staggering 622 kilograms of narcotics, three pistols, and two mobile phones, collectively valued at millions of rupees.

The seized narcotics consist of 469 kilograms of Hasish, 152 kilograms of opium, and over a kilogram of heroin. Preliminary investigations reveal that the vehicle used for smuggling had been tampered with to conceal the narcotics. Additionally, the police discovered a strategic alteration of the car's appearance, with a black sticker affixed to change its color, presumably to mislead law enforcement and other regulatory authorities.

A specialized team, led by SP Cantt Division Waqas Rafique, has been formed to trace the organized network involved in this illegal activity. Surveillance footage from CCTV cameras installed in various locations is being collected, and data from the seized mobile phones is also under scrutiny. Legal proceedings have been initiated with the registration of a case, and a thorough investigation is underway.

DSP Cantt Haroon Jadoon, along with SHO Abdul Aziz, accompanied by the Golbarg Police Station team, conducted the inspection in the Golbarg area Raziq Road after clearing the suspicious vehicle during a routine check. The subsequent search resulted in the discovery of 469 kilograms of hasish, 152 kilograms of opium, over a kilogram of heroin, three pistols, and two mobile phones. The implicated vehicle has been impounded by the police for further examination.

This successful operation signifies a major step in combating narcotics trafficking in the region, demonstrating the commitment of law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety and security of the community. Further developments in the investigation are expected as authorities delve deeper into dismantling the illicit drug network.

15 doctors of KTH promoted

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Teaching Hospital on Wednesday in light of the decisions of the 100th Board of Governors meeting, 14 Assistant Professors have been promoted to the positions of Associate Professors, and one to the position of Professor.

A ceremony was organized at Khyber Teaching Hospital's Auditorium by the hospital administration to acknowledge all promoted doctors and other senior faculty members.

Senior Professors and Chairpersons were honored for their outstanding contributions, and honorary shields were distributed among the promoted doctors.

Assistant Professors promoted to Associate

Professors included Dr. Amina Gul (Pathology), Dr. Muhammad Imran Khan (General Surgery), Dr. Nasir Ahmed, Dr. Hazibullah Jan, Dr. Younas, Dr. Munir Ahmed, Dr. Imran Khan (Psychiatry), Dr. Muhammad Siraj (Orthopedics), Dr. Dil Bagh, Dr. Awal Hakim, Dr. Zahidullah Khan (Medicine), Dr. Muhammad Imran (Pediatric Surgery), Dr. Irfanullah Afridi (Dermatology), and Dr. Adeela Mustafa (Community Medicine from Khyber Medical College), while Dr. Ahsan Mahmood from Khyber College of Dentistry was promoted to the position of Professor.

During the ceremony, Dr. Muhammad Zafar Afridi, Director of KTH,

extended congratulations to all promoted doctors, emphasizing the collective effort needed for the institution's progress.

He expressed the commitment to providing the best medical facilities for patients. Dr. Zafar Afridi also announced upcoming enhancements and renovations in the hospital for better healthcare.



In brief

One dead in coal mine explosion Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: An explosion ripped through a coal mine in Pabi Shahkot, Tehsil of Nowshera on Wednesday, killing one worker and leaving four others injured. According to police and rescue officials, the blast occurred shortly after 8:00 AM, burying five workers under the debris. Rescue teams from Police and Rescue 1122 immediately rushed to the scene and launched a rescue operation. One worker, identified as Khaista, 30, was found dead at the scene. Four other workers, Salahuddin (41), Jahan Khan (37), Jahan Bakht (55), and another unidentified individual, were rescued and rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment. The injured workers, who are reportedly from the Shangla district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, are said to be in stable condition. The cause of the explosion is still under investigation, but authorities suspect it may have been caused by the accumulation of methane gas in the mine. The provincial government has announced an investigation into the incident and has pledged to provide assistance to the deceased worker's family and the injured workers.

FIA arrests key facilitator

FAISALABAD (INP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Wednesday arrested another key facilitator in the Libya migrant boat wreck incident. The FIA spokesperson stated that an operation was conducted over the suspicious transaction from the bank account of the other key facilitator – currently in custody – Adil Mumtaz. The accused received Rs 1 million to send a citizen to Italy via his human trafficking network, additionally, the citizen who gave the money went into hiding after reaching Libya. Earlier this month, the FIA spokesperson confirmed that a key facilitator Adil in the Libya migrant boat wreck tragedy was arrested. The FIA investigators collected all relevant details including bank accounts and mobile phone records from the accused, said the agency's spokesperson, adding that Adil was tasked to collect and transfer money from the citizens for the global human trafficking network. Additionally, Adil was also facing an inquiry of the FIA's anti-money laundering circle. There have been two notable incidents of boats drowning off the coast of Libya in the Mediterranean Sea this year in which several Pakistanis had lost their lives. The first incident took place in February and the other in April. Later, an Italy-bound fishing trawler reportedly carrying at least 800 people – including hundreds of Pakistanis – capsized off Greece. The then-Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed authorities concerned to investigate the human trafficking that led to the tragic incident of a migrant shipwreck near Greece with several Pakistani nationals onboard.

47 wheelchairs distributed F.P. Report

KOHAT: Following the directives of Deputy Commissioner Kohat, Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, a wheelchair distribution ceremony was held in the remote area of Jawaki Tehsil Dara Adam Khel here on Wednesday. District Social Welfare Officer Amjad Afridi participated in the event and distributed 47 wheelchairs among the special people.



QUETTA: Chief Organizer Balochistan Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party Shamshad addressing a press conference

Armed dacoits loot a house at gunpoint in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Unknown armed dacoits stormed into the house of one Akhunzada Ihsanullah, a resident of Khall Bar Kalay in the jurisdiction of Khall police station here on Tuesday night and looted cash and gold at gunpoint, residents said. They said the incident spread fear and panic among locals. The residents said that it was the first ever blatant robbery in the area.

The house owner Ihsanullah lodged a complaint with police stating that some armed dacoits entered into his house at 2 PM on Tuesday night and took the inmates hostage. He said the dacoits looted Rs 100,000 cash and four and a half tola of gold ornaments at gunpoint. An exchange of fire between the robbers and the house owner took place after the robbers went out of the house. The victim's relatives gathered soon after the incident on receiving information but by then the robbers had escaped safely. The Khall police registered a case against unknown accused and started investigations. A police team also visited the crime scene and collected some evidence from the site. The residents have demanded of the district administration and police high ups to arrest the armed robbers as the incident had spread anger in the area. One of the Khall police officials told this scribe on contact that a case had been registered and the accused would soon be brought to book.

Students' expo held:

The Islami Jamiat Tulba (IJT), a students' wing of the Jamaat-i-Islami on Wednesday announced to launch an education referendum in the entire Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province for resolution of problems faced by students.

The announcement was made by the IJT provincial nazim Wasim Haider while addressing a students' expo as chief guest at the government degree college Gulabad. The students and teachers took keen interest in various stalls of books, culture and eatery set up at the expo. A poetry session was also held during which prominent poets Maaz Khan, Sajid Dawran and others presented their poems.

The JI nominated candidate for NA 7 Maulana Muhammad Ismail, candidate for PK 15 Azizullah Khan, IJT local nazim Taimur Ahmad, IJT tehsil chief Dr Bashir Ahmad, IJT provincial president of Bazm e Shaheen Osama Ahmad and college nazim Asghar Khan spoke on the occasion.

The IJT leader demanded the government to provide resources to government colleges and public sector universities so that the issues faced by students could be solved. He said that more than 60 per cent of the total population was youths but they lacked proper education facilities. He said the government should restore the students' union so that students could freely exercise their right to vote. He said that unfortunately no government had prioritized education so far

that was why the public sector universities and government colleges were faced with several issues.

One killed: A man identified as Halim Khan 37 s/o Daulat Khan, a resident of Samarbagh was killed while another man Hayat 35 was injured when a car and a motorcycle collided head on at Gosum area of Munda here on Wednesday. Rescue 1122 officials said. They said the Rescue 1122 medical team shifted the dead and the injured to the district headquarters hospital Timergara after providing first aid to the injured. The Munda police registered a case and started investigations.

One miner killed, four injured F.P. Report

SHANGLA: A miner killed and four other residents of Shangla are injured in gas blast at Haji Abdul Tahir mine in Shahkot-2 area of Pabbi, district Nowshera, on Wednesday.

The coal mine was collapse after gas blast in the ore in which five laborers were ditch in the mud. However, one miner was killed and four others were recovered critically injured after rescue operation in the premises. The injured laborers were identified as Khaista Khan 30 years of age, Salah-u-Din 41 aged, Jahan Khan 37 and Jahan Bakht 55 years of age are residents of different localities of Shangla district.

Govt fails before fertilizers mafia F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Central President Kisan Board Pakistan Sardar Zafar Hussain said that government has absolutely failed to overcome black-marketing and artificial shortage of fertilizers in the county while due to black-marketing and hoarding of fertilizers not only expenditures of famers are increasing which could cause decline in wheat production whereas food crisis also be further increased in the country.

He was addressing the participants of a rally taken out against black-marketing and artificial shortage of fertilizers committed by fertilizer mafia. Vice President Kisan Board Pakistan Amanullah Chatha and District President Kisan Board Hafizabad Shoukat Ali Phullarwan and farmers participated the protesting rally.

He said that fertilizer mafia consisting of fertilizer companies and dealers were selling urea fertilizers at the rate of Rs. 5000/= per bag instead of fixed price of Rs. 3760/= per bag in broad day light and sucking blood of farmers as well as challenging writ of federal, provincial governments and district administration.

Bar association donated blood: Patron-in Chief Sundas Foundation Hafizabad and Ex-District Nazim Col. (R) Ali Ahmad Awan said that honorable President District Bar Association Hafizabad Malik Waqas Raza and members of the Bar has set a new example of serving the ailing humanity to donate blood for innocent children suffering from Thalassemia disease.

Lack of basic facilities in DHQ Mardan

Anees Takar

MARDAN: District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) Mardan has transformed into a hub of issues, leaving patients distressed. With reports of patients being neglected, the hospital's functionality has come under scrutiny, revealing a dire situation. At the heart of the problem is the unavailability of even the most basic supplies, such as a government-issued syringe, which is priced at 20 rupees.

The hospital's administrative performance is seemingly limited, raising questions about its overall functionality, which appears confined to mere photo sessions. The plight of patients is exacerbated by the scarcity of resources and the apparent lack of concern from various association representatives.

Concerned citizens from Mardan and surrounding areas have voiced their grievances, shedding light on the hurdles they face when seeking medical assistance. According to relatives accompanying patients, specialist doctors in various fields are confined to their private clinics

and hospitals. This leaves the District Health Officer (DHO) position vacant for the past eight months, creating a vacuum in overseeing all matters related to the health department.

In an appeal directed at relevant authorities, the residents and community members urge the hospital administration to correct its course. They emphasize the need for transparency and unbiased inquiries into the expenditure of public funds on various ceremonies. The citizens demand a thorough investigation to hold accountable those responsible for potential financial mismanagement, ensuring the National Treasury is safeguarded from any losses incurred.

Sadiq Ahmed, a concerned resident of Mardan, "The deteriorating condition of our District Headquarters Hospital is alarming. My family faced a harrowing experience recently when we couldn't find even a basic syringe for my ailing uncle. It's distressing to witness such neglect in a healthcare facility that is supposed to cater to the needs of our community. Authorities need to address these issues

promptly."

Fatima Gul, a local activist, "The absence of a District Health Officer for eight months is a significant concern. It reflects poorly on the healthcare system's management. We need competent individuals overseeing the health department to ensure citizens receive the care they deserve. Additionally, the financial transparency of the hospital's expenditures must be guaranteed."

Saleem Khan, a senior citizen residing nearby, "I've seen the hospital's conditions deteriorate over the years. It's disheartening to know that specialist doctors prefer their private practices over contributing to the public health system. The concerned authorities should take immediate action to appoint a District Health Officer and address the shortages in the hospital."

The collective sentiment among the citizens calls for urgent attention from health authorities and an overhaul of the hospital's management. The community seeks assurance that their health and well-being are prioritized, and resources are utilized responsibly for the benefit of all.

Inauguration of first DRC in district Khyber applauded

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has set up the first Dispute Resolution Council (DRC) in Tehsil Landi Kotal of the Khyber District to provide a formal forum for settling a dispute outside a courtroom.

In a press release by EVAW/G Alliance Khyber Chapter and Blue Veins, a local NGO working for the empowerment of women in the region, collectively applauded the efforts of DPO Khyber Saleem Abbas Kulachi and IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan for this ground-breaking initiative. 21 members of newly established DRC, including a woman from District Khyber, took oath on Thursday, 8th December, in an inauguration ceremony attended by diverse stakeholders.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have expressed their wholehearted support for the inclusion of women in the newly established DRC in Khyber District as a significant development and ground-breaking shift from the historical norms where dispute

resolution and the jirga system were predominantly male domains.

This 21-member Council, notably including Anna Afridi, symbolizes a progressive step towards inclusive decision-making and dispute resolution. Afridi, representing the EVAW/G Alliance Khyber, brings an essential female perspective to the Council, setting a precedent for future endeavors. "The formation of the DRC is a significant advancement in empowering women within the community. It offers them a platform to voice their concerns, ensuring their participation in the societal and legal processes," said Afridi.

The DRC's role in dispute resolution is crucial in fostering a fair and just society where the rights and voices of women are respected and heard. Qamar Naseem, Program Manager of Blue Veins, emphasizes the importance of capacity building for the DRCs. He states, "To truly serve their purpose, DRCs must be designed to be women-friendly and accessible. Women should be able to approach these councils without fear or hesitation,

ensuring their rightful place in the dispute resolution process."

Echoing the sentiment, Usman Afridi, a social activist, urges the expansion of the DRCs to all Tehsils with inclusion of women of the Khyber District.

"The inclusion of more women in the DRCs is not just a necessity but a mandate for equitable representation and justice," he remarks. The EVAW Alliance demands the establishment of DRCs in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as mandated by the Police Act.

Two gunned down F.P. Report

PASRUR: Two people were killed in firing of armed men over old enmity in Jasooran area of Pasrur on Wednesday. Citizens tortured to death one accused.

Armed men of rival group ambushed two members of the opponent group killing them on the spot.

Admn directed for implementation Khushal Pakhtunkhwa program

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Shaukat Ali Yousafzai has instructed the administrative officers of Mardan and Swabi to ensure the provision of services to the people in various sectors under the Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa program as per the vision of the caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice Retired Syed Arshad Hussain Shah.

Strengthen relationships with the public in your respective areas. He was addressing a meeting of administrative officers of both districts regarding the implementation of the Khushal Pakistan program in the conference room of the commissioner's office. The meeting was attended by Additional Commissioner Mardan Naeem Akhtar, Deputy Commissioner Swabi Dr. Tariqullah, Additional Deputy Commissioners Saeedullah Jan and Gohar Ali, along with Additional Assistant Commissioners.

Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai called the Deputy Commissioners of the two districts to meet the officers of the line departments in their districts and in the light of Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa program, public expectations of public services at all levels including the cleanliness of Patwar Khanas, Service Delivery Centers. Ensure consistent improvement, direct awareness of public issues through open courtrooms and take measures to resolve them on occasion and share weekly report in this regard with concerned constituencies.

He directed the officers to conduct the campaign against polythene bags with intensity

and said that polythene bags are the biggest threat to the environment. A formal legislation has been made in this regard. Now there will be no exception in this regard. Shaukat Ali Yousafzai said that an awareness campaign will also be conducted in mass media regarding Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa program and civic affairs. For this purpose, the role of Pakhtunkhwa Radio Network managed by Department of Information and Public Relations will be key. He said that clear targets have been set for different sectors in the program and he himself will go to different areas to ensure the implementation of the program in both districts.

GMS Baghdada won 1st position: Annual sports competitions of Mardan government schools, Government Middle School Baghdada Mardan maintained its honor and won the first position in hockey in Mardan district. Personality development, character building and leadership.

They play a significant role in developing skills. Sports raise the quality of health of every country, the country which has good quality will always have good quality of life and stress free environment. With hockey at the top, the students of our school go higher and higher. They make their schools famous by participating in high school competitions, they said that along with education, sports are also important, sports and education go hand in hand, the main purpose of education is knowledge and understanding, while sports are important.

Art is literature and other arts. He added that in the development of children. Sports have an important role and it is important

to give full support to children in it. He also said that the teachers of our school have decided to support children in all kinds of sports and help them in their development. Children are being encouraged at the elementary level.

BISE held SLO workshop: Education Board organized three-day workshops regarding SLO base examinations and on-screen marking have started. Subject specialists of English, Physics, Chemistry and Biology from the government and private educational institutions of Mardan participated in large numbers in the board auditorium.

Addressing the first session of the workshops, Chairman of the Board Farid Ahmad Khattak said that SLO-base exams and on-screen marking is an important step towards transparency in the examination system and it will give children a full opportunity to use their mental abilities and get rid of the rota system.

The Chairman Board said that the examination markers will be of primary importance in the success of the new system. The aim of these workshops is that the primary responsibility of the educational institutions is to take measures to keep their moral standards high along with the education of the children. Farid Ahmad Khattak said that for the first time in the history of the province, the Mardan Education Board adopted the system of taking papers in second time, which was highly appreciated and the children and parents are satisfied with the new working hours.

Controller of Examinations Prof. Ishrat Ali presented the aims and objectives of the workshop, along with Educationist Ashraf Ali and Zulfikar Khan,

the participants of the Markers Institute informed about the basic factors regarding the modern examination system. Teachers will be trained on SLO base and online screen marking while a workshop has been organized for female staff at Government Girls Degree College, Nowshera on December 13th at 11 am.

Newly constructed rooms inaugurated: Inauguration ceremony of the newly constructed private rooms was held at the historical hospital DHQ in Mardan in which the Provincial Chairman of MTI Board Policy Prof. Dr. Zia-ul-Islam was the chief guest. The chief guest inaugurated the project of private rooms by cutting the ribbon along with MS Dr. Javed Iqbal of the hospital and other guests.

MMC Director Hospital Dr. Tariq Mehmood, BOG Secretary Azhar Khan, Bacha Khan Medical College Dean Dr. Amjad Ali, Member of Health Management Committee and Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Zahir Shah, Senior Journalist M. Bashir Adil and former In-charge Psychiatry Unit Dr. Syed Muhammad Ashfaq, Dr. Syed Muhammad Tariq, Dr. Hamza Abbas from DHQ Teaching Hospital Mardan, all doctors, nursing, paramedics association president Taj Muhammad, General Secretary Ajmal Khan and others participated.

MS of the hospital, Dr. Javed Iqbal said while giving a briefing that 57 private rooms are equipped with modern facilities, with the completion of this project, DHQ at the district level has got the honor of providing private rooms for such a large number of patients across the province. It is the biggest hospi-

tal and people from Mardan and nearby districts also come for treatment. He said that the patients will get modern health facilities from the private rooms so this hospital will provide all kinds of medical facilities to the patients.

