

**Sher Afzal Marwat arrested**  
**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: PTI leader Sher Afzal Marwat has been arrested on Thursday from outside the Lahore High Court. Marwat, who is senior vice president of the party, was leaving the high court premises after attending a lawyers' convention when a heavy contingent of police arrested him. According to police, the PTI leader was arrested under 3MPO and shifted to Mazang police station.

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**Jamadi-us-Sanni moon sighted**  
**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee on Thursday announced sighting of Jamadi-us-Sanni moon and the Islamic month in calendar 1445 AH will fall on December 15. Headed by Abdul Khabeer Azad, the committee unanimously declared the sighting of the moon in the meeting held in Islamabad after evaluating witnesses and outcomes committees.

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# PM reaffirms Pak's support to Kashmiris

## — rejects Indian Supreme Court verdict as politically motivated

**F.P. Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday reaffirmed Pakistan's moral, political and diplomatic support to the people of Kashmir, and rejected the recent verdict of the Indian Supreme Court calling it a politically motivated and a tool to consolidate Indian illegal occupation.

The prime minister, in his address at the special session of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly (AJK LA), called for India to desist from consolidating its occupation, revoke the illegal unilateral actions of August 5, 2019 and not change the demography of the disputed territory.

Chaired by AJK LA Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar, the session was attended by AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq and Assembly members. PM Kakar also stressed upon India to halt the human rights abuses in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), repeal emergency laws, withdraw heavy military presence and provide unhindered access to the United Nations bodies and the international media.

The prime minister, who was the first-ever caretaker PM to address the AJK

Legislative Assembly, paid tribute to the martyrs of the Kashmir movement and those living along the Line of Control and suffered losses due to the Indian ceasefire violations. He said Pakistan would continue to stand alongside the people of Kashmir in their struggle and wished them to enjoy their due rights.

"Kashmir is Pakistan's jugular vein. The word 'Pakistan' is incomplete without Kashmir. The people of Pakistan and Kashmir are bound by unique affinity. We share joys and sorrow. Pakistan cannot remain indifferent to the situation in Kashmir... Kashmir runs in our blood. Jammu and Kashmir remains an important facet of Pakistan's foreign policy," he remarked. He said across the political divide, the entire Pakistani leadership stood united to support the Kashmiris for their right to self-determination.

Giving a historical account, the prime minister said the Kashmiris had suffered enormously from conflicts in history. Even today, the situation had not improved as the majority was still under the subjugation of an oppressor with a different name. Prime Minister Kakar told the House that Kashmir was the oldest unsettled agenda of the United Nations as the UN Security Council resolutions remained unimple-

mented and the Indian government was bent upon consolidating its occupation of disputed territory through a series of legislative and administrative measures.

Referring to the Indian decision to take the Kashmir issue to the United Nations and repeated Indian leaders recognizing it as a dispute, he said the current Indian government must honour its long-standing commitment to the UN resolutions. He said the Indian SC verdict was politically motivated instead of grounded in law to validate the illegal unilateral measures of August 5, 2019.

The prime minister said considering its massive human rights abuses, the title of 'world's largest democracy' for India should be changed to the 'world's largest hypocrisy' where hollow slogans of democracy and diversity were raised to cover up the marginalization of minorities, state-sponsored terrorism and illegal occupation. Calling the Indian actions in IIOJK a breach of the UN Charter, the UNSC resolutions and international laws, he said the main objective of the Indian measures was to convert Kashmiris into a disempowered community in their land.

(Continued on Back Page)

# Nawaz eyes nation's February 8 'judgment'

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: In his maiden televised 'address to the nation' after ending four years of exile, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif expressed confidence that the people will back his party in the upcoming general elections after he secured major victories from courts.

"I am hopeful that you [nation] will announce your judgments on February 8, [2024] and end the punishments meted out to you," the former three-time prime minister said in a recorded message, aired on television channels Thursday. "My people, you don't need to reach out to any court as you yourself are the judge," the former premier said as he addressed his supporters for the first time since his legal victory in the form of exoneration from major corruption cases against him.

The three-time prime minister is eyeing a fourth stint in power after winning graft appeals that came as a boost for his bid to become the next prime minister of the country. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) overturned Nawaz's convictions in the Al Azizia Steel Mills corruption case and Avenfield case in separate rulings, which came earlier this week and last month, respectively.

The latest relief from the high court on Tuesday, removed one of the last major hurdles for Nawaz to qualify to contest national elections. He now needs the removal of a life ban on holding any public office to qualify to stand in the elections, scheduled for February 8, 2024. Nawaz lamented that he had "never" inherited "good conditions" from his predecessors and that he was always dragged into courts after his governments ended.

But he was thankful that the courts cleared his name this time. "This isn't just my victory, it's a victory for all of us. You kept standing by me and my party through these testing times," Nawaz told his supporters. The three-time prime minister reminded his workers that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had started a witch hunt against him on the directions of a former Supreme Court judge.

"Those involved in these shameful games [overthrowing PML-N regimes] have been exposed now. We are witnessing testimonies coming forth from those quarters from where we never thought of," he said. "I was called Sicilian Mafia, God Father, and a lot of other derogatory words [by judges]. But I left all my troubles up to Allah," he smiled. Just

PML-N elder lamented that he had to stay in jail for a "long time", endure "abuse", and also face "character assassination".

"I could not carry my father's coffin. I could not bury my mother. I could not spend the last moments with my dying wife," Nawaz lamented, but vowed that he would not back down from the tough conditions ahead. Without naming his top political rival, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder Imran Khan, Nawaz said: "It was necessary to remove and punish me to bring a ladla (blue-eyed boy) but what crime was Pakistan punished for".

He said that this question has been fuming like a burning coal in his heart and mind what was the people's fault for which they were "punished". The deposed premier went on to question why the country, which was progressing with a rate of 6.1% during the PML-N's government, was pushed into "economic destruction". "We got rid of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but the country was again pushed towards it," he said, asking why the foreign investment stopped in the country. He wondered why Pakistan was made a "stronghold of terrorism" again after the PML-N government "crushed" the menace. Nawaz also lamented the high inflation and unemployment in the country.

# ECP dispels election delay notion, says all geared up for February 8

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) rebuffed claims of a political party that the upcoming general polls could be delayed as the election schedule remains pending, with anxiety seemingly growing over the evolving scenario.

In a press conference earlier, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan had also claimed that there were "fears" that the elections could be delayed as the "election commission has already

moved elections forward by making excuses". "The election schedule had to be released today [but the ECP hasn't issued it yet]," Gohar, who was recently appointed as the party's chairman in place of PTI founder Imran Khan, said.

In response to the claims, the electoral body said: "During a press conference, the PTI chairman levelled allegations against the commission of delaying polls. We reject these claims which are aimed at misguiding the people." The ECP, in a statement, clarified that the polls will take place on February 8 and that "all preparations" have been

done for staging them.

"In connection with the polls, district returning officers [DROs] and returning officers were appointed and their training was also underway," the commission said, adding that training was crucial for a smooth electoral process. However, the ECP noted that the PTI challenged the appointment of the officers in the LHC and as a result, their appointments were suspended. "Following their suspension, the commission is now contemplating the situation and will soon announce a plan of action."

## Fuelled by arrest fears, repatriation of Afghans gathers pace

ISLAMABAD (INP): The repatriation of Afghans residing illegally in Pakistan is accelerating, driven by both government enforcement and self-deportation fuelled by fear.

Even before the announcement by the government, a large number of illegal Afghans started going to Afghanistan over fears of arrest. On December 13 alone, 2,423 Afghans, including 687 men, 326 women, and 1,410 children, crossed the border into Afghanistan, bringing the total number of returnees to 429,288 since the process began.

While the government officially launched the repatriation effort recently, many undocumented Afghans have been proactively leaving Pakistan in recent months to pre-empt potential arrest. This wave of self-deportation is driven by anxieties over uncertain legal status and fears of detention as authorities crack down on undocumented residents.

On Dec 13, 235 families departed in 114 vehicles, highlighting the scale of the movement. This trend raises concerns about the capacity of Afghanistan to absorb such a large influx of people, particularly amidst its ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Official records indicate that on December 12, an additional 2,023 Afghan nationals voluntarily returned to their homeland. This included 536 men, 412 women, and 175 children in Afghan cities. The repatriation process involved 93 vehicles transporting 182 families to Afghanistan. On Wednesday, the federal cabinet had announced an extension in the stay period for Afghan nationals in Pakistan who are in the process of evacuating to third countries.

The extension stretches from the initial deadline of December 31 to February 29, 2024. However, those remaining after the specified date will incur a monthly fine of \$100, with a capped maximum limit of \$800. The caretaker government emphasized that the extension is accompanied by a penalty system. Damages will be applied at \$100 per month for individuals staying beyond the revised deadline, with a financial ceiling of \$800.

Caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi highlighted that the cabinet also approved a reduction in the processing fee for Afghan nationals being evacuated to third countries. The processing fee, initially set at \$800, has now been halved to \$400. The caretaker cabinet aims to encourage Afghan nationals residing in Pakistan illegally to either obtain legal documents or finalize evacuation agreements promptly.

The reasons for the Afghans' presence in Pakistan vary. Some fled decades ago during the Soviet-Afghan War, while others sought refuge more recently from the Taliban's 2021 takeover. The complex history and intertwined lives of the two countries add layers of difficulty to the repatriation process.

While the Pakistani government emphasizes security concerns as the driving force behind the deportations, the human cost of the operation remains a crucial consideration.



MUZAFFARABAD: Caretake Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq addressing the special session of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly.

# Pakistan rejects reports of talks with TTP

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has vehemently rejected reports and speculations of talks with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Responding to the queries of media persons at her weekly briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said there is absolutely no dialogue taking place with TTP.

The spokesperson said we have noted the statement of the interim Afghan government that it will investigate Tuesday's terror attack that took place in Dera Ismail Khan. She said Afghanistan should take strong action against perpetrators of this heinous attack and hand them over to Pakistan along with the TTP leadership in Afghanistan.

The spokesperson urged the Afghan authorities to take concrete and verifiable

steps to prevent the use of their soil by terror entities against Pakistan.

She said our law enforcement agencies have determined that the recent terror incidents in Pakistan have their links with individuals belonging to the TTP or its affiliates who have sanctuaries and hide-outs inside Afghanistan.