He said that the burden of patients on the hospitals of Peshawar, including MMC, will be reduced and the number of referral patients will decrease. Prof. Dr. Zia-ul-Islam appreciated the ongoing development work in NDHQ Teaching Hospital Mardan and MS Dr. Javed Iqbal Medical and his team congratulations on the good performance and that despite the limited resources better medical facilities are being provided to the patients in the district headquarters hospital. On this occasion.

Dr. Javed Iqbal expressed his views and said that DHQ Teaching Hospital is the biggest hospital in Mardan district and people from Mardan and nearby districts also come to DHQ Teaching Hospital Mardan for treatment now they have also been provided the facility of private rooms in DHQ Teaching Hospital Mardan Dr. Javed Iqbal Medical Superintendent DHQ thanked all the distinguished guests for attending the opening ceremony.

MCCI argues for adaptation of modern techniques: The Provincial General Secretary of the Markazi Tanzeem-e-Tajiran and the president of the Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Zahir Shah said that apart from the traditional methods, the entrepreneurs should adopt the requirements of the modern age because the merchant community is a great force, while the so-

called merchant organizations in Mardan have used the name of the merchant community for their personal interest, but now all the merchant communities have woken up, they have recognized the right and wrong, which is for the welfare of the merchants.

This is the reason why the trade union has rejected the so-called trade organizations forever. These views were expressed by the Chief Guest Zahir Shah while addressing the joining ceremony of the Central Association of Traders Charsadda Road Dheri Baba. On this occasion, Sarparast-e-Aala Rehmanullah, President Payun Khan, Secretary General Shakoor Khan, Vice President Samiullah, Deputy General Secretary Aslam Khan, Finance Secretary Haji Sartaj formally announced their participation in the convoy along with colleagues (Zahir Shah Group). Zahir Shah administered the oath of office to the newly elected cabinet of Tajran Charsadda Road Dheri Baba. Sahibzada, Syed Nasir Ali Shah, Zawar Hussain, Salam Khan, Haji Satan and others also addressed on this occasion.

They said that the central organization of traders (Zahir Shah Group) is the only group which is working for the welfare of traders and solving their problems and playing the role of a first team. Our mission is for the betterment of the business community and to solve their problems in consultation with them that is why all the business community organizations are flocking to join our group. We believe that we have served the business community selflessly and will continue until the end.



Thursday, December 14, 2023



GAZA: Palestinians shelter from the rain at a camp for displaced people in Rafah.

Rishi Sunak sees off Tory rebellion in Rwanda bill vote

LONDON (BBC): Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has seen off a Tory rebellion over his flagship Rwanda bill but still faces a battle to get it through Parliament. The legislation comfortably passed its first Commons hurdle with a majority of 44, but there will be further votes in the new year.

No Tory MPs voted against but some critics on the right of the party rebelled by abstaining. Rebels said they had been told the PM would consider "tightening" the bill. But this could risk losing the support of more centrist Tory MPs, who have warned they would oppose any future changes which would breach international law. The emergency legislation was drawn up to revive the government's plan to send some asylum seekers to Rwanda.

The government says the scheme is designed to deter migrants from crossing the Channel in small boats - something Mr Sunak has made one of his key priorities. In a sign of nerves in Downing Street over the potential for a tight result, Climate Minister Graham Stuart flew back from the COP28 climate conference in Dubai to vote. But despite some Tories on the right threatening to vote against the bill, in the end only opposition MPs did, and the bill passed by 313 votes to 269. Some 37 Tory MPs - including former Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick, who resigned over the legislation last week, and former Home Secretary Suella Braverman - did not record a vote. The majority of these come from factions who earlier said they could not support the bill and are likely to have deliberately abstained.

However, others may have been unable to attend to vote. Shortly before the vote, five factions of backbench MPs - the European Research Group (ERG), the New

Conservatives, the Common Sense Group, the Conservative Growth Group and Northern Research Group - announced they could not support the bill in its current form. They plan to propose amendments and said they could vote the bill down when it returns to the Commons in the new year if the changes they wanted were not accepted. Chairman of the ERG - a faction to the right of the party - Mark Francois, who was among those who abstained, told BBC News: "Our objection was that we don't believe, as it's currently drafted, the bill is firm enough to ensure that flights will take off to Rwanda." "The prime minister had said that he would entertain tightening up the bill. We're taking him at his word," he said. "A number of MPs voted with the government... because they were told in private that there would be amendments later on." However, agreeing to their demands would create new problems for the government.

The centrist One Nation group, which includes more than 100 Tory MPs, had recommended that its members vote for the bill, but warned it would oppose any future amendments "that would mean the UK government breaching the rule of law and its international obligations". Group member Matt Warman told the BBC's World Tonight programme: "We don't want to see the bill change in a way that goes over the red lines of international law... anything that goes over those red lines is out of the question". He added that "there is a possibility for sensible compromise as we go into the next stages of this bill".

Tougher legislation may be more difficult to get through the House of Lords. One Nation Chairman Damian Green told BBC News the vote had seen far fewer abstentions than expected and that "if the government

sticks to its guns then it can probably get this legislation through intact". Home Office Minister Chris Philp said the government would listen to ideas from MPs on how to improve the bill. "Like with any bill, government ministers will be talking to members of Parliament to see if there are ways of tightening this even further, to improve the drafting to make sure there are absolutely no loopholes at all," he added. Ben Bradley MP of the Common Sense Group told BBC's Newsnight that "pragmatism has got to meet ideology at some point. What is the strongest we can deliver versus what is perfect." The bill seeks to declare in UK law that Rwanda is a safe country to send asylum seekers to, after the Supreme Court ruled the policy was unlawful last month. However, critics on the right of the party have argued it is not currently strong enough to prevent legal challenges to deportations. A No 10 spokesperson said the bill was "the toughest legislation ever introduced to Parliament" and "makes clear that this Parliament, not any foreign court is sovereign". "We will now work to ensure that this bill gets on to the statute book so that we can get flights off to Rwanda and stop the boats," the spokesperson added. Labour voted against the bill, along with other opposition parties, and the party has said it would scrap the Rwanda plan if it wins the next election.

It says the millions of pounds given to Rwanda as part of the deal would be better spent tackling people-smuggling gangs. Labour's shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper said: "The Conservatives' civil war is continuing, and the country is paying the price for this chaos. "Today's debate shows how weak Rishi Sunak is with this Tory psychodrama now dragging on into the new year."

Ireland cuts welfare rates for Ukraine migrants

DUBLIN (BBC): The Republic of Ireland is to reduce welfare rates and limit state accommodation for new arrivals from Ukraine to 90 days. The current rate of 220 (€190) per week will fall to 38.80 (€34) for the period that Ukrainian people are in state accommodation. They will revert to the higher welfare rate when they leave these centres.

The parents of children in state accommodation will continue to receive the full monthly child benefit payment of 140 (€120). The changes are set to be introduced early next year. Efforts to encourage Ukrainian people living in the Republic to find work will also be stepped up. Ukrainian welfare recipients will be interviewed with a view to matching them to available jobs. There will be no change to the legal right of Ukrainian children to seek to enrol in local schools. There will be no shadow schools in the new accommodation centres. Opposition politicians attacked the plans to reduce welfare supports. Labour TD Ged Nash said the government had failed to build accommodation specifically for refugees. People Before Profit TD Richard Boyd Barrett said the decision was a "cynical deflection" from the "failure" to address the housing crisis. John Lannon, chief executive of migrant support charity Doras, said he fears that if the 90-day limit on accommodation is imposed on Ukrainian refugees it will increase homelessness. Speaking on RTE's Morning Ireland, he said: "It will put people in precarious positions and it's likely to leave women, children and men on the streets." An analysis of migration figures released in November, showed that between March and December 2022 almost 68,000 people arrived in Ireland from Ukraine under the EU's Temporary Protection Directive. As of December 2022, 87% of those who had been granted temporary protection had recent activity indicating that they were still living in the country.

Asylum seeker dies

LONDON: An asylum seeker has died on board a UK barge used to house people while their asylum claims are adjudicated. British Interior Minister James Cleverly told parliament that an asylum seeker died on the Bibby Stockholm barge moored in Portland, Dorset.

"Tragically, there has been death on the Bibby Stockholm barge," Cleverly said. "At this stage, I'm uncomfortable getting into any more details, but we will, of course, investigate fully." The barge has been controversial since it was first put into use, along with old military barracks, to hold asylum seekers. Earlier this year, the barge, which can house about 500 people, had to be temporarily evacuated after the discovery of legionella bacteria in its water supply, which can cause serious illness. Government officials have said that the barge is not a detention facility and that those held there are able to take short trips to a nearby town.

The Guardian newspaper recently reported that, in practice, doing so is difficult. The outlet quoted a man held on the barge who described poor conditions, abusive behaviour from authorities, and "exactly the feeling of being in a prison". "We are treated in such a way that we despair and wish for death" the man is quoted as saying. Authorities have released few details about the death on the barge. A Dorset Police spokesperson said that the agency received "a report of a sudden death of a resident on the Bibby Stockholm". The Refugee Council called for an independent review. "This is an appalling loss of life but tragically not surprising," said Enver Solomon, the group's chief executive. "Nobody who comes to our country seeking asylum should be left without the support they need yet the system has more hostility than compassion built into it." — Aljazeera

At least \$2.1b in new funds pledged at COP28

DUBAI (AP): With the United Nations climate talks wrapping up in Dubai, foundations and other funders pledged at least \$2.1 billion in new financing to reduce climate impacts, especially from agriculture, and increasing help for vulnerable communities.

The Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC, or COP28 summit, featured numerous firsts, including forums on health, food production and philanthropy. The estimated pledges, which do not represent a complete account of philanthropic commitments at COP28, came from a mix of foundations and private companies with some made in partnership with governments. They will be delivered over a range of timelines. For the first time, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria sent a delegation to the conference, pledging to spend 70% of its budget, about \$9 billion, in the 50 most climate vulnerable countries over the next three years.

"The honest answer is that the global health community, including us, was so focused on COVID-19, that we probably didn't pay enough attention to all the signs of what climate change was doing to global health," said Peter Sands, CEO of the Global Fund. His organization also launched a set of principles for financing projects at the intersection of climate and health along with the World Health Organization, the Green Climate Fund, The Rockefeller Foundation and COP presidency. The first Business & Philanthropy forum offered foundations, donors and corporations a larger formal role at a time when COP28 leaders are looking to secure more financing from the private sector.

According to a report from ClimateWorks Foundation released earlier this month, philanthropic funding for climate change mitigation was essentially unchanged in 2022, after showing consistent growth for the past three years. The lack of growth is attributed to global economic conditions, including increased inflation. "Every sector of society must do more to contribute, including philanthropy," said Helene Desanlis, ClimateWorks' director of climate philanthropy for global intelligence, which she said includes both increasing funding amounts and collaborating more closely with other funders and actors. The forum announced new blended finance vehicles, which can fund initiatives through a mix of corporate investments and donations, as well as a call to direct funding for Indigenous peoples already working to protect the environ-

ment in their communities. Ozawa Bineshi Albert, co-executive director of the Climate Justice Alliance, which advocates for people and organizations in frontline communities affected by climate change, said it's a welcome idea to increase funding for Indigenous peoples, who she says always face an uphill battle to be heard in these meetings. "It would be generous for me to say I'm cautiously optimistic," said Albert. "There's a difference between folks advocating to be benevolent caretakers of Indigenous people versus Indigenous people being at the table because they."

Albert said the Business & Philanthropy forum can be helpful, but government policy and regulation, especially in reducing carbon production, would be far more helpful. "Should they and could they do more? Absolutely," she said. "Do I think their investment in this is going to rescue us from the crisis we're in? No. The government still has to act. If we're not reducing and eliminating the production of carbon with our energy sources, no matter how much philanthropy invests, we will never be able to dig out of the hole." Christie Ulman, president of the Sequoia Climate Foundation, which focuses on driving down emissions in part through transitioning to clean energy, said she is supporting their grantee organizations and partners at COP in advocating for ambitious targets for renewable energy and decreasing other pollutants like methane. "We also are there encouraging the fossil fuel phase out agenda and mainstreaming that," she said of her organization's role at the summit. Along with multiple other philanthropic funders, Sequoia announced a \$450 million commitment to target the reduction of methane and other pollutants over three years. Last year, Sequoia along with some of the same funders, pledged \$500 million over three years to accelerate the transition to clean energy sources in low- and middle-income countries. So far, Ulman said that coalition has granted out 40% of the commitment, or around \$200 million. Ulman said that the investments are targeted to support the plans and projects that countries have already made around energy transitions and she hopes that additional funding will follow.

The Bazon Earth Fund pledged \$100 million to support a plan by Pacific Island nations to protect and sustainably manage marine ecosystems. Bloomberg Philanthropies also made commitments around protecting oceans, transitioning to clean energy and supporting cities adapting to climate change.

Kenya marks 60 years of independence

NAIROBI (AP): Kenya's president defended the high taxes the government recently imposed, calling them a "necessary sacrifice" in helping the country deal with ballooning foreign debt which now stands at \$70 billion.

Speaking at celebrations marking 60 years since Kenya's independence from Britain, President William Ruto said East Africa's largest economy was no longer at risk of defaulting on bond payments following economic reforms his government had undertaken since taking power last September. "Though painful, the sacrifices we have made will not only make our freedom fighters proud," Ruto told tens of thousands of people in the capital, Nairobi. He added: "I can now confirm without fear of any contradiction that Kenya is safely out of the danger of debt distress, and that our economy is on a stable footing."

The economy has taken center stage in politics and

daily life in Kenya as the government tackles mounting debts. A \$2 billion Eurobond is due in June. Last month, the government reached a lending agreement with the International Monetary Fund amounting to \$938 million, a boost for the country struggling with dwindling foreign exchange reserves. Recent attempts at reforms include a mandatory housing levy which courts struck down last month for being "discriminatory, irrational, arbitrary and against the constitution." The president also removed subsidies on fuel and maize flour - a staple in Kenya.

Ruto vowed that "all taxes collected by the government shall be put to their intended use and that no single shilling - not one shilling - shall be lost through embezzlement, theft or corruption." Kenyans have long complained of widespread official graft. The president in his speech did not mention

another pressing threat in Kenya, the deadly rains fueled by the El Niño phenomenon. Ahead of the national holiday, the government announced that Kenyans would be allowed free entry to all national parks and museums.

But John Ndirangu, a shopkeeper from Muranga county, said he was not planning on attending the celebrations or taking up the free park entry. "Where do you get the money in this bad economy to travel to see wild animals when you are hungry?" he asked. Veteran politician and political analyst Njeru Kathangu, who helped to fight for multi-party democracy in Kenya in the 1980s, said the country needs a reset to attain its potential. "Two generations have now passed since the birth of Kenya as a nation, but there's nothing to show for it," he said. "If Kenya cannot change at the beginning of this third generation, then we will not be a state at all."

Poland's PM promises to push for support of Ukraine

WARSAW: Donald Tusk, Poland's newly elected prime minister, has pledged to win full Western support for Ukraine in its war against Russia and mediate past hurdles with the European Union.

Tusk spoke to parliament ahead of a confidence vote after his election victory, which paved the way for a new pro-EU government after eight years of far-right nationalist rule under the Law and Justice party, which had engaged in repeated disputes with Brussels. "We will ... loudly and decisively demand the full mobilisation of the free world, the Western world, to help Ukraine in this war. There is no alternative," Tusk told lawmakers as he outlined his government's plans.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is to hold talks with United States President Joe Biden later as he makes his case

for more US aid for his country at a time of increasing doubts among many Republican lawmakers in the US Congress. Tusk said it hurts him to hear that Zelenskyy has to keep trying to persuade world leaders about the need to continue supporting Kyiv's struggle against Moscow. "They say it to President Zelenskyy's face that they no longer have the strength, that they are exhausted," Tusk said.

Tusk also promised to resolve a monthlong blockade at the Ukraine border by Polish truckers, who are demanding the reintroduction of entry permits for their Ukrainian competitors. "We found a way to meet the needs of Polish truckers as soon as possible and immediately unblock the border," Tusk said. A former European Council president, Tusk made clear to parliament that he plans to reposition Poland as a leader of the EU and will remain a loyal ally of the

US and NATO. "We are all the stronger, all the more sovereign when not only Poland is stronger but also the European Union," Tusk said. However, he insisted that he would uphold the interests of Poland foremost in any agreement. "Any attempts to change treaties that are against our interests are out of the question, ... No one will outplay me in the European Union," he said.

The prime minister also said he would go to Brussels this week and "bring back billions of euros", referring to EU funds frozen under the previous government due to a row over the rule of law. The previous government of the conservative nationalist Law and Justice Party (PiS) had been at loggerheads with Brussels for years over issues including judicial independence and minority rights, and led to billions of euros in funds from the bloc being frozen. — Aljazeera

UN warns nearly 50m people could face hunger next year

DAKAR (AP): The United Nations warned that hunger could surge across West and Central Africa next year, primarily driven by violence in the conflict-riddled region. Nearly 50 million people could face food insecurity and more than 2.5 million will be on the brink of starvation, said officials from the UN, the Food and Agriculture Organization, regional and other groups as they presented the findings in Senegal's capital, Dakar.

The report is compiled by regional governments, the UN and aid groups. While climate change and inflation are contributing factors, the main driver of food insecurity is increasing violence, particularly across the Central Sahel - the vast expanse below the Sahara Desert - which has been hardest hit. Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have had five coups in three years, which has led to increased jihadi attacks

linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. The militants were already operating in the area and have capitalized on the political turmoil, taking swaths of land and blockading cities. "The biggest concern this year is the threat of insecurity," said Martin Naindoubia Djerandodje, a regional expert for FAO. He added that if those affected do not get aid, "people could die and the situation (could) get worse." The cross-border region between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger is the epicenter of West Africa's escalating humanitarian crisis, compounded by effects of climate change, severe floods and droughts. The UN is targeting more than 10 million people with assistance in the area. Since the military takeover in Niger in July, jihadi violence has increased while economic, commercial and financial sanctions imposed by the West African region-

al bloc have made it harder for assistance to enter the country. In Mali, violence in the north between soldiers accompanied by mercenaries from Russian military contractor Wagner and Tuareg fighters, coupled with the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping mission after more than a decade, has made it harder for relief to get to some cities, aid workers say.

In Burkina Faso, where many places are under siege, aid workers say approximately 1 million people live in areas that are hard to reach. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network said that hundreds of thousands in the northern city of Djibo could be at risk of famine after humanitarian cargo flights were suspended in October. Since then, less than 1% of the local population has received food assistance, the network said. Even when food is available, soaring costs have made it

hard for people to buy anything. There is no money here. There is no business to do in Djibo to get money, food is very expensive," Maiga, a Djibo resident who only wanted to use his family name for security reasons, told The Associated Press by phone.

The UN says it's unable to meet the soaring needs because of dwindling funds. Forty percent of people who were food insecure this year did not get aid and those who did received less than 50% of the full rations, said Olo Sib from the World Food Program. The UN launched a \$7.6 billion appeal to support more than 32 million people across West and Central Africa in dire need. Martin Gri'ths, the UN's humanitarian chief, warned that support from the international community is not keeping pace with the needs. "If we cannot provide more help in 2024, people will pay for it with their lives," he said.