As regards the Indian Supreme Court's endorsement of India's illegal and unilateral action of 2019, the spokesperson said the Indian Supreme Court has absolutely no jurisdiction over Jammu and Kashmir which is an internationally recognized disputed territory. The final disposition of Jammu and Kashmir will be guided by the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people. She said Pakistan will continue to extend political, moral and diplomatic to the

Kashmiri brothers and sisters for the just and peaceful settlement of Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

The spokesperson welcomed the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. She said this is a reflection of an international consensus and growing public anger at the ongoing Israeli atrocities that have claimed the lives more than eighteen thousand Palestinian people. It is critical the international community brings an end to Israel's war crimes and crimes against humanity being perpetrated against the Palestinian people.

The spokesperson also condemned increasing Israeli atrocities in the West Bank and attacks against Lebanon and Syria saying these are in breach of territorial sovereignty of these countries.

## Court sentences Sarah Inam's murderer to death

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad trial court on Thursday sentenced Shahnawaz Amir to death for the murder of Sarah Inam and imposed a fine of Rs1 million on him, which would be paid to the bereaved family.

The reserved verdict was announced by District and Sessions Judge Nasir Javed Rana, almost a year after the gruesome killing. The court acquitted Shahnawaz's mother, Samina Shah, who was co-accused in the case. Sarah, a Canadian national, was murdered by Shahnawaz, her husband, the son of journalist Ayaz Amir, in Islamabad a year ago. She was reportedly killed just a day after she arrived in the country from Dubai where she had been working.

Shahnawaz was arrested on Sept 23 last year at a farmhouse in Islamabad's Shahzad Town. He was initially remanded to police custody a day after his arrest and the period of his physical remand was extended several times. His father was discharged from the case and his mother Sameena Shah was granted post-arrest bail in November last year. On December 5, both Shahnawaz and his mother were indicted in the case.

In January, Dr Bushra Ashraf, who conducted Sarah's post-mortem examination, told an Islamabad court that the victim had multiple fractures on her head. In July, Shahnawaz's lawyer completed the cross-examination of Sarah's father and her uncle. Her father Inamur Rahim had ruled out any compromise, which he had also blamed for delays in the case's conclusion.

In October, Investigation Officer (IO) Habibur Rehman testified that Shahnawaz had confessed to the crime. Subsequently, the judge had concluded recording statements of the IO and the prosecution witnesses in the murder case. Concluding his arguments at the previous hearing, the counsel for Sara's father had sought Shahnawaz's death sentence and said all the evidence collected in the case proved his guilt.

In September, the police became a complainant in the case, with a first information report (FIR) registered for the murder on the complaint of Shahzad Town Station House Officer (SHO) Nawazish Ali Khan at the Chak Shahzad police station, initially under Section 302 (punishment for murder) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). Later, police added Section 109 (punishment for abetment, if the act abetted, is committed in consequence and where no express provision is made for its punishment) of the PPC to the FIR and initiated proceedings against Shahnawaz's parents, Sameena and senior journalist Ayaz Amir. The development came after Sarah's uncle filed an application with the police, alleging that Shahnawaz had murdered Sarah in connivance with his parents. According to the FIR, the SHO was present on Park Road near Chatha Bakhtawar when he got the information about the murder.

# Court allows in-camera trial of Imran, Qureshi

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The special court on Thursday accepted the Federal Investigation Agency's plea seeking an in-camera trial of former prime minister Imran Khan and ex-foreign minister Shah Mahmood in the cipher case.

It began the cipher trial afresh at the Adiala district jail after the pair were indicted for a second time yesterday, according to reporters allowed to attend the hearing. The cipher case pertains to a diplomatic document that the FIA's charge sheet alleges was never returned by Imran. The PTI has long held that the document contained a threat from the United States to oust Imran as prime minister.

Imran and Qureshi were initially indicted in the case on Oct 23. Both had pleaded not guilty. The trial was being held at Adiala Jail and four witnesses had alre-a-day recorded their statements when the Islamabad High Court (IHC) termed the government's notification for a jail trial "erroneous" and scrap-ped the entire proceedings.

As a result of the judgment, the special court started fresh proceedings. On Monday, the former premier had challenged the process of his indictment in the cipher case in the IHC, urging it to halt the proceedings till deciding on the petition. A day ago, the special court, established under the Official Secrets Act 1923, had indicted Imran and Qureshi for a second time.

However, the ex-premier's legal team disputed the impression, with Barrister Salman Safdar saying that the court did not indict the two PTI leaders as none of them had signed any document. But officials in the prosecution had told Dawn that since the judge had told the accused persons about the charges, the process of indictment had been completed. Separately, speaking to the media after the hearing yesterday, Imran's sister Aleema Khan lamented she was "not seeing justice being served".

"We are followed when we go out of our homes. We are told we will be put in jail. [But] we are not afraid," she had said. Noting that her brother "could be sentenced to death in this case" as per the offence, Aleema claimed that US diplomat Donald Lu had sent the cipher to ex-army chief retired Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa.

Today, the FIA urged Special Court Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqar-nain to allow the trial to be held in-camera, which he accepted, despite ruling last month that the proceedings would continue at the Adiala Jail but in an open court. The court said the next hearing would be heard in-camera, which it adjourned until tomorrow

(Friday). It further ruled that family members of the suspects would be allowed to attend the hearing.