EU remembers Iranian woman who died in custody

BRUSSELS (AP): The European Parliament remembered a young woman who died in police custody in Iran last year, during a ceremony at which she and a Iranian human rights group were officially awarded the EU's top human rights prize. Parliament President Roberta Metsola deplored that even part of Mahsa Amini's family was not allowed to attend the event for the awarding of the Sakharov Prize at the EU legislature's plenary.

"They are under a travel ban imposed by the Iranian regime. Their treatment is another example of what the people of Iran face every

day," Metsola said. Amini, 22, died in September 2022, three days after she was arrested by Iran's morality police for allegedly violating Iran's mandatory headscarf law. While authorities said she suffered a heart attack, Amini's supporters said she was beaten by police and died as a result of her injuries. The EU said her death triggered a women-led movement in Iran, and representatives of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran were in Strasbourg, France, to attend the solemn ceremony. The 27-nation EU has imposed sanctions on Iranian officials and organi-

zations - including ministers, military officers and Iran's morality police - for human rights abuses over the protests. "This year's Sakharov Prize serves as a tribute to all the brave and defiant women, men and young people in Iran who, despite coming under increasing pressure, are continue the push for change," Metsola said. Amini's death triggered protests that spread across the country and rapidly escalated into calls for the overthrow of Iran's four-decade-old Islamic theocracy. Authorities responded with a violent crackdown in which more than 500 people

were killed and over 22,000 others were detained, according to rights groups. The demonstrations largely died down early this year, but there are still widespread signs of discontent. For several months, women could be seen openly flaunting the headscarf rule in Tehran and other cities, prompting a renewed crackdown over the summer. The EU award, named for Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, was created in 1988 to honor individuals or groups who defend human rights and fundamental freedoms. Sakharov, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, died in 1989.

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Justice delivery or reversal of past predilections

RECENTLY, the Islamabad High Court acquitted former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills reference. A two-member bench, comprising IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Mian Gul Aurangzeb convened a hearing of the case, wherein yearslong self-exiled PML-N supremo fearlessly appeared before the court. After the arguments, the Islamabad High Court annulled the previous judgment of the accountability court that awarded seven years imprisonment to PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills reference, in addition to imposing a fine of 2.5 million pounds. Earlier, the Islamabad High Court acquitted Nawaz Sharif in the Avenfield reference about two weeks ago. Interestingly, the court also dismissed the plea filed by the NAB in the Flagship reference against the PML-N leader's acquittal after the accountability watchdog withdrew its lawsuit.

A strange political scenario has emerged in the country that has stunned the masses as well as the media and the intelligentsia in the country and abroad. The Country's judiciary is telecasting two different episodes simultaneously, and a Marathon for undoing and redoing important verdicts of past adjudicators is currently underway. On the political side, despite all legal and administrative challenges, a winning playfield is being staged quietly for a particular political group that reminds the public regarding a flap experience under a failed operation that cost the nation billions of dollars in economic losses, global embarrassment, name and shame for the architects and promoters. While turning back the page of history to five years back in 2017, the situations were totally different but the characters, producers and directors were the same. A bulk FIRs and petitions were filed against the PML-N leadership, rush hearings of courts and hasty convictions of the Sharif family on multiple counts including corruption and sedition charges. Whereas, the white dove sat on the shoulder of the PTI Chairman leading him to the Prime Minister's office in an atmosphere of fear, joy and apprehension. In the current scene, the PTI and the PML-N are contesting the polls with the change roles but political analysts and common citizens dislike this heinous game of Kingmakers, their facilitators, baiters and supporters that exploit the political process and weakens the system and democracy in the guise of patriotism and nation building. The public foresees the future events likely to happen in 2028, when the Pakistani judiciary will be revoking its decision against the PTI leader and his colleagues in cases of Toshkhana gifts, misdeclaration with the Election Commission, Al-Qadir's trust as well as hateable violent protests and attacks on military installations on May 9. Apparently, the process of overhauling democracy, engineering political alliances, production of flimsy political and religious groups and whitewashing of leaders has become mandatory in Pakistan, to instantly declare them dishonest and reinstate them in the position of Sadiq and Ameen.

The nation raises serious questions regarding the conduct of NAB authorities, the Police and the FIA, for their betrayal of the principle of unbiased and no partisanship and subservience to the political leaders. While masses also have concerns regarding the biased conduct and politically motivated adjudication of the top judges, who are well versed with the tactic of resembling crow with the peigon and declaring dark in the broad daylight. What decisions of the adjudicators are lawful or otherwise? Or, it is just trading of justice, the theory of necessity, or witchcraft with the nation. There is a dire for the public accountability of all public office holders together with judges, generals, bureaucrats and politicians for their conduct and decisions during their tenure that cost huge prices to the nations. The petitioners, investigators, prosecutors and adjudicators all involved must be inquired and accordingly penalized for their malignancy and crime, so no other self-proclaimed nation saviour, or a dishonest jury repeats such jokes with the nation until doomsday.

Afghanistan exclusion from COP-28

AFGHANISTAN has been left out for the consecutive third time from the United Nations Climate talks being held in Dubai under the COP-28 Summit. Historically, Afghanistan is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change, due to worsening droughts, recurrent earthquakes, and flash floods. The country witnessed heavy rains triggering flash floods that swept across drought-stricken land earlier this year. However, Kabul has not been invited to the COP28 climate summit in Dubai, having been singled out of such UN talks since the Islamic Emirate took over of the country in 2021.

Afghanistan has been pushed into deep isolation by the global community in the aftermath of the Taliban control over the country almost two years ago. There are severe political, diplomatic, economic, trade, and social challenges to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan that seriously hurt the public and hinder the economic development and social uplift of Afghanistan. The Central Bank of Afghanistan (DAB) is unplugged with SWIFT, the global Banking and Financial System while the interim government failed to secure a single recognition from the global community so far. These two issues were already big hurdles in the path for economic and social inclusion into the comity of nations that the Islamic Emirate itself triggered some other issues like human and women's rights, and restriction on girls education that further distanced Kabul from rest of the world. In fact, the global community particularly the United States and its allies have linked their diplomatic recognition, political relations, trade and economic ties and Humanitarian aid as well, with the human and women rights situation and terrorism issues that are also important clauses of famous Doha agreement, which pave the way for US withdrawal and Taliban return to power in that country. While the rest of the world is also hesitant in normalizing its relations with the IEA on fear and apprehensions based on the previous and the current governance of the Taliban rulers in Afghanistan. Apparently, the global community is less likely to mould its stance over Afghanistan as it does not suit its interests in that nation. Hence, the Afghan rulers must review their policies, so their nation gets some space in the global sphere that will increase Kabul's stacks and open up tremendous incentives at the global level.

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Even in time of genocide, Big Tech silences Palestinians

Marwa Fatafta

THE scorching violence against the people of Gaza has been unprecedented. And so have its reverberations online. Palestinians documenting and speaking up against Israel's genocidal war on Gaza have faced relentless censorship and repression, accompanied by an explosion of state-sponsored disinformation, hate speech and calls to violence on social media.

Following Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, Big Tech set to eliminate content on the war that they claimed violated their rules. TikTok removed more than 925,000 videos from the Middle East between October 7 and 31. As of November 14, X, formerly known as Twitter, had taken action on over 350,000 posts. Meta, for its part, removed or marked as disturbing more than 795,000 posts in the first three days of the attack.

This elimination frenzy, run by ill-trained algorithms and further fuelled by pressure from the EU and Israel, has resulted in the disproportionate censorship of critical Palestinian voices, including content creators, journalists, and activists reporting from the ground in Gaza. While being accused of promoting pro-Palestinian content, TikTok actually arbitrarily and repeatedly censored content on Palestine. For example, on October 9, United States-based media outlet Mondoweiss reported that its TikTok account had been permanently banned. It was reinstated only to be suspended again a few days later. The company did not provide any explanation.

X has also been accused of suppressing pro-Palestinian voices. For example, the account of the US branch of Palestine Action group was not able to gain any new followers; the issue was only resolved after public pressure mounted. Meta, of all companies, holds the lion's share in this digital repression campaign. It has arbitrarily removed Palestine-related content, disrupted live streaming, restricted comments, and suspended accounts.

Among those who have been targeted is Palestinian photojournalist Motaz Azaiza, who had gained over 15 million followers on Instagram for documenting the Israeli atrocities in Gaza; his account was later reinstated. The Facebook page of Quds News Network, one of the largest Palestinian news networks with over 10 million followers, was also permanently banned. On Instagram, people posting about Palestine have experienced shadowbanning - a

stealth form of censorship where an individual is rendered invisible on the platform without being notified. Meta also reduced the threshold of certainty required for automated filters to hide hostile comments from 80 percent to 25 percent for content originating from Palestine. We have documented cases where Instagram hid comments containing the Palestinian flag emoji for being "potentially offensive". Meta's content moderation has never been forgiving of Palestinian speech, especially in times of crisis. The company's rules, developed in the aftermath of the US-led "war on terror", have disproportionately disfavoured and silenced Arabic-language political speech. For example, an overwhelming majority of individuals and organisations on its secret "terrorist" blacklist are from the Middle East and South Asia - a reflection of the US foreign policy posture.

The company's policy on Dangerous Organizations and Individuals (DOI) Policy, which prohibits the praise, support and representation of these individuals and groups, is the catalyst behind the company's heavy-handed censorship and discrimination against Palestinians. Back in 2021, this policy was responsible for silencing pro-Palestinian individuals when they took to the streets and to social media to protest Israel's attempt to forcefully expel Palestinian families from their homes in the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah. In the context of the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza, Meta stated they apply their policies equally around the world and refuted claims that they were "deliberately suppressing voice". Evidence, however, suggests otherwise.

Two weeks into Russia's war on Ukraine, Meta bent its rules to allow Ukrainians to express themselves freely. It allowed, for instance, calls for violence against Russian invaders. It even delisted the neo-Nazi group, the Azov Battalion, designated under its DOI policy, to allow for their praise. In defence of these exceptions, the company's President of Global Affairs Nick Clegg wrote: "If we applied our standard content policies without any adjustments we would now be removing content from ordinary Ukrainians expressing their resistance and fury at the invading military forces, which would rightly be viewed as

unacceptable." Have any adjustments been made to ordinary Palestinians "expressing their resistance and fury at the invading military forces"? Quite the opposite. In a blog post that was last updated on December 5, Meta stated that it has disabled hashtags, restricted live streaming, and removed seven times as many pieces of content as it did in the two months prior to October for violating its DOI policy.

Even on the humanitarian front, double standards are on full display. Meta went to great lengths to coordinate humanitarian relief for Ukrainians, including enabling a feature that helps them stay informed, locate their family members and loved ones, and access emergency services, mental health support, housing assistance and refugee aid among others. No such support has been afforded to Palestinians in Gaza who face communications blackouts and a humanitarian catastrophe of unspeakable scale.

This discrimination transcends to how Meta dedicates its resources and enforces their policies. Arabic language content is heavily over-moderated, while Hebrew content remains under-moderated. Up until September 2023, Meta didn't have classifiers to automatically detect and remove hate speech in Hebrew even though its platforms were used by Israelis to explicitly call for violence and to organise pogroms against Palestinians. A recent internal memo revealed they were unable to use the newly built Hebrew classifier on Instagram comments due to insufficient training data. This is deeply worrying in light of the fact that Meta significantly relies on automated content moderation tools. Some 98 percent of Instagram's content moderation decisions are automated and almost 94 percent are automated on Facebook. These tools have repeatedly been revealed as poorly trained in Arabic and its various dialects.

According to one internal memo leaked in the 2021 Facebook papers, Meta's automated tools to detect terrorist content incorrectly deleted nonviolent Arabic content 77 percent of the time. This partially explains the egregious impact we are seeing on people's ability to exercise their rights and document human rights abuses and war crimes. It also explains some unjustifiable system glitches, including labelling Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest mosque in Islam, as a terrorist organisation in 2021; translating

the bios of Instagram users with a Palestinian flag to "Praise be to God, Palestinian terrorists are fighting for their freedom"; and deleting footage of dead bodies from the al-Ahli Hospital bombing for violating its policy on adult nudity and sexual activity, no less.

Meanwhile, Meta is allowing verified state accounts that belong to the Israeli government - including politicians, the Israeli army and its spokespersons - to disseminate war propaganda and disinformation that justifies war crimes and crimes against humanity including attacks on hospitals and ambulances, filmed confessions of Palestinian detainees, and almost daily "evacuation" orders for Palestinian civilians. Instead of protecting Palestinians in Gaza as they are facing what 36 UN human rights experts and other genocide scholars have warned amounts to genocide, Meta has approved paid ads that explicitly called for a "holocaust" for the Palestinians" and wiping out "Gazan women and children and the elderly".

Such disturbing calls for violence have made their way to other platforms as well. In fact, X seems to be leading other platforms on the amount of hate speech and incitement to violence targeting Palestinians. According to Palestinian digital rights organisation 7amleh, there have been more than two million such posts on the platform since October 7. Telegram also hosts a number of Israeli channels which openly call for genocide and celebrate the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. In one group, named "Nazi Hunters 2023", moderators post pictures of Palestinian public figures with crosshair marks on their faces as well as their home addresses and call for their elimination.

So far, social media companies do not seem to comprehend the gravity of the situation at hand. Meta, in particular, seems to have learned very little from its role in Myanmar's genocide of the Rohingya in 2017. The silencing of Palestinians, while promoting disinformation and violence against them, may have been the modus operandi for social media platforms in the absence of any meaningful accountability. But this round is different. Meta is risking being implicated again in genocide and it must correct course before it is too late. The responsibility to protect users and uphold freedom of expression applies to other social media platforms, too.

Aljazeera

Biden must be wary of losing youth votes

Kerry Boyd Anderson

RECENT polls have increased concerns among Democrats that President Joe Biden is losing young voters' support in the runup to the November 2024 election. The situation could change before the election, but Biden's campaign and the Democratic Party more broadly need to do more to reach out to younger Americans.

Young voters turned out in record numbers in 2020 to vote for Biden, who won far more votes among young adults than Donald Trump. In the 2018 midterm elections, during Trump's presidency, young voters also turned out in historically large numbers, helping Democrats win a majority in the House of Representatives. While youth turnout dropped somewhat in the 2022 midterm elections, young voters still played an important role in helping the Democrats maintain control of the Senate. The youth vote has become more important as elections have become tighter races. Younger Americans are more likely to vote for Democrats. For example, the Republican presidential candidate has not won the 18 to 29-year-old cohort since 1988. According to a recent survey from Harvard University, 35 percent of this age group "affiliate with the Democratic Party," while only 26 percent identify with the Republican Party. However, notably, the larger percentage (38) consider themselves independent or unaffiliated.

While younger adults are more likely to vote for Democrats than Republicans, they are less likely to vote at all than older Americans, which has diluted their electoral influence. It also means that Democrats are often more worried about encouraging young voters to show up at polls than about pulling them away from Republican candidates. Polls show mixed results for Biden among young voters. Multiple recent polls have found Biden and Trump nearly tied for young Americans' votes; in just one example, a recent NBC poll found Trump had 46 percent support among young voters while Biden had only 42 percent - a huge shift from the last election. In the Harvard survey, 41 percent of young voters would choose Biden compared to 30 percent who would vote for Trump in a one-to-one contest. However, young voters who plan to vote Democratic are more opposed to Trump than they are enthusiastic about Biden; for example, the Harvard survey found that only 35 percent of young voters approve of Biden's current performance as president.

Beyond the uncertain risk of losing young voters to Trump, Democrats face two major challenges with young voters: persuading them to turn out to vote and fending off challenges from third-party candidates. Several polls have suggested that young adults are less likely to turn out to vote in 2024 than in recent elections.

According to the Harvard survey, only 49 percent of young voters said they plan to vote for president, compared to 57 percent at the same point in

the last presidential election cycle. However, the Harvard survey suggested an interesting twist: the potential decline in turnout comes more from Republicans and independents than from Democrats.

The survey found that 66 percent of young Democrats plan to vote, compared to 68 percent in the fall of 2019. The decline among young Republicans was larger, at 10 points (56 percent today, down from 66 percent in 2019). Intention to vote also declined by 10 points among young independents, to 31 percent today from 41 percent in 2019. If young Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents fail to turn out for the Democrats, it could hurt Biden in a close race, but the existing data makes it difficult to make confident predictions. Another worry for Democrats is the appeal of third-party candidates to young voters. Robert Kennedy Jr. and Cornel West are running as independent candidates for president and there is still potential for other candidates to enter the fray. A recent Quinnipiac University poll found that young voters are the most likely age group to vote for Kennedy or West. In the Harvard survey, when presented with a scenario in which they could vote for Biden, Trump, Kennedy, West or potential candidate Joe Manchin, Biden's lead over Trump slipped to only four points (29 percent compared to 25 percent for Trump, 10 percent for Kennedy and less for West and Manchin).

There are important limitations to polls of young voters. The election is still months away and much could change. Many Americans are unhappy with the idea of a repeat contest between Biden and Trump, but in the face of an actual decision between the two, many will turn out to vote against whoever they dislike the most. All polls have methodological challenges. Even with those caveats, Biden's team and the Democratic Party more generally should heed the warnings offered by the polls and many youth activists. Many young Democrats and left-leaning independents feel that their government is failing to solve the biggest problems facing their generation, including climate change and cost-of-living concerns.

An AP-NORC poll found that 77 percent of voters younger than 45 see Biden as too old to be an effective president. The war in Gaza has highlighted enormous generational differences in views on foreign policy, with youth activists warning that Biden's strong support for Israel could lead many young voters to skip voting and complicate efforts to recruit young activists to campaign for the president.

Young voters might still turn out to support Biden and other Democratic candidates in 2024, especially if Trump is the only viable alternative. However, Democrats cannot take young voters for granted. Republicans have an uphill battle to gain more young Americans' votes, but they might have some success and would benefit if many young people simply chose not to vote at all.

The Guardian

It's the Sunak twilight zone

Marina Hyde

CAN the Conservative party of recent years ever really be said to have been in recovery from its addiction to pure, teeth-grasping chaos? It's possible that there was a brief period at some juncture after the third prime minister of last year had been installed that the natural party of government was not tearing itself or the economy or the country apart ... but if you happened to be taking the bins out at that moment, you'd sadly have missed it.

Whatever the truth about the good old day/ hour/ minute, the Conservatives have fallen well and truly off the wagon again over the past week, as the prime minister, Rishi Sunak's, sensationally defective and distasteful Rwanda deportation bill makes landfall.

You are cordially invited to recall that when Sunak was appointed party leader in October last year, all manner of Tory grandees and commentators assured the nation that the sensibiles were back in town. It was a "new

down", the "system" had proved robust, and all those wonderful people out there in the dark would be relieved at the era of calm about to be ushered in. Yesterday I suddenly recalled a column written by William Hague on the occasion of Sunak's accession to the prime ministership, in which the former Tory leader confidently asserted: "After being an object of global pity in recent months, Britain will again be an example of government being conducted with professionalism, honesty and reliability."

Will it, though? Flash forward to this week and a clown called Mark Francois is once again beckoning to us from a storm drain, while the phrase "ERG star chamber" has been deployed like it presages anything other than the apparently unstoppable rise of the idiots. In not unconnected news, this morning I read a current Hague column containing words and phrases such as "abyss", "mad enough", "cliff

edge", "huge public row" and "yet another drama". Well quite. Who among us could have predicted, and so on?

Whichever way you slice it, Sunak arguably remains eye-catchingly bad at politics. Like me, you will have hugely enjoyed reports that Sunak had got the newbie foreign secretary, David Cameron, to call Eurosceptic potential Rwanda rebels over the weekend, rather than deigning to get involved himself. Making Cameron do the ring-around is a genuinely hilarious power move - if slightly undermined by the fact that many putative Rwanda rebels would prefer a call from the Metropolitan police's serious sex crimes unit than from David Cameron.

At time of writing, I have no idea how Tuesday night's vote will turn out - other than the absolute cast-iron, copper-bottomed conviction that whichever way it goes, it won't be the end of the matter

for the messiest messes out there. In the run-up to the big day, Sunak was at pains to stress that the Rwanda bill wouldn't amount to a confidence vote in him. Ironically, even that doesn't feel like a statement we can have confidence in. There are people - including a cabinet minister, according to a BBC report on Tuesday morning - who are now predicting (off the record) that, whatever happens with the bill, there's absolutely no way that Sunak can butch it out to whenever in late 2024 he had set his heart on as the perfect general election date. I wonder if Rishi enjoyed his Monday at the Covid inquiry, answering lawyers' questions about Treasury death squads and his own Dr Death nickname? It might well have been his last fun and carefree day in politics. Again, at time of writing, it was still his world. Unfortunately, the rest of us have to live in it, and you

could be forgiven for reacting to the ongoing horror show with total incredulity. Have we fallen through some tear in the strong-and-stable continuum, only to re-emerge in the depths of winter 2018-2019, with the mad bastards of the Conservative party ramping up to Mach 3 madness? Have we been marched at gunpoint into a wing of our memory palace we thought we had put permanently beyond use?

No. It's somehow worse than that because of a) the hideous familiarity b) the fact that whole new Conservative party factions and splinter groups have spawned since we last knew this place. Take the New Conservatives. Tuesday began with Sunak throwing an "emergency breakfast" (arguably the only phrase worse than "emergency podcast") for this group of MPs, who believe in nationalism, nativism and the use of artisan repressing techniques to exorcise the woke mind virus (leading

light Jonathan Gullis was among the first patients). Or take the Conservative Growth Group, or the European Research Group, or the Northern Research Group, or the Common Sense Group. All of them should be fitted with sarcastic airquotes as standard. And then, take your place in the Brexit wars simulator, and remind yourself that this is what taking back control looks like. A powerful Tory faction whose false nostalgia for a time that never truly existed caused a political shock in 2016 is now just one of the powerful Tory factions apparently nostalgic for the three-year fallout period after that shock - for the era of indicative votes, for tented media field hospitals on the green outside parliament, for spectacularly talentless and freaky MPs being on telly more than Ant and Dec. Hate to call an untimely end to Rishi Sunak's inspirational new dawn, but it's starting to look just possible that Theresa May was right all along. Nothing - Nothing - has changed.

The Guardian

Netanyahu must not be allowed a war with Hezbollah

Osama Al-Sharif

WHILE the world is focused on Israel's two-month-old military campaign in the Gaza Strip, the northern front is quickly heating up. A few days after Israel declared war on Hamas and started pounding the besieged Strip ahead of a ground invasion, tensions along the Israel-Lebanon border began to rise. A few skirmishes between Hezbollah and Israel's military soon developed into a daily exchange of firepower, forcing Israel to vacate the settlements and towns up to 5 km south of the Lebanon border.

And as the US dispatched two carrier groups to the Eastern Mediterranean, sending a stern message to Tehran and its proxies not to interfere in Israel's war on Gaza, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah appeared - after the group released a couple of videos raising the level of suspense - to indicate that the his people were not about to break the truce with Israel under UN Security Council Resolution 1701, but would respond to provocations within the so-called rules of engagement. But that did not stop the two sides from targeting each other in what can be described as low-intensity fighting. That forced Israel to mobilize three armored divisions to the north, something that Hezbollah said would relieve pressure on Hamas. Some of the skirmishes were deadly. While Israel was careful not to release figures concerning its own casualties, Hezbollah began, well into the first month of the Gaza campaign, to publish the names of its own fighters that fell during operations "in support of the people of Gaza and the gallant resistance." These operations were described as "support" and "diversions," costing Hezbollah more than 100 of its fighters so far. On a few occasions, when Israel targeted civilians in southern Lebanon, the group launched rockets that hit Kiryat Shmona, one of the larger urban centers in the Upper Galilee, which is only 3 km west of the Lebanese border. Before it was evacuated, it was home to more than 22,000

Israelis.

Also, in response to Israel's aerial bombardment of southern Lebanese towns and villages, Hezbollah fired a few heavy rockets, called Burkan, which have large payloads. It also admitted to sending drones across the border, a few of which sounded the alarm in northern Israel. On a number of occasions, it released videos of its fighters targeting Israeli armor, radars and fortifications. It claimed that it had killed and injured Israeli soldiers. In addition to shelling southern Lebanon, Israel launched a number of aerial raids against Damascus airport, southern Syria and Qunaitra in the Golan. Some of these strikes reportedly killed Iranian advisers and Hezbollah fighters. But last week and earlier this week, a noticeable spike in the scope of such exchanges resulted in Hezbollah firing rockets as deep as 9 km into Israeli territory in response to Israel's bombing of Lebanese towns. On Monday, one Israeli strike killed the mayor of the Lebanese town of Taybeh and injured others. The day before, Israeli fighter jets destroyed an entire neighborhood in the border town of Aitaroun. In the past few days, Israel has also targeted journalists covering the skirmishes from the Lebanese side, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon and Lebanese army positions. The rise in tensions along Israel's northern borders comes in the wake of strong warnings and ultimatums made by a number of senior Israeli officials that the situation in the north must be dealt with. According to Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar, Israel delivered a message to Hezbollah via UNIFIL that anything, military or civilian, spotted within a 3-km radius along the border with Lebanon would be targeted. Hezbollah responded that it too would consider anything moving within 3 km of the border a legitimate target.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued a strong warning to Hezbollah last week that escalations along the border would mean

"turning Beirut into Gaza." A similar warning was issued by far-right Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich. Also last week, Israeli National Security Council head Tzachi Hanegbi claimed: "We will change the reality on the border with Lebanon and we will solve the problem militarily if it is not solved diplomatically." Such statements from senior Israeli officials should be taken seriously for a number of reasons. Israel's war in Gaza is not going well, despite the heavy civilian death toll and the global outcry denouncing Israel's reckless regard for innocent lives and nonmilitary infrastructure. The Biden White House is coming under unprecedented pressure, both domestically and from allies, to call for a ceasefire. Netanyahu and his war Cabinet reportedly have less than a month to wrap up the military campaign. But by Israeli and other accounts, that is not enough time to achieve the country's elusive goals in Gaza: destroying Hamas, killing its military leadership and freeing the hostages.

In addition, Israel is beginning to admit that, despite all its firepower and heavy armor, it is incurring unusually heavy casualties. It admits that more than 100 soldiers have been killed and more than 5,000 injured, some seriously. Hamas says the number of Israeli dead is much higher. Israel also says that, despite the heavy bombing, Hamas' military abilities remain intact. As of Monday, Hamas was still firing rockets toward Tel Aviv and southern Israel. Israelis and their apologists are saying that Israel is losing the public relations war. Millions around the world continue to march, demanding a ceasefire and putting additional pressure on their governments. The draft UNSC resolution calling for a ceasefire that the US vetoed last Friday was co-sponsored by more than 100 countries. The US is becoming isolated as the only country supporting the continuation of Israel's war. The escalation of hostilities along the northern borders of Israel and the Israeli threat to

push Hezbollah north of the Litani river can only mean war. Despite the US' blind support and threats, Hezbollah, which is now in full control of Lebanon's political fate, will not hesitate to defend the status quo in southern Lebanon.

This is complex geopolitical territory for all. Neither Iran nor the US wants to see an expansion of the war for differing reasons. But for Netanyahu and his cohorts, the perspective is different - and dangerous. A sudden end to the war on Gaza would mean defeat for Israel and would have far-fetched repercussions for the country, but most of all for Netanyahu. The circumstances surrounding what really happened on Oct. 7 are vague. An investigation into this would make many heads roll, foremost of them being Netanyahu's. Hezbollah no longer acts as a nonstate actor. It must consider its gains in Lebanon and its alliance with Iran. It does not seek a 2006 version of a war with Israel, even though it has much more firepower than at that time. Those who want to expand the war and draw in the big powers are the extremists in the Israeli political scene. Netanyahu, who has sealed the fate of the Israeli hostages by ending the truce with Hamas, is looking out for his own personal interests. Fearing that time is running out on his war on Gaza, he is in a position to force Hezbollah into a wider confrontation - thus dragging the US, and possibly Iran, into a regional war. The Biden administration must draw the line here. Hamas is unlikely to be destroyed completely, even if the war drags on for a few more months. The hostages' families are already putting pressure on the war Cabinet, saying that this has become an unnecessary war. Netanyahu is reaching the end of his tether. A war with Hezbollah would be catastrophic for all parties. The only immediate exit is to bring Netanyahu's government down. That may not end the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. It would present a scenario for the day after, but it would also offer all stakeholders a way out of a conundrum that, unless it is addressed, could drag the region into a major war.

The state of exception in Honduras is endangering innocent lives

Adeline Neau

WHEN Honduran President Xiomara Castro was elected in November 2021 after running on an anticorruption platform and promising to tackle the country's disastrous human rights record and sky-high homicide and extortion rates, hopes ran high. She committed to working with affected communities, listening to their needs and taking action. But the sense of optimism did not last long.

In December 2022, less than a year after taking office as Honduras's first woman president, Castro declared a state of exception covering parts of the country with the highest crime rates. She said the extraordinary measures were required to fight insecurity, particularly extortions. Castro appeared to be following the strategy embraced by President Nayib Bukele in El Salvador in 2022 despite its terrifying consequences for human rights.

Under the state of exception, the Honduran authorities suspended constitutional rights, including the freedom of movement, assembly and association, as well as protection against arbitrary detentions. The military police were allowed to make arrests and search homes without a warrant. In a country where security forces have an abysmal human rights record, granting a police force such extraordinary powers was nothing short of bad news. These measures were meant to be temporary, but a year on, they are still in place. On December 6, we marked the first anniversary of the state of exception. These are 12 months in which the people of Honduras have faced countless abuses officially condoned by law.

Honduras has undoubtedly endured very real and extremely serious security problems with gangs terrorising the population, including by limiting their ability to move from one area to another. But the militarisation of security is putting everybody in danger. Human rights organisations have documented a rise in arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial executions

and enforced disappearances across the country since the state of exception was declared. The Office of the National Human Rights Commissioner in Honduras received 286 reports of human rights violations between December 2022 and September 2023 alone.

Several experts from the United Nations who have independently visited Honduras over the course of the year have described the situation as alarming. A statement issued at the end of UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions Morris Tidball-Binz's visit to the country highlighted that extrajudicial killings are "still a widespread phenomenon". Tidball-Binz was quoted as saying that the judicial process is hampered by "limited investigative capacity and a culture of impunity". Amnesty International has also uncovered evidence of widespread abuses. Rihanna Ferrera, an activist and member of the National Mechanism Against Torture, a body made up by government officials and independent organisations, told an Amnesty team they have seen an increasing number of cases of young men from marginalised areas being detained without any concrete evidence. She said the authorities are criminalising poverty. Ferrera has documented cases of young men who are detained and then driven around to be beaten and abused before their arrests are even registered at the police station. She claimed this is a way of encouraging forced confessions, to show authorities are doing something to tackle crime.

The situation in prisons has also deteriorated, with the military police taking charge of the whole prison system in June.

This move came after the eruption of violence between two gangs in a prison in Támara, near the capital Tegucigalpa, took the lives of 46 women. But activists said that instead of working to make prisons safer, the authorities are punishing those held behind bars by withholding food and banning family visits, which for most are the only way to access

basic products. Human rights organisations are also being prevented from entering prisons, which opens the door for more abuses to take place. Activists who have tried to report the growing number human rights violations taking place during the state of exception have been harassed and subjected to smear campaigns or worse - have become targets of abuses themselves. It is not surprising many are scared to even speak up.

Between January 2021 and September 2023, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights documented 944 attacks against journalists and human rights defenders, including 40 murders. Honduras's security challenges are real and extremely complex and require multifaceted strategies to tackle. However, cancelling basic human rights to try to solve this crisis is only creating an even greater one. Mass arrests and impunity for abuses put the lives of ordinary Hondurans at risk. Such measures also strengthen the criminal organisations that they are supposed to fight by creating an atmosphere of fear and chaos.

Instead of continuing to promote a short-sighted approach to security, the Honduran authorities should invest time and resources in developing a long-term security strategy that places respect for human rights at its core. A first step towards this could be strengthening the judicial system, by providing it with the necessary resources and staff to ensure that organised crime is investigated adequately and effectively and that those responsible for human rights violations face justice.

Measures must also be taken to tackle poverty and inequality, some of the main underlying causes of crime. Switching gears in the fight against crime may indeed be challenging and require resources. But Honduras can achieve it and receive international support if it shows that there is political will, not only to commit to sustainable changes, but to actually implement them.

Why doesn't Russian opposition talk about climate change?

MY activist friends are currently attending the UN climate conference COP28 in Dubai, while I can't leave Germany. Russia stripped me of my citizenship and I am currently stateless. Most Russians don't know anything about these conferences, who is representing them there, or what those representatives are doing.

Why don't Russians know about this? Because nobody is talking about the climate crisis. Five years ago, when I was just starting out in activism, I asked a well-known opposition politician to support the Fridays For Future climate protests in Russia. When he told me Russia was not ready for the climate agenda, I was surprised. Politicians talk all the time about their visions for Russia's future. So why do they keep ignoring such a serious threat to this future? Since then, the impacts of climate change have been obvious. Forest fires have ravaged Siberia; there was a disastrous oil spill in Norilsk; the storm of the century hit Sochi; and melting permafrost is destroying infrastructure in Siberia. People are taking a stand, which is obvious from protests against a waste dump in Shiyes and for the preservation of the Kushtau hill in Bashkortostan. There have been countless other disasters and regional protests that we don't know about. All international and domestic attention is focused on Moscow, the capital of the Russian empire.

I used to think the opposition ignored climate change because they had more important things to focus on. The Kremlin's crackdown on civil society has left the opposition movement struggling for its survival. But now that many of them have fled to Europe, where they hold conferences to talk about

Arshak Makichyan

how great they are almost every month, they are continuing to ignore the environmental agenda. The opposition spends its time taking part in daily fights on Twitter, which I am tired of following. They keep arguing about the same thing - elections that few Russians believe in. Meanwhile, the environmental crisis continues to creep toward a global tipping point. It is obvious that ordinary Russians can see that something is wrong. Unlike the opposition, they can look out the window and see skies blackened by pollution, floods, powerful storms and forest fires.

I think the problem is that the opposition don't understand their own country. Living metropolitan lives in Moscow, they grew used to Mayor Sergei Sobyanin's electric buses and other comforts of modern life. Now that many of them live in Europe they get to experience wind turbines, separate waste collection and plentiful vegan food. But none of this inspires them to offer a vision of a greener future in their home country. They stick to their strategy of focusing on the Kremlin's repressions which, though important, do not inspire ordinary Russians. At the same time, environmental protests continue in Russia at the local level. Some have even been successful at blocking the destruction of green spaces. But as long as these successes happen separately from demands for systemic change, then neither the environmental movement nor the wider opposition will stand a chance of defeating Putin's regime.

The Kremlin's propaganda has done a great job of turning people against progressive causes like fighting for the rights of minorities, women, and the LGBT community. The average Russian will

find statements on these topics controversial. But the environment is a special case. According to a 2022 poll by the Levada Center, three-quarters of Russians consider pollution and the destruction of green spaces to be serious problems for society. There is another very important reason why the Russian opposition should talk about the environment. Revenue from fossil fuels is the foundation of the Russian regime. When I went to COP in 2019 and 2020, I saw with my own eyes how Putin's representatives were promoting the interests of the state-owned Rosatom corporation and fossil fuel corporations. When countries continue to buy Russian fossil fuels, they are continuing to fund the Kremlin and its war effort. The Russian regime's strategy shows they are clearly afraid of popular anger growing stronger. Even during the war, they have made concessions to environmental protests. I think the fact that I kept asking the state inconvenient questions is why I was stripped of my citizenship. In the long term, it is very important to try to politicize the environmental movement in Russia.

Putin's regime certainly has the resources to control peoples' views on the climate. I have seen quite a few videos on social media with so-called scientists who deny that climate change is exacerbated by humans. Many ordinary people don't have enough knowledge on the subject so are vulnerable to spreading these conspiracy theories. In the words of Colombian President Gustavo Petro at COP28, when choosing between fossil fuels and life, "I have no doubt which position to take." Russians won't hear about any of this. But it would be good if the opposition gave them the choice to do so.

The Moscow Times

China ramps up efforts to interfere in Taiwan's coming elections

William Yang

ANALYSTS say China is ramping up its efforts to interfere in Taiwan's coming presidential and legislative elections, launching high-level, coordinated disinformation campaigns on social media and sponsoring Taiwanese politicians on trips to China, hoping to sway public opinion through influential local leaders.

Analysts say Beijing's goal is to help the main opposition party, the China-friendly Kuomintang or KMT, win the election. "Beijing will do whatever they can to help the KMT win, but I think they still don't know how to do that well," Kharis Templeman, a research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, told VOA in a recent interview.

Taiwanese intelligence authorities said last week that senior Chinese officials from various government agencies, including China's defense ministry and Taiwan Affairs Office, held a meeting earlier this month to "coordinate" Beijing's efforts to influence the January 13 elections. The meeting, led by China's fourth-ranked official, Wang Huning, reportedly assigned different tasks to several government agencies, with the Publicity Department of the Chinese Communist Party and a psychological warfare unit under the People's Liberation Army leading influence campaigns to sway public opinion. The Taiwan Affairs Office and the United Front Work Department focus on facilitating outreach programs, according to an internal Taiwanese memo shared with Reuters.

Rorry Daniels, managing director of the Asia Society Policy Institute, said the meeting was designed to organize the Chinese Communist Party's internal efforts to influence Taiwanese voters' choices. "They want to make sure that their internal policy organs are coordinated on what each of them wants to do to change the conversation inside Taiwan with regard to influencing voter choices," Daniels told VOA in a phone interview. The main tool of influence involves disinformation campaigns on YouTube and TikTok designed to amplify pro-Beijing narratives while creating divisions in Taiwanese society.

"The main aim is to exacerbate certain narratives that are advantageous to Beijing, to weaken its partners' opponents in Taiwan, to sow divisions and confuse the public," J. Michael Cole, senior adviser on Countering Foreign Authoritarian Influence with the International Republican Institute in Taiwan, told VOA. Chiu Tai-San, the minister of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, urged Beijing to "act as a responsible power and stop intimidating and coercing Taiwan."