Speaking to the media after today's hearing, Qureshi's daughter Mehr Bano asserted that an open trial was the "requirement of justice". The PTI vice-chairman's counsel Barrister Taimur Malik told reporters that the charge sheet was "the same as the one the IHC dismissed". Noting that "two important personalities" were in jail, the lawyer said the matter was now "ambiguous". Malik said he still hoped for justice from the courts, adding that the lawyers could consider challenging the proceedings of framing the charge. Lawyer Umair Niazi quoted Imran as saying that the ongoing deportation drive of undocumented immigrants was a violation of human rights.

Niazi further said that the former premier rejected PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif's statements on improving ties with neighbouring countries, including India, as "we cannot sacrifice Kashmir". Prior to the hearing today, FIA Special Prosecutor Raja Rizwan Abbasi told reporters that the witnesses in the case will be produced before the court. He further said that the FIA has filed a petition seeking an in-camera hearing of the case under section 14 (exclusion of public from proceedings) of the Secrets Act. "If this matter was not secret, then there would not have been an FIR. How can a secret matter be made public?" Abbasi asked.

**IHC declines to halt Imran's jail trial in cipher case:** Rejecting the petition filed by former prime minister and ex-PTI chairman Imran Khan, seeking an immediate halt to hearing of the US cipher case, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday issued a notice to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

It was claimed in the petition that legal requirements for holding a trial of the ex-PTI chairman in the case inside Adiala Jail had not been met. Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb of the IHC, who heard the petition, said he would like to first read the report before deciding on the petition. The court also issued a notice on the former prime minister's plea, seeking a stay in the case.

The judge asked Imran's lawyer to present a copy of the notification the government had issued for the jail trial. The latter replied he did not have a copy of the notification with him. Expressing his surprise, the judge asked him why he did not have a copy with him. The lawyer replied that it was the government's, and not the court's, job to choose the place for holding the trial. But Justice Aurangzeb disagreed with his statement, and said categorically that it was the judge's prerogative.



### Decline in dengue cases noted as temperature drops

LAHORE (APP): The Health Department Punjab said in its report that the number of dengue cases was lowering with the decrease in temperatures. However, a total of 33 new cases were recorded on Thursday, bringing the year's confirmed cases to 14,964 across the province. Lahore remains at the forefront of the battle against dengue, reporting 6,895 cases, followed closely by Rawalpindi 2,654, Gujranwala 1,578, Multan 1,439, and Faisalabad 903. Lahore saw an additional 12 cases, Rawalpindi 3, Gujranwala 3, Multan 4, Faisalabad 4, and Khanewal 2 new cases in the latest update. Hafizabad and Rajanpur reported one case each in the last 24 hours. Currently, 26 dengue patients are receiving treatment in various Punjab hospitals, with 12 of them in Lahore district hospitals. Punjab Health Secretary Ali Jan Khan issued a plea to citizens urging them to maintain clean and dry surroundings to prevent dengue. He emphasised cooperation with the Health Department teams actively working to combat the outbreak. For those seeking dengue treatment, information, or wishing to register complaints, a free helpline, 1033, has been provided by the department.

### Dr Jamal inaugurates Health fair at DPS

RAWALPINDI (APP): A free health fair in collaboration with the Red Crescent and District Health Authority was organized at the Divisional Public School (DPS) and College here on Thursday. Caretaker Provincial Minister Primary and Secondary Health and Population Welfare Punjab Dr. Jamal Nasir and Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaqat Ali Chatha inaugurated the health fair. According to the details, as many as 22 health camps were organized in free health mela including 11 each for girls and boys. Around 850 students were checked in OPD while Eye, dental, hepatitis, blood screening, and general screening of the students of government colleges were conducted in the fair. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Jamal Nasir said that organizing such fairs would help in developing a healthy environment. He said that the students of government educational institutions benefited from organizing free health fairs. In the next phase, a complete health screening of all DPS students will be carried out. He appreciated the efforts of the health department and DPS administration in organizing the health fair.

## First lady urges vigilance, creating breast cancer awareness

LAHORE (APP): First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi emphasised the urgent need for spreading awareness about early diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer, particularly among women, at a seminar, organised by the University of Lahore on Thursday. At the event, held at the Governor's House in collaboration with the World Health Organisation, various medical institutions and NGOs addressed the significance of self-examination in detecting breast abnormalities. Begum Alvi urged women to conduct monthly self-examinations and consult a doctor promptly if any lump or cyst is detected. Addressing the societal importance of combating breast cancer, she highlighted the statistic that one in nine women in Pakistan is suffering from the disease. Emphasising the urgency of early diagnosis, Begum Alvi underscored that breast cancer is curable at any stage, but delays can increase risks and reduce survival chances. She commended the progress made in overcoming societal taboos around discussing breast cancer, attributing it to increased awareness. The First Lady acknowledged the media's crucial role in disseminating information, stating that the awareness campaign, ongoing for five years, has led to

more women seeking treatment in the early stages. She encouraged collective efforts, describing breast cancer awareness as a social responsibility. Begum Alvi also advocated for inclusion of differently-abled individuals in society as productive citizens, and called upon the media and stakeholders to provide employment opportunities to such people. Addressing the mental health concerns, she revealed that approximately 24 million people in Pakistan face mental health issues, mentioning the mobile application 'Hamraz' as a resource. She sought the help of foreign experts to contribute to mental health initiatives in Pakistan. She also spoke about stalled implementation of the 'Zainab Alert Bill', stressing the need for collective action to protect innocent daughters. The First Lady applauded the University of Lahore and other institutions for organising the informative programmes, and distributed shields among the organisers. The event included contributions from Wife of Punjab Governor Begum Ayesha Balighur Rahman, Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr. Javed Akram, Representative of the WHO Dr. Maryum Malik, and other speakers.

## Punjab health minister stresses breast cancer awareness

LAHORE (APP): At a breast cancer awareness seminar, held at the Governor's House here, Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr. Javed Akram emphasised the crucial need to spread awareness about breast cancer in society. The event, organised in collaboration with the University of Lahore and the World Health Organisation, featured First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi, as the special guest and wife of Punjab Governor Begum Ayesha Balighur Rehman. Dr. Akram commended the efforts of the University of Lahore and the World Health Organisation in addressing the critical health issue. Highlighting the alarming statistics, he revealed that one in every nine women in Pakistan was affected by breast cancer. Stressing the importance of early diagnosis for a successful cure, he mentioned that breastfeeding plays a

protective role, urging mothers to embrace it without any stigma. Expressing gratitude to the organisers, Dr. Javed Akram proposed integration of breast cancer awareness seminars into educational institutions. He praised First Lady Samina Arif Alvi for her dedication to the campaign against breast cancer, citing its global impact on women's mortality. Dr. Javed Akram urged everyone present to take responsibility for spreading awareness within their circles, acknowledging breast cancer as a significant global health concern. The seminar saw the participation of prominent figures, including Principal Ameeruddin Medical College Prof. Dr. Sardar Zafar Al-Fareed, Principal Continental College Prof. Dr. Ayesha Shaukat, Principal Fatima Jinnah Medical College Prof. Dr. Noreen Akmal, and Medical Superintendent Punjab Institute of Cardiology Dr. Mohsin Ali Shah.



LAHORE: First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi addressing to the "Breast Cancer Awareness" at Governor House.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali addressing SPs of Police Service of Pskistan at Governor's House.

## Sindh govt focuses on eradication of GBV, welfare of women: Info Minister

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Caretaker Minister for Information, Minority Affairs and Social Security Muhammad Ahmad Shah, here on Thursday, said that the Sindh government was focusing on eradication of gender-based violence and welfare of women, children and all vulnerable segments of the society. He was addressing the second conference of the Multi Sectoral Coordination Committee (MSCC) on gender based violence that was organized by Pathfinder International in collaboration with UNFPA Pakistan funded Sehat Mand Khnadan (SMK) Project and MSCC on Gender Based Violence. The minister said that Sindh had taken lead in very progressive legislation in all important sectors but it was not enough to make laws and their effective implementation was also necessary. Emphasizing on effective implementation of laws with full passion and determination, he said that

respect and fear of the law and deterrence to crimes could only be created by strict implementation of the law. Stressing on joint efforts for welfare and betterment of all the citizens without any discrimination, he said that funds allocated by government for the purpose should reach their rightful and deserving beneficiaries. Referring to heinous murder incident of a minor girl in Ranipur town of Sindh, Ahmad Shah said that Fatima Phariro had become a symbol of oppression and helplessness. "We have to help every Fatima Phariro so that no one's sister or daughter can be a victim of persecution," he urged. He said that some cultural stereotypes and misconceptions were also connected with gender based violence but it was imperative for all of us to support and help the victim and oppressed and under privileged sections of the society.

He said that friends of the minority community have urged that the laws be strictly implemented in letter and spirit. On the occasion, caretaker Minister of Law and Human Rights Umar Soomro said that there was still a lot of work to be done to reduce violence against women and children. He suggested that some improvements could be made in the the law of testimony to reduce gender based violence. The law minister said that government has planned to provide scholarships of Rs. 25000 for human rights training in schools and madaris. He informed that improvements were being made in the process of appointment of medico-legal officers. Sindh Chief Secretary Dr. Fakhar Alam Irfan and Additional Chief Secretary Home Sindh Muhammad Iqbal Memon and other speakers also addressed the conference.

### LESCO detects 269 power pilferers on 96th day of anti-theft campaign

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) detected a total of 269 connections from where consumers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts -- Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara -- on the 96th day of grand anti-power theft campaign. A LESCO spokesman told the media on Thursday that the company had also submitted FIR applications against 269 electricity thieves, out of which 134 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while seven accused have been arrested. Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations. The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft.

## PPP wants to develop the urban, rural areas alike: Mayor Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that Pakistan People's Party wants to develop the urban and rural areas alike and his party does not believe in the politics of discrimination and prejudice. He said this while addressing the opening ceremony of the road construction and expansion project from Razzaqabad to Sheedi Goth Power House on Thursday. He said that his party is completing development projects in all districts of Karachi, while the next provincial government will be ours and we will be in the center as well. He said that the construction and expansion of the road from Razzaqabad to Sheedi Goth Power House will provide travel facilities to the residents. A sum of Rs 307 million has been spent on this 6.2-kilometer road and it is connected with the link road of Super Highway and National Highway, he added. Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad, Mayor Karachi Spokesperson for Political Affairs Karamullah Waqasi, former Member of National Assembly Jam Abdul Karim Jokhio, Chairman Gadap Town Tariq Aziz Baloch and other leaders and activists were also present. He said that if the infrastructure of Karachi is better, the city will develop. Work has been done on Jatoti Sahib's UC in the area, fifty thousand square feet of pavement work has been done, a huge star