He said doing so could help to gradually eliminate the "hostile spiral" between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. The Taiwan Mainland Affairs Council oversees cross-strait relations. The Chinese Embassy in the United States told VOA in a written response that Beijing respects the current social system in Taiwan and

hopes the results of the election will "help maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait" and bring cross-strait relations back to the "right track of peaceful development."

Beijing has also sponsored hundreds of Taiwanese politicians on trips to China over the last month. Taiwan's interior minister, Lin Yu-chang, said on Monday that at least 556 borough chiefs or village leaders in Taiwan have participated in 51 group trips to China. Last week, Taiwanese prosecutors launched an investigation into five people for allegedly arranging free trips to China for dozens of voters. According to them, one man surnamed Chou offered "unfair benefits" such as free meals and accommodation to 60 people who took part in the trip and asked these individuals to support candidates from specific political parties.

Cole in Taipei said the effectiveness of Beijing's attempt to influence Taiwanese elections through sponsored trips remains questionable. "Certainly, a small number of individuals might agree to be co-opted and return the favor by doing something that furthers Beijing's interests," he told VOA. "However, most Taiwanese are clear-eyed when it comes to these favors."

In his view, success through these efforts is "too limited" to overthrow trends in Taiwanese attitudes toward China. However, some Taiwanese experts warn that China's efforts to discredit the ruling Democratic

Progressive Party or DPP could pose serious challenges to the Taiwanese authorities in the run-up to the election. "The target of Beijing's cognitive warfare has long been swing voters and doubling down on narratives related to the potential conflict across the Taiwan Strait is an effective strategy to sway swing voters," Puma Shen, chairperson of Taipei-based research group Doublethink Lab, told VOA by phone.

In addition to amplifying fears that a victory by DPP's presidential candidate, Lai Ching-te, could heighten the risk of war across the Taiwan Strait, Shen said Beijing is also spreading disinformation. He cited as falsehoods word that Taiwan's public safety is deteriorating and that the Taiwanese government is wasting money on maintaining diplomatic allies while people are struggling economically. In his view, these efforts could increase swing voters' political apathy and eventually lead to their disengagement from politics. "While Beijing focuses on discrediting Taiwan's ruling party through a range of narratives, the Taiwanese government could only react to these false narratives and issue corresponding clarifications," Shen said.

Whatever China tries to do, Templeman from Stanford University thinks the impact on the elections will be limited. "I don't expect [these efforts] to fundamentally reshape the election," he told VOA. "The trends in Taiwan are too strong for Beijing to just weigh in at the margins and affect the outcome."

VOA

US defense budget debate begins to turn ugly

Maria Maaloue

IN American politics, there are many ways budget funding fights can be manifested. There is the traditional rivalry between the Republicans and the Democrats in Congress over the size of the budget and what it is to be spent on. But the most acrimonious budget battles center on the defense budget.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, which was unveiled last week, earmarks \$886 billion for different defense spending outlays, including a 5.2 percent pay increase for members of the armed forces. However, the most controversial aspect of the proposed defense budget is the unintended unity in the positions of the left-wing progressives in Congress and the ultraconservatives, especially the group known as the Freedom Caucus. This highlights the dilemma of American politics on the nature, the scope and the methods of political debate and it represents a problem for American democracy regarding how it can function.

There are many new policies that the defense bill introduces. Among them is an elevation in the status of the top general of the US Space Force, giving the role the same rank and stature as those of the army, navy, air force and Marine Corps. It makes the vice chief of the National Guard Bureau hold a statutory rank of general while serving in that position. It establishes the procurement of up

to 10 Virginia-class submarines.

Among the amendments made in the Senate are an effort to collect data on unidentified flying objects and the mandate of a two-thirds majority of members of the Senate before the president can withdraw the country from NATO.

However, what makes this defense bill unprecedented is that it embraces many aspects of the so-called culture wars in American politics. Many Republicans have stressed the need to abolish access to abortions for military troops and their families. They have attempted to remove permanent healthcare provisions for transgender service members and their family members. Both issues were left out of the draft bill. A few analysts have warned against the language of the budget, which prevents any racial equality phrases in its various items and categories. The political implications of the defense budget are numerous. It negates the goal of striking a consensus in American foreign and defense policies. Therefore, partisan disputes will dominate any foreign policy discussion in Washington. It makes American politics very unpredictable, since the least unpredictable outcomes could happen. For instance, Republican members of the Freedom Caucus have voted with Democrats to kill off previous defense budget bills and to stop the reelection of Rep.

Kevin McCarthy as the speaker of the House.

Moreover, many members of Congress have the economies of their congressional districts dependent on defense spending. With the debate on the defense budget getting more tense, the political mood inside Congress could get very bitter, demeaning and aggressive, as each member will try to secure the maximum benefits for his or her constituency from the huge and disputed budget authorization act.

President Joe Biden has also contributed to this negative partisan fight over the priorities in defense spending. Biden's request for additional funding of more than \$100 billion to help support Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan has complicated the budgetary politics. Constitutionally, the president can invoke supplementary funding measures. Nevertheless, the timing and circumstances of such a request are very unfortunate. Senate Republicans have voted against this extra funding, while insisting on the inclusion of more spending on the US border with Mexico. This ties defense spending into a complex web of items that have little to do with the US' ability to fight wars or counter national security threats, which are the main challenges to any country's national security policy and politics.

The Pentagon's budget may

Arab News



Insurance industry: Pakistan needs significant transformation: Shamshad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue, and Economic Affairs, Dr Shamshad Akhtar said Pakistan needs significant transformation in the insurance industry to address its fundamental challenges while catching up with global trends to maximize the value proposition of this industry.

While addressing a two-day International Insure Impact Conference 2023, organized by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), she asked the insurance industry to recognize that the risks are growing, both globally and nationally, demanding adequate coverage for people and businesses, said a press release issued here by SECP.

The Minister also gave a keynote address at the session, where a large number of industry experts, professionals, and officials from the insurance and financial sectors were present.

Dr Shamshad said that Pakistan needs to track and embrace emerging trends in the insurance sector adding that the global insurance

industry is undergoing technological advancements, evolving customers' expectations, and a pressing need for sustainable practices.

She advised concentrating on lifting the low penetration ratio of the insurance industry. She said that SECP's 5-year strategic plan will set the tone for future policy, legal, and regulatory landscapes. Incorporating the recommendation of the insurance industry reform committee would be a step in the right direction.

She suggested focusing on mainstreaming global best practices, reducing the cost of doing business, digitizing the operations, and making effective use of technology generally.

SECP Chairman Akif Saeed, in his welcome address, informed the participants about SECP's determination to work closely with industry stakeholders to align a strategic vision, propel economic growth, and cater to rising community aspirations.

Talking about the 5-year strategic plan, he added that

five years down the lane, SECP expects to capitalize on the digital ecosystem, increased outreach of insurance, growth in the Takaful sector, and enhanced reinsurance capability of the sector.

Setting the onset of the conference, SECP Commissioner Insurance, Aamir Khan, in his address pointed towards the key focus areas of legal and governance structure, tax reforms, awareness and perception, and the need for collaborations and embracing technology for rapid development of the sector.

Deputy Country Director, Asian Development Bank in Pakistan, Mr. Asad Aleem, commended the efforts of SECP to strategize the development of the insurance sector in Pakistan through a 5-year plan.

He said that ADB would continue to support such initiatives for the sustainable development of the insurance sector. Musa Alban Bahar, Project Coordinator at TCIP, presented a case study on the Turkish Catastrophe Insurance Pool. Musa

informed the participants that Turkey is one of the most seismically active regions in the world.

He informed me that in Turkey, the compulsory earthquake insurance model is a very well-designed system. The 2023 earthquake in Turkey affected 14 million people, causing a total economic loss of 103 billion USD and an insured loss of \$5 billion.

Musa said that the TCIP made more than \$34 billion in payments to more than 473,000 claims. Waseem Khan, SECP's head of insurance, presented the 5-Year Strategic Plan and shared details of strategic outcomes and actionable items.

Panel discussions were held on topics such as disaster risk and crop insurance, taxation issues, improving industry perception, and enhancing policyholder protection. The panelists highlighted certain key areas to be included in the draft 5-year plan before its final launch. They requested SECP to continue its current inclusive approach by taking the industry on all policy decisions.

TDAP organizes virtual webinar on potential of exports of maize

F.P. Report

KARACHI: There is 174% increase in Maize exports from Pakistan during July-November 2023. Pakistan's exports of maize/corn have been increased to US\$ 217 Million in July-November 2023-24 as compared to US\$ 79 in the same period in the year 2022-2023. Export of Maize in last 4

months is more than total export of last year.

TDAP in collaboration with our Trade Mission at Vietnam, Malaysia and Sri Lanka organized a awareness webinar on export potential of maize/corn to Vietnam, Malaysia and Sri Lanka on 13th December 2023. Around 75 exporters of Maize attended the webinar. The webinar started

with the opening remarks of DG (Agro) followed by the presentation by DM agro. After that our Commercial Counsellors at Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Malaysia gave a detailed presentation on import requirements of Maize and its potential available in these markets. In the question and answer session, exporters asked questions

from our trade and investment counselors about the dynamic of the markets and were answered by them. Exporters considered it as a very informative webinar in which they got lot of awareness about potential of exports in these markets.

It is expected that exports of Maize/Corn from Pakistan will be increased in the year 2023-24.

FCCI says to help revive GPO services

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) President Dr. Khurram Tariq said on Wednesday that the business community would make concerted efforts to revive historic and architectural splendor of General Post Office (GPO), addition to switching over from private courier companies to the Pakistan Post (PP) to make it a profitable national entity.

During his visit to the GPO, he discussed various issues with Madam Iffat Ishaq, Chief Post Master Faisalabad, and termed the PP a historic asset to Pakistan which had lost its glory due to neglect of the authorities concerned.

He said that the services offered by PP should be upgraded to compete with the private sector and it should also provide similar facilities at affordable rates. He said that the business community would play its role in restoration and face-lifting of GPO outside Rail Bazaar. He visited various departments of the GPO and appreciated its overall performance.

CG of Turkiye visits PCJCCI Secretariat

LAHORE (APP): Consul General of the Republic of Turkiye Durmus Bastug visited Pakistan-China Joint Chambers of Commerce and Industry to discuss trilateral relations among Turkiye, Pakistan and China, here at PCJCCI Secretariat on Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by the executive committee members of PCJCCI and many top notch business leaders from both Pakistan and China.

PCJCCI President Moazzam Ghurki said that Pakistan, Turkiye and China are three brotherly countries and they could complement each other's economy in many fields, therefore, they should focus on promoting trade and economic ties to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. He added that

Pakistan has gained market access in traditional sectors such as leather, rice, dates, mangoes, cutlery, and sports goods; and non-traditional sectors including seafood, processed agricultural products, rubber tubes and tyres, plastics, and engineering goods.

Durmus Bastug exchanged his views by saying that Turkiye and Pakistan enjoy good relations which should be transformed into growing business relations to achieve mutual economic benefits. He added that the current trade volume between the two countries is around USD 1.2 billion which did not reflect the expected and actual figure. "So, our primary goal is to reach USD 5 billion trade volume in a few years. Half of the Turkish investments

in Pakistan, worth around USD 2 billion, are in the Punjab region, and more than 15 Turkish companies are operating in various fields in Punjab," he mentioned.

The joint chamber's Secretary General Salahuddin Hanif said that the 6,540 km journey from Islamabad to Istanbul city takes ten days, less than half the time needed for the equivalent voyage of 21 days by sea. Therefore, the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul train project should be implemented and completed not only for freight purpose but also to boost tourism between the three countries. He also said that PCJCCI aims to enhance regional connectivity by enhancing bilateral and trilateral trade relations between the countries.

Motorbikes, 3-wheelers sale drops 12 per cent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sale of motorbikes and three-wheelers in the country witnessed a decrease of 12.30 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to sales of the corresponding months of the last year.

During July- November, as many as 459,459 motorbikes and three-wheelers

were sold against the sale of 523,936 units in July-November (2022-23), according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA).

The sale of Honda motorcycles dipped by 9 per cent from 437,708 units to 398,303 units whereas the sale of Suzuki motorcycles witnessed a decrease of 65.48 per cent from 17,450 units to 6,023 units during the months under review.

Similarly, the sale of Yamaha motorbikes also went down from 5,796

units to 3,896 units while the sale of Road Prince motorbikes witnessed a sharp decline of 52.03 per cent from 14,540 units to 6,974 units. The sales of United Auto motorcycles witnessed a decrease of 9.12 per cent from 40,504 units to 36,807 units.

Meanwhile, the sale of United Auto three-wheelers dipped from 960 units to 393 units while the sale of Sazgar three-wheelers however witnessed an increase of 35.26 per cent from 3,440 units to 4,653 units.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at the Port where five ships namely, MSC Mundra-VIII, MSC Jemima, New Asoura, Gaschem Warnow and Al-Deebal scheduled to load/offload Container, Cement, Chemicals and LNGberthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Engro Terminal and Elengy Terminal respectively on Tuesday. Meanwhile three more ships, Nadeen, Dolphin 02 and TCLC Luzhou also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim on same day to load/offload Rice, Chemicals and Coal

Respectively.

A total of ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Container vessel MSC Mundra VIII and bulk cargo carrier DSI Drammen left the port on today morning and three more ships, Gaschem Warnow, Basrah and Marlin Hera are expected to sail on today afternoon.

A moderate cargo handling was recorded at the port where a cargo volume of 169,071 tonnes, comprising 121,921 tonnes imports cargo and 47,150 tonnes export cargo carried in 3,885 Containers (2,435



KARACHI: President & CEO UBL Muhammad Jawaid Iqbal receiving PSX 'Top Companies of Year' Award for 2022 from the Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

UBL wins PSX's 'Top Companies of Year' award F.P. Report

KARACHI: United Bank Limited (UBL) was presented with the Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) 'Top Companies of the Year' Award for 2022 in Karachi recently.

On receiving the award Mr. Muhammad Jawaid Iqbal, President & CEO UBL, said, "UBL is honoured to be recognized as one of Pakistan's top companies for 2022. This achievement is a testament to the unwavering support of our customers and the dedicated efforts of our employees."

PSX loses 1,146 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 1,146.62 points, a negative change of 1.73 percent, closing at 65,280.16 points against 66,426.78 points the previous trading day.

A total of 1,358,411,606 shares valuing Rs.37.657 billion were traded during the day as compared to 969,630,378 shares valuing Rs.26.931 billion the last day. Some 412 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 93 of them recorded gains and 304 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 15 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 153,676,751 shares at Rs.1.65 per share, Bank of Punjab with 106,283,289 shares at Rs.6.29 per share and K-3 Electric Ltd with 90,068,235 shares at Rs.4.52 per share.

Sapphire Fibres Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.29.50 per share price, closing at Rs1.699.50, whereas the runner-up was Mehmood Textile Mills with a Rs 23.82 rise in its per share price to Rs 470.32.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs649.00 per share closing at Rs 10,350.00, followed by Nestle Pakistan with Rs.194.00 decline to close at Rs.8,506.00.

Gold rates decline further by Rs.1,000 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.1,000 and was sold at Rs.212,600 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs. 213,600 on the last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.858 to Rs.182,270 from Rs.183,128 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.167,081 from Rs.167,867, the Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

Promotion of furniture industry: SCCI urges govt to take steps

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) president

Fuad Ishaq urged the government to take pragmatic steps for promotion of furniture industry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and issues businesspeople attached with this sector.

Fuad Ishaq said that the furniture industry has played a pivotal role in economic development and enhancement of the country's export, which should be lifted up at an optimal level.

He was speaking as chief guest at 83rd Edition of Pakistan Lifestyle and Furniture Expo in Peshawar, said in a press release here on Wednesday. Various Pakistani and international furniture stalls set up in the expo.

The event was attended by the chamber's senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, Pakistan Lifestyle Group Chief Executive Mohsin Faisal, Director Zahra Faisal, Secretary General of the chamber

Sajjad Aziz, Saddam Gul, Faiz Rasool, Fazal e Wahid, organisers and people attached with furniture industry.

While praising the organisers for holding international furniture exhibition in Peshawar, Fuad Ishaq said such initiative is vital to boost investment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially revive the country's ailing economy.

The SCCI president said huge potential exists to make investment in the furniture sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He asked to create maximum opportunities for promotion of the furniture industry and investment in the sector.

Fuad Ishaq said the business community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has faced various difficulties due to current economic turmoil and other issues.

Therefore, he urged the government to take serious steps for resolution of businessperson issues attached with the furniture industry.

Like other sectors, he said the furniture industry

was not only contributing to economic development but had an important role in improving the country's exports.

He emphasized the furniture industry should be incentivized to boost up investment in the sector.

Fuad Ishaq said the business community has always supported the national economy in difficult circumstances. So, he stressed that traders' issues should be resolved on priority grounds.

Later, the SCCI president Fuad Ishaq and senior vice president Sanaullah Khan visited various stalls set up in the furniture exhibition and praised the various arts/designs and high quality of furniture.

On the occasion, Lifestyle Chief Executive Mohsin Faisal presented shields to president of the chamber Fuad Ishaq, senior vice president Sanaullah Khan and Secretary General Sajjad Aziz while the SCCI chief distributed certification among organisers and participants of the furniture exhibition.

HABIBMETRO honoured awards

F.P. Report

KARACHI: HABIBMETRO is honoured to have been recognised at the prestigious PSX Top 25 Companies Awards 2022. The award was received by Mr. Khurram Shahzad Khan, President & CEO of HABIBMETRO from the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

The PSX Top 25 Companies Awards are presented to recognise the exceptional financial and managerial performance of selected companies operating in diverse sectors, and also acknowledge their operational efficiency, governance practices and commendable initiatives in sustainability and ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) domains.

This accolade is a testament to HABIBMETRO's commitment to upholding exemplary standards in operations and prioritizing customers' needs as the cornerstone of our business ethos. It solidifies our standing as a trusted financial partner. HABIBMETRO's inclusion in this esteemed list reflects its unwavering commitment to the key pillars of excellence, trust, respect, and reliability that define our corporate success.

Reflecting at this prestigious accomplishment, Mr. Khurram Shahzad Khan, President & CEO, HABIBMETRO said, "We are honoured to have been recognised among the top-performing companies by the Pakistan Stock Exchange. This award is not just an acknowledgement of our financial prowess but a celebration of the enduring relationships we have cultivated

over the past 30 years. We dedicate this remarkable achievement to our valued customers, who have consistently chosen HABIBMETRO as their trusted financial partner. This achievement reflects the invaluable guidance of our esteemed Board of Directors and the concerted efforts of our employees who work diligently to take the Bank to greater heights. As we celebrate this milestone, we look forward to further deepening meaningful relationships and delivering greater value to our customers."

As HABIBMETRO continues to innovate and uphold its legacy of trust and commitment, the Bank remains dedicated to delivering exceptional financial services to its valued customers and contributing to the economic growth of our country.

Pak-Kyrgyzstan strategic alignment highlighted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade House Meher Kashif Younis on Wednesday said the strategic alignment of Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan, through China international

land routes offers a gateway to manifold economic opportunities, bolstering trade, fostering cooperation, and contributing to the overall development of the region.