ground has been inaugurated in Sherpao Colony, development work is also in progress on Shershah Road, Malir Kala Board Road will also be inaugurated soon. He said that the construction work of two grounds and four parks is going on in Malir and it has also been decided to build the second road of Machli Chowk which will benefit the fishermen. The Mayor Karachi said that the work has started on the Baloch Colony Expressway and the work is in progress on the Karimabad underpass in district central, the bridge is also being constructed on the Korangi causeway, we will try to complete the project in one year. He said that work on Malir Expressway is also going on fast track and water problems are also being solved. We have computerized the system of hydrants in Karachi while, suction and jetting machines have been handed over to the Water Corporation to improve drainage system in the city, he added. He said that 50 buses were brought to Karachi; however, there are some tax problems due to which they are standing at the port, adding that eight new snorkel vehicles were also ordered for the fire brigade, which is also standing at the Karachi port, three of them will be used in Karachi and the rest in Sindh. Snorkels up to 105 meters high are being used in the city.

## Various properties sealed in LDA, TEPA crackdown

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) and Traffic Engineering and Transport Planning Agency (TEPA), in a joint operation, demolished multiple properties besides sealing several others on parking violations here around Shadman Main Boulevard and Civic Centre on Thursday. In response to Commissioner Lahore and Director General LDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa's directives, all encroachments

in the said locality were cleared. During the three-hour operation, illegal encroachments from commercial properties were removed, including demolition of over two dozen properties involved in unauthorized construction on parking spaces in Shadman. In the vicinity of Shadman Main Boulevard, violations were eradicated from established storefronts. Fatima Memorial Hospital's Right of Way obstacles were also removed. Sewera Store,

Break Out and Broad Way Pizza faced closure for encroachments in setback areas while two commercial plazas were sealed for encroaching on parking areas. Jalal Sons and Kamran Steel faced closure for encroachments, three pharmacies on Shadman Main Boulevard were sealed and eight illegal temporary shops in Civic Centre were demolished. Prior to the operation, multiple notices were issued for corrective measures on these properties. The operation included participation from the Director Parking Enforcement TEPA, Director Private Housing Scheme, Deputy Director PHS, Deputy Director Town Planning, Enforcement Wing, and TEPA officers, alongside police and heavy machinery. Commissioner, DC visit LDA One Window Cell: Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali Rindhanwa, along with Deputy Commissioner Rafia Haider, conducted a visit to Lahore Development Authority's (LDA) One Window Cell, here on Thursday. During the visit, citizens' concerns were addressed, while Director One Window Cell briefed on its functionality.



سوئی ناردرن گیس  
Sui Northern Gas  
REGD  
/SNGPL official

### استعمال سمجھداری سے ذمہ داری سے

## سردیوں کے 4 ماہ گیس استعمال 0.9Hm<sup>3</sup> سے زیادہ ہوگا تو گیس بل کئی گنا بڑھ سکتا ہے

لہذا! ⚠️ روایتی گیس میٹر کا استعمال ترک کریں ⚠️ گیس میٹر کا استعمال ہرگز مت کریں ⚠️ بغیر ضرورت چولہا جلتا نہ چھوڑیں ⚠️ کچھ سے بچنے کیلئے باقاعدگی سے گیس آلات چیک کریں

Rs.300 /MMBTU

Rs.600 /MMBTU

Rs.1,000 /MMBTU

Rs.1,200 /MMBTU

Rs.1,600 /MMBTU

Rs.3,000 /MMBTU

Rs.3,500 /MMBTU

Rs.4,000 /MMBTU

سیلاب 1

سیلاب 8

PID/L/1888-D

## FIA arrests 3 for human smuggling, visa fraud

LAHORE (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested three individuals on Thursday in connection with human smuggling and visa fraud in different areas of the city. According to a spokesman for the agency, the Anti Human Trafficking Circle launched a crackdown on human smugglers. Three suspects, including an absconder Umar Shahbaz, Mehak Babar and Ahsan

Elahi were arrested. The accused used to lure people with promises of overseas employment and extract substantial amounts from them. Absconder Umar Shahbaz extracted Rs 272,000 from a citizen with a promise to send him to Dubai. The female suspect also received lakhs of rupees from various people in different cities by falsely promising to send them to Canada.



### ATTENTION

It is hereby informed to all our valued customers through notice that the following branch of Allied Bank Limited will soon be temporarily shifted to a new building/place/address.

Khyber Bazar, Branch (0312) Peshawar

Old Address:	New Address:
Zaman Mansion Soekarno Chowk, Khyber Bazar, Peshawar.	Chamber House, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce, G.T. Road, Peshawar.



### ATTENTION

It is hereby informed to all our valued customers through notice that the following branch of Allied Bank Limited will soon be permanently shifted to a new building/place/address.

Bilal Town Islamic Branch (5165) Peshawar

Old Address:	New Address:
Plot No. 2668 & 2669, Rahat Tower, Bilal Town, Opposite Gul Bahar Police Station, G.T. Road, Peshawar.	Khatta No. 953/1426 Qitta No. 3, Mouza Shah Dhand, Gul Muhammad Khan Road, Gul Bahar No. 3, Near Rashid Town, Peshawar.





# Governor assures redressal people’s issues on priority



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation leads by Peer Qayyum Shah along founding presi-

dent Bajaur Chamber of Commerce and industries Lali Shah meet with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali for redres-

sal of different issue especially operationalization of Peshawar Dry-port.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali ensured resolution of the issues on priority while assured initiation of developmental projects after general elections as Election Commission of Pakistan has imposed ban works.

The delegation forwarded redressal of grievances at Tal and Doaba tehsils of Hangu district on priority basis. The participants briefed Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa about backwardness and marginalization of the area.

Peer Qayyum Shah stressed on demarcation of Dar Samand as well as construction of dam for storing rain water in the premises. He also requested for computerization of collective land (Shameelat) and identification of true ownerships in this regard.

The delegation also

pointed out shortage of staff at hospitals and National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) offices at Daoba and Tal teshils. They requested for appointment of officials on vacant seats for facilitation of public in the premises. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of Sarazai to Hangu road to ease communication.

They requested Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for establishment of technical colleges at Tal and Daoaba as well as installation of Small Industrial Zone at Dar Samand to ensure provision of employment opportunities to the youth.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali ensured redressal of public interest issues on priority basis while assured initiation of development works after general elections scheduled on 8th February 2024.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah addressing undertraining Assistant Superintendents of Police (ASPs) at Chief Minister’s House.

## NPA officers call on KP Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): The under training officers of National Police Academy (NPA) during the study tour of Governor House Peshawar called on Haji Ghulam Ali, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa here on Thursday.

The Governor briefed the delegation about his constitutional duties and historical importance of the Governor House, Peshawar. Police officers, who were welcomed by the governor, asked various questions related to law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, merged areas’ problems and higher education.

The Governor said that controlling crime ratio and protection of citizens were prime responsibilities of the police department and stressed on them to treat people politely at police stations where complainants come for resolution of their problems and seeking justice.

He advised police officers for better relations with areas elders in their respective jurisdiction.

Living close with people will enhance respect and image of police department in eyes of public, he said.

Police have rendered many sacrifices in war against terrorism and their was a long list of police sacrifices from from Jawan to officer.

Equipping police force with modern weapons and their capacity building was inevitable, he concluded.

## Salim nominates as secretary



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muslim Lawyer Forum (MLF) nominated Salim Shah Hoti Advocate as provincial Secretary Information Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Thursday.

In this regard a notification has been issued stating that Salim Shah Hoti Advocate to assume charge as Provincial Secretary Information MLF immediately.

Salim Shah Hoti advocate paid thanks to Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Engineer Amir Muqam, MLF provincial Kifayat Ullah Khan and general secretary Akbar Yousaf Khalil for their trust on him.

The newly nominated info’s secretary said that party’s workers are united under the leaderships of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz.

He argued public to vote PMLN for development and integrity of the nation.

# Minister stresses for tourism practices

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial Caretaker Minister, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel emphasized responsible tourism practices to protect both the environment and local cultural values.

In a significant address during the Chitral Symposium held in Peshawar, Caretaker Minister Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, reaffirmed the unwavering commitment of the provincial government, armed forces, and institutions to foster the growth of the tourism sector.

Highlighting key initiatives, Minister underscored the priority placed on providing necessary facilities. He said tourism policing and a 24/7 helpline for the convenience and safety of tourists have already been introduced.

Welcoming public-private partnerships, he cited establishment of four integrated tourism zones, with a special focus on Chitral, as a testament to the region’s dedication to enhancing tourist attractions.

Expressing gratitude to the Pakistan Army for their support in organizing the successful Chitral Symposium, Minister Kakakhel praised the Department of

Tourism, Culture and Tourism Authority for their commendable arrangements. He extended thanks to the Chitral community, including elders, experts, youth, media representatives, and stakeholders, for their active participation.

Minister Kakakhel emphasized the need to preserve the Chitral’s diverse culture, rich traditions, heritage, and natural environment. Recognizing Chitral as a safe and culturally rich destination, he called for responsible tourism practices to protect both the environment and local cultural heritage.

The minister unveiled proposals presented during the symposium, including plans to designate 2024 as the Year of Tourism for the province.

He assured effective implementation through strong coordination and integrated mechanisms among all stakeholders, with a focus on providing better facilities.

The Minister said that Pakistan, especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has a unique position in the world in terms of tourism. Centuries-old history, natural environment, hospitality and unique culture make it unique in the world.



As many as 90 percent of Buddhist sites are in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the country has 22,000 heritage sites, five of which are UNESCO sites.

The province has 2000 valuable artefacts of which only 50% are on display in the Peshawar Museum. He said that we have to present it to the world in a positive way.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and IGFC North Major General Noor Wali Khan also addressed the Chitral Symposium, alongside other distinguished speakers from Chitral.

The event showcased cultural stalls reflecting Chitral and Kailash culture, with the Caretaker Minister presenting special shields and souvenirs to speakers and organizers as a token of appreciation for their valuable contributions.

# Vehicles’ keys handed over to colleges’ principals

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Higher Education, Sayyed Mazhar Ali Shah, Director Higher Education, Dr Faridullah Shah and principals of the relevant colleges.