Talking to a delegation of exporters and importers led by Faran Shahid, he said bilateral trade between landlocked Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan, facilitated by China through land routes, holds immense potential for economic growth and regional connectivity.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) serves as a crucial conduit, linking these geographically distant nations. Kyrgyzstan, nestled in Central Asia, lacks direct access to seaports, making overland trade routes vital for its economic development. He said moreover, the collaboration enhances regional stability by fostering economic interdependence.

He said as goods flow more seamlessly through these land routes by a fleet of NLC (National Logistics Corporation) the potential for mutual investments and joint ventures between Kyrgyz and Pakistani businesses increases.

BFC to attract investors in Faisalabad: FCCI president

FAISALABAD (APP): Establishment of Business Facilitation Centre (BFC) in Faisalabad is a happy augury as it would not only facilitate the industrialists but also attract maximum investors by providing them all mandatory and regulatory facilities under one roof.

This was stated by Dr. Khurram Tariq President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) during a meeting with Divisional Commissioner Madam Silwat Saeed. He discussed various issues relating to the establishment of BFC and said that most probably BFC would be established in the Commissioner Complex where state-of-the-art facilities would be provided in addition to linking it with all concerned provincial departments.

Dr. Khurram Tariq thanked Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi and the Divisional Commissioner Faisalabad for taking this bold and in-time decision which would encourage new investors. Madam Silwat Saeed assured that consultation with FCCI would continue to materialize this project as early as possible.



In brief

Throwball Championship

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 4th National School and College Throwball Championship organised by Pakistan Throwball Federation will be held here at the Pakistan Sports Complex 2024 from January 27 to 28, 2024. The opening ceremony would be held on January 27 while closing on 28. Trophies, Medals, and Certificates would be awarded to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd position holders in each category, as well as the best players of the tournament. Best Coaches of the winning teams would also receive shields, t-shirts while best players in each event will receive trophies. PTF Souvenirs would be presented to the principals of participating teams. A meeting for Draws and Rule & Regulation will be held on January 26 at PSB Mess Hall.

National Jr Taekwondo C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Taekwondo Federation in collaboration with Korean Embassy, was organizing 16th Korean Ambassador National Junior Taekwondo Championship here at the Liaquat Gymnasium of Pakistan Sports Complex from December 15 to 16. The championship was set to be a mega event with the active participation of over 200 to 250 officials and athletes. Distinguished guests, including the Korean Ambassador and Senior Services Officers would be in attendance for the opening ceremony on December 16. The participating teams include Pakistan Army, Pakistan Air Force, Wapda, Railway, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, Gilgit Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and WT Care Programme Team.

Al-Fateh Football Club win

FAISALABAD (APP): The first U-14 boys football championship was played at Lasalle School and College on Wednesday under the auspices of district sports department and district Faisalabad football association. Al-Fateh Football Club defeated Lasalle Football Club by 5-4 and won the title. The third position was won by Kids Football Club. President District Football Association Hafiz Azhar Mahmood was chief guest who distributed prizes among winners. Total eight teams participated in the championship.

Shaheen named vc for Test series

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi has been appointed as vice-captain of the Pakistan Test Team for the series against Australia. Earlier, Shaheen was also appointed captain of the Pakistan Men's T20 Cricket Team. Shaheen has played 27 Tests, 53 ODIs and 52 T20Is for Pakistan.

Winter Hockey coaching camp

H Y D E R A B A D (APP): A winter Hockey coaching camp for Boys and girls will be organized by District Hockey Association Hyderabad in collaboration with Rizwan Tanvir hockey academy in Aastro Of hockey ground of Board stadium from 15 December. Sharing details about winter coaching camp, president District hockey association Iftikhar u din said that the purpose of organizing winter camp was to strengthen the hockey game at grassroots level.

Pakistan all ready for Australia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan were set to take on Australia in the first Test of the three-match Benaud Qadir Trophy at Perth Stadium on Thursday (December 14).

Pakistan currently tops the ICC World Test Championship 2023-25 points table after having started the campaign on a winning note against Sri Lanka earlier this year. Overall, Pakistan are ranked sixth on the ICC Men's Test team rankings.

Reigning world Test champions, Australia would be kicking off their second series of the ongoing WTC cycle. Australia were ranked fifth on the table after their series against England, where they won two, lost two and drew a game.

Pakistan's last Test tour to Aussie shores yielded a two-nil loss in 2019-20. In the recent Test series between both sides in March 2022, Australia took the honours with a 1-0 victory in the three-match Test series held in Pakistan.

Shan Masood, who became Pakistan's 35th Test captain ahead of the series, would be playing his first game as captain. The first match of the series would be a milestone game for Babar Azam as he will feature in his 50th Test

match for Pakistan. Babar Azam is ranked fourth in the ICC Test batters rankings. Shaheen Shah Afridi is ranked fifth in the Test bowlers rankings. Shaheen bagged six wickets in Pakistan's first two WTC 2023-25 matches earlier this year. In the ongoing WTC cycle, Saud Shakeel and Abdullah Shafique were the two leading run-scorers for Pakistan with 295 and 228 runs respectively. Salman Ali Agha has amassed 221 runs in the championship and has also picked up three wickets.

As part of their preparations, Pakistan locked horns with the Prime Minister's XI in a four-day first-class match in Canberra which ended in a draw. The squad traveled to Perth on December 10 and the team has undergone three extensive training sessions at Perth Stadium. Mystery spinner Abrar Ahmed has been ruled out of the Perth Test due to injury and his replacement, off-spinner, Sajid Khan joined the squad in Perth on Tuesday. On the eve of the series opener, Pakistan announced their playing XI for the first Test including debutants Aamir Jamal and Khurram Shahzad.

Pakistan's playing XI for first Test includes Shan Masood (captain), Imam-

ul-Haq, Abdullah Shafique, Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel, Sarfaraz Ahmed (wicket-keeper), Salman Ali Agha, Faheem Ashraf, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Aamir Jamal and Khurram Shahzad.

Pakistan skipper Shan Masood said, "I think it is best to look at the bigger picture as a side, look at the process, look at how we want to play cricket and take results as a by-product. If we play good cricket for five days consistently, I'm sure we'll be on the right end of the results. For us right now it's how we grow as a side and if we do the right things for a long period then we'll get the results."

"The beauty of this game is that you get to do something different and that's what we want to do as a side. We want to go forward and play attractive Test cricket and if the results come our way then well and good but if they don't then we'll go back to the drawing board and try to rectify our mistakes. I see a lot of potential in this side and a lot of players who can take Pakistan forward. For us, it is about the bigger picture and playing good cricket and making sure we can compete against the best and this is the perfect opportunity to do so," he said.

PM's Youth Talent Hunt Program handball trials begin at Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister's Talent Hunt Youth Sports League male handball trials began at University of Peshawar University, in which a large number of players participated.

Mardan, Swat, Hazara and Bannu zone trials will be held as per schedule. Higher Education has assigned the responsibility of monitoring of handball trials to Peshawar University. Director Sports Peshawar University paid tribute to Chairman HEC

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad and DGHEC Javed Ali Memon and said responsibility will be fulfilled with zeal and zest. As per schedule the trials were conducted under the supervision of the Director Sports and Organizer and Coordinator of the University of Peshawar and the President Provincial Handball Association Bahr Karam.

The selection committee of Pakistan Handball Federation consisted of international coach Asim Rashid, international player Naveedur Rahman and director distance education

system Dr. Noorzada was also present. A large number of players participated in the trials.

12 players will be selected in first phase, while in the second phase provincial competitions will be held in which players of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa team would be selected for National Championship to be held in Peshawar. Trials of Mardan zone would be conducted from 16 to 17 December, in Swat from 20 to 21, in Hazara from 24 to 25 and in Bannu from 28 to 29 December.



Sadia Iqbal climbs to number four in the ICC Women's T20I Bowlers Rankings

LAHORE (PPI): After making history in New Zealand by defeating the hosts in a three-match T20I series 2-1, the Pakistan women's team is also making significant strides in the ICC Women's rankings.

Left-arm spinner Sadia Iqbal, a key contributor to Pakistan's success against the White Ferns in the T20I series, has been rewarded by reaching the fourth spot in the ICC Women's T20I rankings. The 28-year-old Sadia has played 28 T20Is, taking 29 wickets, with her best figures of three wickets for 19 runs against Bangladesh in 2019.

For her consistent performance, Sadia was shortlisted for the ICC Women's Player of the Month for November. In ODIs, Sadia has climbed six places to currently sit at number 34.

Another left-arm spinner from Pakistan, Nashra Sundhu, is also among the top 10 bowlers in the ICC Women's T20 rankings. Nashra, who has taken 53 wickets in 51 T20Is, holds the eighth spot. In ODIs, Nashra has moved up two places to 13th.

Apart from Nashra and

Sadia, captain Nida Dar is ranked fifth among all-rounders in ICC Women's T20I rankings, and in bowling, she is at number 18.

In the ICC Women's ODI rankings, Sidra Amin has shown progress, rising three places to 21st due to her century (105, 117B, 12x4s) against the White Ferns on Tuesday at the John Davies Oval in Queenstown. Sidra is also leading the batting charts of ICC Women's Championship 2022-25, scoring 852 runs from 16 matches at an average of 65.53. The right-handed opening batter has struck three centuries and four half-centuries in championship matches.

Cherishing the moment, Sadia Iqbal said, "Cricket is all about challenges and milestones, and reaching number four in the ICC T20I bowlers rankings is a significant milestone in my career. I owe this achievement to the collective efforts of the team and the unconditional support from fans. I am also grateful to the coaching staff who have played a crucial role in my journey and I am looking forward to bringing

more success for my country in the future."

Chairman PCB Management Committee, Mr. Zaka Ashraf said: "I am immensely proud of the progress our women cricketers have made in the international arena. Recently, they made history by becoming the first Asian country to beat New Zealand in their own backyard, and now the elevation of our women cricketers in the ICC rankings reflects the hard work and commitment they have shown. We are committed to fostering the growth of women's cricket in Pakistan."

Head of Women's Cricket, Tania Mallick: "Achieving rankings in the ICC Women's Rankings is a significant milestone for our players, showcasing their skill, determination, and the growing competitiveness of women's cricket in Pakistan. "As the head of women's cricket, witnessing our players secure rankings in the ICC Women's Rankings is a heartwarming moment. It underscores the progress we are making in promoting and developing women's cricket in Pakistan."



LAHORE: Players struggling to get hold on the ball during Polo match between Master Paints and FG Din Polo during Hamadan 12th Lahore Open Polo Championship 2023 at Lahore Polo Club.

Babar Naem forced to live abroad due to threats to life

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former Pakistani cricketer Babar Naem was forced to live abroad due to serious threats to his life from powerful land grabbers.

According to the details, Babar Naem, who played 162 first-class matches for the Rawalpindi region, was currently residing in the United Kingdom (UK) after being injured in a murder attempt last year.

The 40 years old cricketer has also filed cases in the Rawalpindi Civil Court and the High Court against the powerful land grabbers.

Along with cricket, Babar Naem had also a good business in his home town Gorakhpur, a suburb of Rawalpindi but the land mafia had also occupied their property and refuses to vacate it despite the court orders.

Babar Naem was also been threatened to lose his life if he returns to his homeland. Due to the current circumstances faced by the cricketer, he has decided to settle in the United Kingdom and will soon file a case for settling in the UK. It should be mentioning that Babar Naem has represented Pakistan A, Pakistan Under-19s, Pakistan Cricket Board Blues, Rawalpindi Rams, Pakistan Cricket Board Patron's XI, Sayid Paper, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Federal Areas, Rawalpindi Region teams as well as played league cricket in United Kingdom for the last fifteen years.

Wheelchair cricket team awarded with cash prize

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Wheelchair cricket team was awarded with a cash prize of Rs3.6 million by Chairman PCB Management

Committee, Mr Zaka Ashraf for its remarkable success in the T20 Wheelchair Cricket Asia Cup 2023 held in Nepal. According to details, the Pakistan wheelchair cricket team demonstrated an all-round display to become back-to-back champions of the T20 Wheelchair Cricket Asia Cup. The PCB in its bid to keep inclusivity and diversity as a paramount part of the sport acknowledges this achievement and supports people of all abilities. Zaka Ashraf praised and appreciated the Chairman Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket (PWCC) Ruksana Rajput, Manager Zawar Noor, Assistant Manager Javed Babar and captain Mohammad Zeeshan along with the triumphant squad.

Addressing the Asia Cup winning squad said, the Chairman PCB Management Committee said, "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the team. We are proud of all the players and the PWCC management who achieved this wonderful feat. All of you are blessed with great skills and making a name for Pakistan on the global stage. The PCB will make sure to provide more grounds and training facilities to the Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket team." Expressing his admiration for the Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket team, the COO PCB, Mr Salman Naseer stated, "I congratulate you all on behalf of the PCB and the management committee.

UAE U19 beats Sri Lanka by 2 wickets, Shoaib felicitates UAE boys

DUBAI (INP): The UAE U19 team after a thrilling contest defeated Sri Lanka U19 by two-wicket win in the ACC Men's Asia Cup U19 match at the ICC Academy Oval. The teenagers' joy doubled when they were greeted by legendary Pakistan pacer Shoaib Akhtar right after their incredible win over the cricketing powerhouse.

Shoaib Akhtar visited the ICC Academy Oval as part of his special visit to Dubai. The fastest bowler in cricket history with peak bowling speeds of more than 160kph, has been signed up by the DP World ILT20 as the League Ambassador for Season 2.

The Pakistani pacer congratulated the UAE boys on their exciting victory and lauded the team spirit and camaraderie.

The pacer who made 224 international appearances for Pakistan stressed on the importance of hard work, determination and a never-say-die attitude in order to achieve success at the international level. Shoaib later spoke to the media on the contributions of DP World ILT20 for UAE cricket and the future of the game in the country.

"I want to congratulate the young guns of UAE for their impressive performance today. I am

thrilled to see their passion for the game and how they overcame a bigger opponent while holding their nerve in the final stages of the match."

He said, "The Emirates Cricket Board has done some stellar work for cricket in the UAE in recent years.

I am delighted to come onboard as the League Ambassador for the DP World ILT20. The tournament is all about developing the game further in the UAE and providing exposure to the players in the country. The presence of some world-class T20 players in all six sides further proves the league's standing."

Ideal Chitral Football club wins Peshawar Football League



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Ideal football club clinched the title of Peshawar Football League Season 6 by beating defending champion Aatish Tank wit 4-3 goals, on Wednesday at Tahmas Khan Football Stadium Peshawar.

First half of the final remained equal with no goal from each side, however, at the start of the second half, Khalid from Aatish Tank scored a goal in the 46th minute to take a lead of 1-0, but after a few minutes M Zafar of Ideal Chitral equalized the match by making a

goal in the 95th minute and none of the players managed to score more goals till the end of match time.

Match was decided by penalty kicks in which chitral won the title with 4-3. Gohar Zaman as commissioner, Anwar Khan and Hidayatullah supervise the match as referees. Former captain of national team Colonel (ret'd) Mujahidullah, director sports merged districts Pir Abdullah Shah, former secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Football Association Basit Kamal, district sports officer Peshawar

Gul Rukh, chief organizer, chairman Youth Glam Welfare Organization Gul Haider, assistant director sports Faisal Javed were also present.

Eight teams- Shinwari Football Club, Hazara Football Club, Popo Club, Ace Garden, Shaheen Football Club, Aatish Tank FC, Ideal Chitral Football Club and Mamson Football Club participated in the league. Organizing Secretary Gul Haider said the league was organized for the sixth consecutive time, opportunities were provided to the youth to express their talents.

Pakistan women team reach Christchurch for two ODIs matches

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan women's team reached Christchurch on Wednesday to play the remaining two ODIs of the series at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch.

The ODIs are part of the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25. Pakistan women's team will participate in the training session on Thursday afternoon. The second ODI between Pakistan and New Zealand women's cricket

teams will be played in Christchurch on Friday, while

the third and final match of the ODI series will be played on December 18.

Series schedule:

3 Dec - 1st T20I, Dunedin (Pakistan women beat New Zealand women by seven wickets)

5 Dec - 2nd T20I, Dunedin (Pakistan women beat New Zealand women by 10 runs)

9 Dec - 3rd T20I,

Queenstown (New Zealand women beat Pakistan women by six runs on DLS)

12 Dec - 1st ODI, Queenstown (New Zealand women beat Pakistan women by 131 runs)

15 Dec - 2nd ODI, Christchurch (2pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

18 Dec - 3rd ODI, Christchurch (2pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)



In brief

Police arrest 15 lawbreakers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other lawbreakers here on Wednesday arrested 15 accused besides recovering over eight kg charras, 25 liters liquor, two 30 bore pistols, ammunition and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Rawat, Dhamial, Gungmandi, Waris Khan, Morgah, Saddar Wah, and Cantt police rounded up 10 accused namely Ansar Ali, Saeedullah, Niaz Ali, Nadeem, Jabar, Razaq, Faisal, Bashir Ahmed, Ali and Nabeel and recovered over eight kg charras from their possession. Similarly, Bani, Rattaamral and Civil Lines police rounded up five accused namely Rashid, Kashif, Sarfraz, Hanzala and Zeeshan and recovered 25 liters liquor, two 30-bore pistols and ammunition from their possession. The spokesman further informed that Rawalpindi District Police also registered 144 FIRs against underage drivers during the last 24 hours. He said that police on the directives of the City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were taking action against underage drivers. A total of 2817 FIRs were registered under the campaign launched against underage drivers while 144 cases were registered during the last 24 hours. The CPO had directed the City Traffic Police to take solid steps to control traffic rules violations and underage driving, he said.

IRSA releases 84,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 84,800 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 38,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1483.78 feet and was 83.78 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 19,700 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1165.00 feet, which was 115.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,800 cusecs and 26,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 61,800, 37,200, 35,800 and 6,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 6,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police engage students

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Police Officer of Security Division Islamabad Awais Ahmad delivered a compelling lecture at Quaid-e-Azam University as part of the Islamabad Capital Police's ongoing initiative to combat drug abuse in the federal capital and protect the younger generation from the perils of narcotics. Addressing a diverse audience comprising professors, students, and university staff, Awais Ahmad underscored the urgent need for students to distance themselves from the menace of drug abuse and take concrete steps to secure their futures. The lecture focused on the damaging effects of substance abuse, particularly among the youth, emphasizing the profound threat it poses to both health and future prospects.



ISLAMABAD: VC AIOU, Prof Dr Nasir Mahmood giving shield to Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi during 3rd International Conference on "Modern Trends in the Arab Novel in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century" organize by AIOU at Academic Auditorium.

Ombudsman Office receive 190,000 complaints

ISLAMABAD (APP): Wafaqi Mohtasib (Federal Ombudsman) Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has directed the investigation officers and the heads of federal agencies to ensure timely implementation of Wafaqi Mohtasib decisions since no slackness would be tolerated on this count.

He said that 178,000 complaints have so far been decided since January 2023 and the number of complaints may touch an all-time high figure of 190,000 by the year-end.

Wafaqi Mohtasib was presiding over high-level meeting of WM Regional Officers from Lahore, Faisalabad, Sargodha and Gujranwala on Wednesday.

Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, speaking to media in Lahore, for the first time after having been elected as President of Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) said that it was a great honour and recognition of Pakistan's valuable contribution.

Commending the performance of the Regional Offices, he reiterated his firm commitment to resolve the issues faced by the poor masses. He said that the Wafaqi Mohtasib was a "poor man's court" and its main purpose was to redress the grievance of oppressed and the marginalized members of the community. All out efforts would be undertaken by the government officials to resolve the complaints so that relief was provided to poor strata, he added.

He said without allocation of additional budget and manpower, the officers of Wafaqi Mohtasib had put in their best to reach out the public for resolving their complaints through Khulli Katchehries and IRD.

He said number of complaints, filed with Wafaqi Mohtasib, was increasing every year and only in 2022 WM received 164,174 complaints out of which 154,770 complaints were resolved.

This year WMS have received 183,000 complaints till now and it is expected that this number may reach to 190,000 by the end of the year, he added.

He said his increase in the number of complaints showed the trust of the people, reposed in the Wafaqi Mohtasib institution. He commended the role of media in creating awareness about the institution of Wafaqi Mohtasib among the public, he added.

Wafaqi Mohtasib also highlighted steps being taken for the benefit of the pensioners, Overseas Pakistanis, Prisoners and specially the Women and Child Prisoners. He emphasised upon the media to cooperate in disseminating the message of Wafaqi Mohtasib to far-flung areas to ensure that poor segments of society received the information about Wafaqi Mohtasib and enable them to get timely relief.

ANF busts drug-trafficking gang; arrests 9

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting an operation in Kot Moman managed to bust a drug-trafficking gang and arrested nine accused including four women besides recovering 1023 kg drugs.

According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, ANF while conducting an operation in Kot Momin netted nine smugglers, members of an inter-provincial gang which was allegedly involved in drug smuggling through women in different cities of Punjab. During the operation, total 1023 kg drugs were recovered from their possession.

He informed that Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) team stopped three vehicles near Kot Momin and recovered total 703 kg hashish from the vehicles. During the investigation, the accused revealed the presence of drugs in a house located in Kot Momin.

On pointation of the accused, the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) team raided the house and recovered 398 kg opium while four women were also rounded up during the operation.

Madad Ali increases quota for women from 33% to 40% in PMYSDP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi has increased the quota for women from 33% to 40% in the Prime Minister's Youth Skills Development Programme (PMYSDP).

He made these directions while chairing the 1st Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Prime Minister's Youth Skills Development Programme (PMYSDP) by NAVTTC on Wednesday.

He said that women's empowerment is a crucial milestone that needs to be prioritised if we want Pakistan to overcome the existing social challenges.

Similarly, he ordered that all differently abled students to be given seats irrespective of any quotas set.

He also ordered the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) to arrange accommodation for them in major cities to facilitate them.

Madad Ali Sindhi said that technical training can become the backbone of the economy of Pakistan. He said that it is imperative that we harness the full potential of the youth of Pakistan.

He appreciated the sheer scale of the Prime Minister's Youth Skills Development Programme (PMYSDP) and said that effective and practical implementation of this programme can yield extremely positive results.

Madad said that all institutions that will be partnered with under the Prime Minister's Youth Skills Development Programme (PMYSDP) should be strictly scrutinised to meet the set standards.

He appreciated the involvement of E&Y and KPMG as third-party auditors to

ensure swift accountability.

Madad said that NAVTTC's work has been practical and has made a significant difference. He appreciated the ongoing projects of NAVTTC and its reach to underdeveloped regions of the country.

ED NAVTTC told the Federal Minister that the current Prime Minister's Youth Skills Development Programme's costs approximately Rs. 10b.

He said that under this programme 161k youth have been trained so far. Out of which 96k have received hi-tech training and 64k have received conventional training. He further briefed the minister that this trained workforce has an employment rate of 71%, adding out of the total trained students, 42k were women.

The minister was apprised of the provincial breakdown as being 67k from Punjab, 20K from KPK, 38K from Sindh, 12K from Baluchistan and 22K from the federal capital.

Madad Ali Sindhi was further briefed about the components of the Prime Minister's Youth Skills Development Programme. He said that under the name of Hunar Ablaah, 16,000 students will be given training in High-Tech / IT Technologies. Similarly, under the Jiddat Maharat, 25,000 youth will be trained in High-End Industrial Revolution Technologies and under Al-Kasib, 15,000 youth will be given training in conventional technologies and under Bayrun Rozgar, 15,000 students will be given training under the Global Skill Recognition of Pakistani expats & potential emigrants (RPL).

SAPM Jawad Malik for higher job opportunities in hospitality sector in KSA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development, Jawad Sohrah Malik held an interactive session with Pakistani professionals from the hospitality industry at the Embassy of Pakistan, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The SAPM, Jawad Sohrah Malik assured the participants of the will and

the resolve of the government to train the workers in accordance with the requirements of the hospitality industry in Saudi Arabia in order to get the maximum share for Pakistanis in the Saudi job market, said a press release.

The Participants briefed the SAPM on the trends in the hospitality sector with the focus on areas where Pakistan could benefit.

The SAPM was

informed that the Kingdom accorded priority to the tourism industry under its ambitious Vision 2030 and therefore the hospitality industry was growing at a rapid pace.

They highlighted the specific skill-set and qualifications that were sought after in the Saudi Arabian hospitality industry, such as the working level language proficiency in Arabic and English.

HEC, British Council, PMYP to jointly work on Green Youth Movement

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission, British Council, and Prime Minister's Youth Programme have entered a new partnership to collaborate in their flagship programmes aimed to contribute to the economic and social development of the Pakistani youth.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister Mr. Wasi Shah was chief guest of the signing ceremony, which was attended by Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Executive Director HEC Dr. Zia Ul Qayyum, Country Director British Council Mr. James Thompson and other notables from the three sides.

Deputy Secretary Prime Minister's Youth Programme Dr. Muhammad Ali Malik, Advisor (Global Engagement) HEC Mr. Awais Ahmed and Country Director British Council Mr. Hampson signed the Letter of Intent (LoI).

The tripartite collaboration will be focused on the outcomes of the Prime Minister Youth Programme's Green Youth Movement, HEC's Green Youth Movement, and the British Council's Pakistan Youth Leadership Initiative (PYLI).

The primary objectives of the collaboration are to provide essential capacity-building and technical support to Green Youth Movement (GYM) clubs, develop

training content, and establish connections between GYM Clubs and other development partners on both national and international fronts to enhance the impact of youth initiatives.

Additionally, it will cover the conduct of training sessions for GYM clubs, focal persons and faculty members, empowering them with the skills necessary to effectively facilitate leadership training.

The collaboration will involve the development of a digital platform and a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

In his remarks, Mr. Wasi Shah underlined that Pakistan's vulnerability to the disasters of climate change necessitates a sense of responsibility in the nation.

He stressed the need for honing the potential of Pakistani youth, whom he termed the country's asset, to cope with the challenges of climate change. He said, "Under the GYM project, we have established GYM clubs in 137 universities across Pakistan. These clubs are working in five thematic areas which are agriculture and forestry, renewable energy, liquid and solid waste management, water conservation and eco-tourism."

Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed said, "This collaborative

effort signifies a commitment to the economic and social development of young people in Pakistan, with a focus on climate action, innovation, and leadership."

Through joint programmes and innovative initiatives, the tripartite partnership aims to create a lasting impact on the youth landscape in the country, he said.

He maintained that the three partners will work together to build the capacity of Pakistani youth to face the climate challenges and contribute meaningfully to overcoming these challenges.

Country Director, British Council Pakistan stated that the partnership between PMYP, HEC and the British Council will help young people shape their future as leaders of tomorrow in the face of today's climate crisis.

He said HEC and the British Council have long been partners, as the two entities have jointly worked on over 22 projects.

Appreciating HEC for its commitment to the cause of promoting higher education in the country, he hoped that programmes like Pak-UK Education Gateway would yield immense results, bringing the governments and people closer.

He affirmed that the world realizes the fact that Pakistan is one of the major victims of climate change.



ISLAMABAD: IESCO workers busy installing new electricity meters in residential flats at G-7 in Federal Capital.

Major parties unite for women political participation, inclusive society at National Policy Forum

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a landmark demonstration of solidarity, representatives from major political parties Wednesday unequivocally expressed their commitment to advancing women's political participation.

This pivotal stance was taken at the National Policy Forum on "Women's Inclusion in Democratic Governance," a significant event hosted by South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK), a news release said. The forum brought together women leaders, policymakers, and international partners to deliberate on strategies for enhancing the role of women in political processes. The highlight of the event was the presentation of a joint Charter of Demands by women leaders, parliamentarians, and civil society advocates. This charter calls for meaningful political participation, urging political parties to integrate women into their structures and decision-making processes. The collective dedication to this cause was prominently affirmed by representatives from diverse political affiliations.

Renowned political analyst Mosarrat Qadeem delivered a compelling keynote

address, emphasizing the indispensable role of women's voices in constructing a robust and equitable Pakistan. Qadeem shed light on the efforts undertaken by SAP-PK and its partners to empower women through enhanced political participation.

She stressed that the essence of women inclusion went beyond numerical representation, advocating for a fundamental alteration of power dynamics to ensure women voices were integral to decisions affecting their lives. Mohammad Tahseen, in his welcoming remarks, expressed SAP-PK's commitment to fostering a more inclusive and equitable society where women assumed meaningful roles. The forum provided a unique platform for diverse voices, featuring a panel discussion with accomplished women leaders sharing their experiences and perspectives. The panel included Sana Durrani (Balochistan), Pushpa Kumari (Sindh), Nusrat Ara (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Neelum Sarwar (Gilgit Baltistan), Anum Khan (representing Persons with Diverse Abilities from Punjab), and Mahi Ali (transgender activist).

Aid for returnees discussed

KABUL (BNA): In a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador, Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, Acting Economy Minister and head of the committee for attracting aid for refugees, discussed assistance for Afghan returnees in Kabul. Qari Din Mohammad Hanif expressed gratitude for China's extraordinary humanitarian support to Afghan returnees who are deported from neighboring countries despite Afghanistan's persistent challenges.

UN has no right to challenge

KABUL (Ariana news): The United Nations has no right to challenge the recognition of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), Secretary General of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, Ali al-Qaradaghi, has said. Speaking in an interview with Hadith TV, al-Qaradaghi said that they will use all the resources in hand to get IEA out of isolation. He said that the government in Afghanistan is Islamic and countries need to recognize it.

Uplift, promotion of Islamic banking: Effective activities carried out: Governor

KABUL (BNA): In a recent discourse, the Acting Governor of Da Afghanistan Bank, Hayatullah Badri, highlighted the bank's effective efforts in promoting and developing Islamic banking over the past two years. The discourse, initiated by Da Afghanistan Bank, was aimed at fostering the growth of Islamic banking and involved key stakeholders including the Ministry of Information and Culture, the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs, the Islamic Banking Research Center, and experts in the field. Badri emphasized the significance of Islamic banking in contributing to global economic growth and prosperity. While acknowledging the bank's initiatives in the past two years, he stressed the need

for collaboration with academic institutions and key ministries to enhance awareness and coordination. Dr. Yusuf Salim, an official from the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs, provided detailed insights into the trends, achievements, current status, and plans of Islamic banking over the past two years. He advocated for collaboration with the ministry and academic institutions to further promote Islamic banking. Mawlawi Zar Mohammad Haaqani, Deputy Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs, discussed the levels of cooperation with the Afghanistan Bank and expressed readiness to launch awareness programs through mosques and schools. He underscored the need for the bank to collaborate with academic institutions

in formulating practical guidelines for promoting Islamic banking. Mufti Abu Saeed al-Rashid, the head of the Islamic Banking Research Center, emphasized the need to enhance the capabilities of bank employees in the field of Islamic banking. He commended the Central Bank for initiating such programs and stressed the importance of collaboration with educational and training institutions. The discourse aims to pave the way for technical discussions at the level of rational and equitable policy frameworks, aligned with the conditions and desires of the people and is intended to manifest itself in the light of Sharia. Practical actions are planned to take place in the field through collaboration among various authorities.

Ministry fined for data breach during Afghan's evacuation

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UK's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has imposed a £350,000 fine on the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for a significant data breach. According to the statement posted on the UK Information Commissioner's Office website, "The incident, which occurred during the chaotic Afghan evacuation after the Taliban's 2021 takeover, involved the accidental disclosure of personal details of 245 Afghan nationals eligible for evacuation." The statement added, "The breach, caused by an email error, potentially endangered lives by exposing sensitive information to potential Taliban access. The MoD has since implemented new measures to prevent future breaches and cooperated fully with the ICO's investigation. This penalty underscores the necessity of stringent data protection practices, especially in high-risk situations." The original email, issued by the team overseeing the UK's Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), was crucial in its context and purpose. This team is dedicated to aiding the relocation of Afghan nationals who have been associated with the UK Government in Afghanistan. The sensitive nature of the data within this email was significant; if it had been intercepted by the Taliban, it could have posed a serious threat to the lives of those involved. After the data breach, the MoD advised affected individuals to delete the email, change their email addresses, and provide new details via a secure form. They also reached out to the ARAP team. Additionally, the MoD conducted an internal investigation, addressed Parliament regarding the breach, and improved ARAP's email protocols. This included a new policy requiring emails to external recipients to be reviewed by a second staff member for extra security. Acknowledging the MoD's response and the ARAP team's challenges, the ICO reduced the fine from £1,000,000 to £700,000, then to £350,000 under public sector policy, as a deterrent for future data breaches. According to the British Government, from the Taliban's takeover until the end of March 2023, approximately 24,600 people, including British nationals, arrived in the UK from Afghanistan. Approximately 21,000 of these were resettled through various schemes. About 2,000 arrived before Operation Pitting, 15,000 during the operation, and 7,000 have arrived since.

Muttaqi discusses issue of refugees with Iran's envoy



KABUL (Ariana News): Iran's special representative and ambassador to Afghanistan, Hassan Kazmi Qomi, met with Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, on Wednesday and discussed a number of issues including that of Afghan refugees in Iran. According to the ministry, there was a detailed discussion about recent bilateral economic developments between Afghanistan and Iran, the problems of Afghan refugees in Iran and bilateral political and economic cooperation. After welcoming the Iranian delegation, Muttaqi said that it is necessary to seriously solve the legal and judicial problems of Afghan refugees in Iran and to effectively maintain bilateral political, economic and cultural relations between the two countries. Qomi mentioned the recent visit of high-ranking Afghan officials to Iran under the leadership of the economic deputy prime minister. He also spoke on the development of bilateral cooperation, adding that

regional connectivity and the development of economic cooperation between the two countries will strengthen political and economic relations. Emphasis was placed on mutual cooperation and constructive action in strengthening and developing all-round relations between Afghanistan and Iran, the ministry said.

‘World should not lose focus on Afghanistan’



KABUL (Ariana News): Pio Smith, the regional director for Asia and the Pacific for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) wrapped up a five-day visit to the country this week and urged the international community not to lose focus on Afghanistan. Smith said: "UNFPA is supporting more than 700 health facilities across Afghanistan that are reaching around 700,000 people every month. "While that is undeniably saving thousands of lives, it is nowhere near what is needed to ensure that every Afghan woman and girl receives essential reproductive health services, including psychosocial support to help them cope and rebuild their lives," he said. UNFPA is actively assisting in a number of areas across the country. Along with partners, the agency has set up a mobile health clinic at Torkham reception center in Nangarhar to help care for

Afghan migrants returning from Pakistan. In addition to this, UNFPA is assisting victims of the October earthquakes in Herat province. Immediately after the first earthquake, UNFPA set up medical tents to provide immediate maternal health and psychosocial support on the ground. Today, these tents have been replaced with a fully equipped emergency maternity unit providing normal and Caesarean-section delivery services, as well as counselling and mental health support for women and girls. "Many of those affected, including pregnant women, have physical injuries from the earthquakes. Beyond the physical scars, there are a lot of mental wounds. Many, sadly, are feeling desperate and suicidal. These women and girls are suffering – they are suffering because they have lost their families, they have lost their homes, they have lost their livelihoods – and they are

in dire need of psychosocial support to help them cope and to help them rebuild," said Smith. In response the Islamic Emirate says the concerns about the violation of rights of women and girls are unfounded and emphasizes that the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan have been secured more than ever before. However, in a new report, the Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is concerned about the situation of women in the country and said that during a survey conducted from August to October of this year, the restrictions imposed on girls and women, immigration and climate change has had a negative impact on women's health and personal and social life. UNAMA has asked the international community to facilitate direct dialogue between Afghan women and the authorities of the Islamic Emirate.

Patients complain of disparities in healthcare quality in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): On the occasion of Universal Health Coverage Day, the World Health Organization has emphasized the importance of providing equal access to healthcare services worldwide. The organization stated, "Let's urge our leaders to enact policies that guarantee equitable access to

essential health services without financial hardship and that ensure good health and well-being is not a privilege for a few but a right for all." Some relatives of patients in Afghanistan complained about the lack of equal access to healthcare in the country. They said that the lack

of healthcare facilities has forced them to travel long distances to reach central hospitals. "In Ghazni, we took this child to the doctor, but they couldn't diagnose his illness. We had to take him to another hospital. Now he is doing well," said Ahmad Khalid, a Ghazni resident. "In Zabul, it was not possible to perform the surgery, so I had to visit several other hospitals before bringing him here," said Sayed Mohammad, a Zabul resident. Some doctors said that the lack of medical facilities in the provinces has led to an increase in the number of patients visiting hospitals in the capital city. "The Ministry of Public Health should pay attention to activating provincial hospitals so that our problems can be resolved," said Payenda Mohammad Salihi, a doctor. Ahmad Zia Roshan, another doctor, said, "Most of our patients coming from the provinces have undiagnosed illnesses, and we have a shortage of specialist doctors in the provinces," said Ahmad Zia Roshan, another doctor. Some of the governmental hospitals that were supported by some international organizations in providing standard healthcare services have now had their support withdrawn.

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\$46 billion can restrict humanitarian crisis

KABUL (TOLONews): The United Nations has requested \$46 billion for the prevention of the humanitarian crises in the next year. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that Afghanistan is one of five countries which needs humanitarian assistance. OCHA requested \$3 billion for Afghanistan. "Requesting money for five major countries reflects the number of people in need and severity of their need in these countries. This request includes \$4.4 billion for Syria, \$3.1 billion for Ukraine, \$3 billion for Afghanistan, \$2.9 billion for Ethiopia and \$2.8 billion for Yemen," OCHA in the statement said. Following the increasing concerns of the aid organizations over increasing poverty in Afghanistan, some residents of Kabul also want the needy people to be helped during winter. Mohammad Nadir, who leads a 7 member family, says that he can't earn over 100 Afs per day and said that it is too hard to find food for the family. In the meantime, the Ministry of Economy said that due to the imposed financial restrictions, Afghans need assistance and the ministry continues its efforts for transparency in the distribution of the assistance.

4% of women support recognition of Taliban govt

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has published its quarterly report on the status of women under the rule of the Taliban administration. The report highlights women's calls for increased international pressure on the Taliban. The UNAMA report, released on Tuesday, reveals that the UNAMA office, the International Organization for Migration, and the UN Women's Unit have recently conducted in-person and online consultations with 462 women across 33 provinces of Afghanistan. According to the report, since the establishment of the interim government, nearly 70 decrees issued by the leadership of the Taliban have restricted women's fundamental rights and freedoms. The report indicates that 45% of women have requested increased international aid to improve their situation. Another 39% of women have stated that direct dialogue opportunities with the Taliban are necessary to improve their human condition. Meanwhile, 4% of women have emphasized the recognition of the Taliban. A Gallup survey in 2023 shows that only 11% of women in Afghanistan are satisfied with their life situation. Women's Education: Women in these consultations emphasized prioritizing education and employment. The report states that the deprivation of education, coupled with increasing poverty, has led to serious problems for women. The lack of girls' education has also led to an increase in early marriages and violence against women. The report also notes that girls' restricted access to education has led them to engage in domestic activities such as tailoring, carpet weaving, embroidery, and jewellery design. Despite over two years of girls above sixth grade being barred from schools, the Taliban administration has made no effort to reopen girls' schools. Mental Health and Social Relations of Women: 76% of the interviewed women reported being in a "very bad" or "bad" mental state. They spoke of loneliness, depression, suppression, and gradual elimination from society. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) report mentions that bans on women's presence in parks, sports clubs, and beauty salons have reduced their social interactions. As a result of employment bans and job losses, women have reported a decrease in their decision-making power within the





ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Energy and Power, Muhammad Ali called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

SC suspends its verdict against civilian trials in military courts

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has conditionally suspended its earlier verdict that declared the trial of civilians in military courts null and void. The court announced its decision with a 5-1 majority. Justice Musarrat Hilali opposed the majority decision. The SC ruled that the military courts will not pronounce final decisions on the trials underway.

It allowed the military courts to proceed with the trials, but said their final decisions would be conditional to the Supreme Court verdict. A six-member larger bench, headed by Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, heard the appeals. The bench also included Justice Aminuddin, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Musarrat Hilali and Justice Irfan Saadat.

The larger bench also issued notices to the parties in the intra-court appeals and adjourned the proceedings till the third week of January. As the court resumed hearing the intra-court appeals on its verdict against the trial of civilians in military courts, head of the bench, Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, refused to step down from the bench over objections by one of the applicants.

The intra-court appeals have been filed by the federal and provincial governments, as well as the Defence Ministry. The federal government has also sought a stay on the court verdict as well as appealed for declaring the decision null and void. Former chief justice of Pakistan Jawad S Khawaja is also among the applicants and had objected to the inclusion of Justice Masood in the bench hearing the case. He filed a petition before the court, challenging Justice Masood's participation.

Khawaja expressed reservations over Justice Masood's prior opinion on the applications related to military courts. He proposed the formation of a fresh bench by the judges' commit-

tee. The petition outlined that both Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and Justice Masood had recused themselves from a nine-member bench hearing these cases. Justice Masood's previous opinion, signed on June 26, deemed the petitions against military courts inadmissible.

As the hearing commenced, Justice Masood refused to step down from the bench, citing the applicant's own earlier decision that recusing from a bench was a judge's prerogative. "Pardon me, but I do not step down from the bench," Justice Masood insisted and rejected the former CJP's objection.

Defense Ministry's lawyer Khawaja Haris started presenting his arguments and read the court verdict. The entire section of a law has been declared invalid in two lines, Justice Masood remarked. The lawyer said these provisions were previously retained in the Supreme Court's decisions. An eight-member bench retained these provisions in the FB Alti case.

In the latest decision, the provisions were declared null and void by the majority of 4-1, he further said, adding that these provisions were also maintained in the 21st Constitutional Amendment case. The court also stopped Aitzaz Ahsan, Salman Akram Raja and Latif Khosa from presenting arguments, saying they had not been issued notices yet. Salman Akram Raja said if that was the case then a stay order should not be issued.

Sardar Latif Khosa also opposed the issuance of a stay order. The judges ruling on the military courts are also from this Supreme Court, he remarked, and asked how a trial can resume when a detailed decision on the annulment of the trial has not been issued yet. Justice Masood asked why this appellate court was formed then. The provisions related to civilians were revoked, which

should not have been done.

"Under what law should the trial of those who martyred your children be conducted?" Justice Masood asked. Raja said they will answer these questions satisfactorily when they're given the opportunity to be heard. Basic human rights have been protected in the Constitution, he added. The attorney general for Pakistan requested for conditional permission to run trials of civilians in military courts.

Justice Masood remarked that a law has been revoked, so how things can be removed from it and allowed. "What is the hurry in this case?" asked Justice Mazhar. The court then reserved its verdict on the decision to grant a stay on its prior order on military courts. The judges then retreated to their chamber and Justice Masood said they will return in a while. Aitzaz Ahsan said a stay order cannot be issued on the filing of an appeal, just a notice is issued.

The AGP said the suspects involved in the May 9 incidents could also be charged under the provisions of serious offences. The serious provisions were not applied because those culprits may be misguided but they were fellow citizens. Lawyer Faisal Siddiqui said if a component of the decision is suspended, the AGP's problem can be resolved.

Salman Akram Raja said they could not be a part of an unconstitutional trial. Justice Hilali asked if the officer hearing the cases in military courts had the authority to grant bail or they were only authorized to issue a sentence. Faisal Siddiqui suggested suspension of the part of the decision that is affecting the trial of terrorists. He also asked for sending the 103 suspects of the May 9 incidents back to the Anti-Terrorism Court. Aitzaz Ahsan said the current chief justice has given his opinion that a fair trial cannot be conducted in military courts.

Commander Turkish Air Force visits Air HQs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: General İsmail Güneykaya, Combat Commander Turkish Air Force, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office today. The meeting underscored several key areas of mutual interest with a special focus on bilateral training, progress of current joint ventures and exploration of further avenues of collaboration in the aviation industry.

During the meeting Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, shared the framework of PAF's comprehensive modernization strategy involving integration of emerging technologies, bolstering critical infrastructure and a comprehensive restructuring of its training set-up, in order to address contemporary air warfare challenges. The Air Chief highlighted that both the brotherly countries enjoy long-standing religious and historic ties which are manifested through unprecedented strategic partnership. Appreciating the participation of Turkish Air Force in Exercise Indus Shield, the Air Chief reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral relations in military-to-military cooperation, strategic alliance and the training domain. The Air Chief further remarked that PAF pilots are playing an active role in imparting nursery to tactical level training to Turkish aircrew. He reiterated Pakistan Air Force's commitment to provide training and capacity-building assistance to the Turkish Air Force.

General İsmail Güneykaya, acknowledged the impressive progress made by Pakistan Air Force in developing a robust indigenous aviation industry and reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing ties between the two brotherly countries. In order to cultivate tactical brilliance for Turkish aircrew, the visiting dignitary expressed profound interest in exploring avenues for training of Turkish Air Force pilots in the Combat Commanders Course being offered at the prestigious Air Power Centre of Excellence. Both the commanders also agreed to explore further areas of cooperation through bilateral and multilateral military exercises with special focus on collaboration in the technology based future programs. During his visit, the Combat Commander Turkish Air Force also visited various installations and technological infrastructure established at Air Headquarters, Islamabad including PAF's National ISR and Integrated Air Operations Centre and PAF's Cyber Command. He also visited National Aerospace Science and Technology Park, which is a major landmark in Pakistan's journey towards progress and is all set to play a pivotal role in shaping the country's aerospace industry, fostering strategic partnerships and contributing to the economic growth of Pakistan.

Israeli army opens fire at hospital wards

GAZA STRIP: The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said Wednesday that Israeli forces have opened fire at hospital rooms, raising fears for the safety of 12 children in paediatric care. "The occupation (Israeli) forces have tightened the siege and the targeting of Kamal Adwan hospital, firing at patient rooms and courtyards," ministry spokesman Ashraf Al-Qudra said in a statement.

"We fear the death of 12 children in paediatric care who are already deprived of milk and are without life support equipment." The Israeli army did not offer an immediate comment, while AFP was unable to confirm the situation at the hospital independently. On Tuesday Qudra said that Israeli forces had stormed the Kamal Adwan hospital in the north of the Palestinian territory and were rounding up men in the courtyard.

The previous day, the United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA said two mothers were killed when the maternity department of Kamal Adwan hospital was reportedly hit. In Wednesday's statement, Qudra said that Israeli forces had detained hospital director Ahmed Al-Kahlol and other staff members who were "tortured and deprived of food and drink."

Several of them were later released, he said. Qudra said the Israeli forces were also targeting Al-Awda hospital and tightening the siege of the facility, "depriving it of water, food and electricity." Forces were also "preventing the wounded and sick from reaching" the hospital, he added. Israeli troops have previously raided other medical facilities in Gaza, including Al-Shifa, the territory's largest hospital.

The military accuses Hamas of using hospitals as command centers to plan and launch attacks against Israeli forces, a charge denied by the militant group. There is currently only one hospital in northern Gaza able to admit patients, according to the UN. Just 14 of 36 hospitals across the territory are functioning, providing limited health care while sheltering thousands of displaced people, the World Health Organization said Sunday.

More than 18,600 Gazans have been killed and almost 50,600 wounded since the war between Israel and Hamas erupted more than two months ago, according to the health ministry. Around 1,200 people were killed in an unprecedented attack by Hamas militants on southern Israel on October 7, Israeli officials say,

which sparked the blistering military response on Gaza. The majority of war casualties in Israel and Gaza have been civilians.

Meanwhile, the UN humanitarian office said on Wednesday that Gaza faced a public health disaster due to the collapse of its health system and the spread of disease amid an offensive by Israel that has hit hospitals and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. The United Nations and aid groups have sounded the alarm about the spread of infectious disease in Gaza, where the internal displacement of 85 percent of the population has caused overcrowding in shelters and other temporary living facilities.

Israel, which went to war in Gaza after the Palestinian enclave's ruling Hamas militants launched a devastating attack on its southern communities on Oct. 7, has told civilians to flee battle zones and says it seeks avert humanitarian distress. "We all know that the health care system is or has collapsed," said Lynn Hastings, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

"We've got a textbook formula for epidemics and a public health disaster," WHO has reported a sharp rise in acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, lice, scabies and other fast-spreading diseases. Hastings said people in Gaza had to line up for hours just to access a toilet.

"You can imagine what the sanitation conditions are like," she said. WHO said on Tuesday that only 11 of Gaza's 36 hospitals were partially functional, one in the north and 10 in the south of the enclave. In Jerusalem, a senior Israeli lawmaker from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, said field hospitals had been erected within Gaza by the United Arab Emirates and Jordan. "We offered every possible help (and) we are prepared to do more," Yuli Edelstein, chairman of the Israeli parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, told Reuters.

"But one thing has to be clear. There is overlapping between medical system and hospitals and Hamas terrorist activities," he said, reiterating Israeli allegations — denied by Hamas — that the Palestinian militants have been operating within hospitals. "So this is not something that we will tolerate." Hastings said that almost half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million was now in Rafah in the southern tip of the enclave to escape Israeli bombardment. — Arab News

PHC directs for submission of report on daily basis to ECP

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered District Election Officers for submission of daily basis report to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding political activities to ensure free and fair polls.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and SM Attique Shah issued detail judgment on Contempt of Court plea of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Ali Amin Gandapur against didn't allowing PTI's workers for gatherings and workers conventions.

The decision was authored by Justice Ijaz Anwar stated that holding election is constitutional obligation of ECP, caretaker government and district administration. ECP has constitutional obligation to take concrete steps to ensure free and fair elections, the judgement asserted. The caretaker government obliged by law to assist the ECP for free and fair election. The caretaker government has

no jurisdiction to interfere in election processes or may it intervene the procedure, the judgement stated.

PTI is approaching PHC again and again that their workers are charging in different First Information Reports (FIRs) on one hand while on the other side neither equal playing field is provided to them for general election, the decision argued.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had admitted before PHC that equal playing field will be provided to every political party as per law. ECP's lawyer also submitted before court that law and order situation is responsibility of provincial government while added that the commission had contacted Principal Secretary Prime Minister for provision of equal opportunities to all political parties, the judgement stated. PHC argued that holding of free and fair election is constitutional obligation of ECP and further ordered for provision of equal playing field/equal opportunities to all political parties including PTI.

PHC ordered all District Election Officers for submission of daily basis report on political activities to ECP and the commission may order Chief Secretary for actions against officers involved in political victimization.

Meanwhile, PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice

mission of daily basis report on political activities to ECP and the commission may order Chief Secretary for actions against officers involved in political victimization.

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Sahibzada Asadullah stopped arrest of PTI's parliamentarian in Anti-corruption establishment FIR regarding illegal recruitment and malpractices till 10th January. Former Deputy Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Mahmood Jan, former provincial minister Taimour Salim Jaghra, Kamran Bangash, Ishtiaq Aormur, Peer Fida, Fazal Elahi and Asif Khan approached PHC.

Moreover, PHC suspended arrest warrant of PTI's Hangu president Yousaf Khan issued under Section 3 of Maintenance of Public Order (MPO). The counsel Syed Sikandar Khan argued that Yousaf Khan had submitted application for workers convention but district administration arrested PTI's Hangu president under 3MPO.

IHC reserves verdict regarding delimitation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday reserved its verdict on the petition filed against the delimitations of veteran politician Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan's National Assembly (NA) and Punjab Assembly constituencies NA-53 and PP-10.

IHC Chief Justice (CJ) Justice Aamer Farooq reserved the verdict after hearing the arguments from lawyers representing the petitioner and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Giving his arguments in the case, Petitioner Sheikh Sajidur Rehman's counsel Kashif Malik Advocate said that under section 10, no changes could be made to an administrative unit.

He prayed to the court to order the ECP to again include Sagri area in NA-53, which had earlier been excluded from the constituency and made part of Gujjar Khan. Disagreeing with the petitioner, the ECP's lawyer said delimitations of these constituencies had been done in the light of the Supreme Court (SC) verdict, and no changes could be made to them now.

The court, however, reserved the verdict after hearing the arguments. A day earlier, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) reserved its verdict on the petition filed against the delimitations of veteran politician Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan's National Assembly (NA) and Punjab Assembly constituencies NA-53 and PP-10. IHC Chief Justice (CJ) Justice Aamer Farooq reserved the verdict after hearing the arguments from lawyers representing the petitioner and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Giving his arguments in the case, Petitioner Sheikh Sajidur Rehman's counsel Kashif Malik Advocate said that under section 10, no changes could be made to an administrative unit.

Bilawal vows to construct 3 million houses for poorers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a women workers' convention in Peshawar said that he is pleased to see that the women organisation of the Party participated in this series of conventions all over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This is why, he had directed the President of the PPP KP Women organisation to hold a convention as they played an exemplary role. Bilawal said that the PPP will surely be victorious if its workers continue to work hard in the same manner.

Bilawal said that the women of the PPP have played a leading role in the Party and the country's progress. Begun Nusrat Bhutto laid the foundation of the PPP women's wing, and this not only helped the Party survive but triumph. The women of the Party have always played a key role, even when facing the most dictatorial and barbaric regimes. This led to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto being the first woman prime minister of the Islamic world. This is a result of the struggles of the women of the Party. Bilawal said that a woman judge was a part of the bench of the Supreme Court yesterday when he went to attend the hearing of the Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Presidential Reference. It is as a result of the struggle of the women of the PPP that we have seen this day as a country, Bilawal said. Our ideology is that women are given equal opportunities, be it in the economy or the politics. Women constitute 50% of the country's population and the economy cannot run until this faction of the society does not contribute. The economy of the country cannot progress until women are provided with the opportunity to prosper.

Bilawal said that as the 2024 elections near us, the PPP's message to the women of the country should include the vision of the Party. He said that the manifesto of the Party would make it apparent to the women that it is the sole political party in the country that can accurately represent them. We wish to see women in every economic domain, Bilawal said. "My mother is no longer in this world, but I would like to serve the women of this country just as a son would". Bilawal said, The BISP was a revolutionary initiative and we wish to expand it after coming to power. Not only do we plan on expanding the BISP, but complete the incomplete mission of the Party and introduce new projects. We wish for the poor women of the country to be empowered economically. The 'Peoples Poverty Alleviation' project was introduced in Sindh, through which we are providing women with interest-free loans to kickstart their businesses. This is one of our most successful programmes. We wish to introduce this in the entire country. The return rate for our programme in Sindh is 99% which indicates that not only is our programme successful, but the business run by women too are successful. In the cases that we do not receive the loans, it is only due to unfortunate circumstances.

Bilawal said that it is a part of our manifesto and the "Roti, Kapra Aur Makaan" ideology of Quaid-e-Azam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Therefore, we wish to build two million permanent homes for the poor people of the country and give the ownership to women, as we are doing in Sindh. We wish to do the same for all those living in temporary housing throughout the country. We wish to support our youngsters as well as the new mothers. If a child receives high-quality meals and essential nutrients along with the mother in the first thousand days, then life expectancy can be increased. We would like to financially

support new mothers for the first thousand days after child birth, and they would need to come to our clinics and get their health check-up so that their future is secure and the fundamental needs are met. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto gave us the concept of Lady Health Workers and we need to look after them, as they are our asset. When this initiative was introduced, our politicians as well as international financial institutions would criticise this project. However when the project was successful, the world accepted this as one of the most successful projects which then inspired Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka to follow suit. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto introduced the first female banks, and we plan on opening them in every district of every province to excludes provide loans to women as a means of empowering them. When we talk of providing educational facilities and employment to the youngsters, we are talking about brothers as well as our sisters. The treatment of women in Afghanistan is unfortunate and certain elements in Pakistan are of the same regressive view. "It is my message to them that as long as I am alive, hindering obstacles in the path of women attaining education would not be possible in Pakistan at least", Bilawal said.

Bilawal said that after coming to power, he will talk to educational institutions such as Oxford and Harvard to initiate online courses for his sisters in Pakistan and Afghanistan to attain education through utilising modern technology, despite the obstacles faced by using religion as a weapon. We want these facilities for our Afghan sisters as well, and we are willing to talk to the Afghan government as well. We will provide education to our Pakhtun sisters, who already have a lot of potential.

CORRIGENDUM

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL Hiring of Services For Collection of Contribution and Disbursement of Pension

Employees' Old Age Benefits Institution (EOBI)

It is hereby informed that the date of submission of tender documents, called through PPRA Website as well as print media, vide PID K No. 1529/D-23 dated 24.11.2023 in the following newspapers has been extended upto **27.12.2023**, at **1100** hours:

1. Daily Dawn	7. Daily Pakistan Observer
2. Daily Express Tribune	8. Daily Awami Awaz
3. Daily Jang	9. Daily Millan
4. Daily Dunya	10. Daily Awami Halchal
5. Daily Balochistan Express	11. Daily Nawai Sindh
6. Daily Frontier Post	12. Daily Business Recorder (Published 25.11.2023)

Now Technical Bids, on the subject matter, will be opened on **27.12.2023**, at **1130** hours, at the same address.

Director (General Administration Department)
EOBI Head Office, 190/B/1, P.E.C.H.S Block # 2,
Near Blue Ribbon Bakery, Off Shara-e-Faisal, Karachi, Tel No: 021-99225397