On the occasion, the minister was told that under the first phase of AIP Program, 55 Hiace vehicles and buses were approved, of which 46 vehicles were distributed in the first phase while the remaining nine Hiace vehicles were distributed in today’s function.

The minister was told that in criteria for the selection of colleges for vehicles’ distribution, the number of students and difficulties in travelling facilities were scrutinized while for the general and commerce

colleges an estimate of Rs 945 million was suggested under the phase one for provision of transport facilities to these colleges.

The Minister said steps were underway for the second phase of providing transport facilities to the educational institutions so that all colleges could be provided with transport facility. The minister further said that special emphasis was being laid on the female education in the province and in this regard girl colleges were also included in this project. He said practical steps were underway to address the issues including the shortage of staff in education institutions.

# KTH Young doctors call off strike after dialogue

PESHAWAR (APP): In Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH) Peshawa, the Young Doctors’ Association on Thursday called off their strike after successful dialogue with the hospital authorities.

According to KTH administration, the representatives of Young Doctors’ Association had a successful session of dialogue with Director Hospital KTH, Dr Zafar Afridi, Medical Director, Professor Dr Muhammad

Ayaz Khan and Associate Dean Post Graduates, Professor Dr Wazir Muhammad, following which the association announced to end its strike, started in demand of increase in salaries.

Following the development, the hospital administration thanked the Young Doctors’ Association and assured them that the hospital administration will take onboard all its staff including the training medical officers, nurses, paramedics

and consultants in matters related to the hospital’s performance. The administration also assured all out support to its staff in discharge of their duties.

The hospital administration further said that demands of the young doctors would be addressed amicably through the relevant forum. It said the entire staff of the hospital would work in unification to provide best possible medical cover to the patients.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali addressing a gather at Peshawar Bar Association.

# George honors unfaded heroes of Christian Community in KP — urges for country’s development

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Human Rights Khalil George on Thursday highlighted the significance of the services offered by the often unsung heroes-the members of minority communities, particularly Christian brothers and sisters and urged to work more for the development of country.

Addressing the participants here at Governor House regarding “Unfaded heroes of Christian Community in KP.”

Minister George said that Pakistan is our country and we are living here happy and getting equal rights. He said that Pakistan came into being after the sacrifices of our forefathers.

He called for creating an environment where everyone, regardless of their background, can thrive and contribute to shared

progress. As the event unfolded, it became a platform for the promotion of inclusivity in development initiatives.

Minister Khalil George stressed the importance of ensuring that development initiatives are inclusive and considerate of the needs of all communities.

Governor KP, Haji Ghulam Ali in his address, reinforced the significance of diversity, unity, and interfaith harmony in the province.

Haji Ghulam Ali shared profound insights, beginning with an acknowledgment of the rich diversity that defines Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, emphasizing its role as a strength that contributes to shared prosperity.

Governor Haji Ghulam Ali reaffirmed a commitment to a future marked by tolerance, inclusivity, and prosperity for all.

He urged continued collaboration and understanding to build a province that serves as an example of unity in diversity.

He said that our religion Islam stresses us for interfaith harmony and respect of others.

The Governor House, in collaboration with Pak Mission Society, hosted the distinguished event, “Unfaded Heroes of Christian Community in KP.” This momentous occasion celebrated the remarkable contributions of 68 individuals from the Christian community in the development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan in general.

Dr. Sarah Safdar, ex-Minister, expressed heartfelt gratitude to the awardees, emphasizing their dedication and hard work that not only elevated their respective fields but also played a pivotal role in

the overall development of society.

Awards were presented to Christian professionals, recognizing their unwavering commitment to the services of the country.

Adel Rehmat, CEO of Pak Mission Society, lauded these unsung heroes, urging the audience to appreciate and embrace the diverse contributions of each community. In the spirit of a world often divided, Rehmat commended the prevailing spirit of interfaith harmony in the province, encouraging continued efforts to build bridges of understanding and tolerance.

Dr. Samson Griffin Chairman of Pak Mission Society, concluded the event by cutting a Christmas cake, symbolizing shared joy and unity. Shields and awards were distributed among the participants.

## Secretary visits AHITI

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Secretary Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperative Dr. Muhammad Israr here Thursday visited Animal Husbandry In-Service Training Institute (AHITI) Peshawar and inspected its various sections.

He was accompanied by Principal AHITI, Mian Ahadullah and other relevant officers. During visit, he was briefed about technical training in animal husbandry, consultancy services and progress of courses conducted in the institute.



PESHAWAR: (L) Vice President SCCI Ejaz Khan Afridi and (R) Cosmetics Expert Dr. Salman shake hand with PPP Co-Chairman Bilal Bhutto.

# Minister ground-breaks investment venture of US 16m

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Caretaker Minister for Tribal Affairs, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education (TAIC&TE) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Syed Aamer Abdullah, accompanied by Secretary IC&TE Zulfiqar Ali Shah, visited the Nowshera Economic Zone and Risalpur Export Processing Zone. The zones are under the proficient management and development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KPEZDMC).

CEO of KPEZDMC Javed Iqbal Khattak, along with senior management

team welcomed the distinguished guests.

The primary purpose of the visit was to mark the groundbreaking ceremony of a state-of-the-art splint manufacturing unit in the Export Processing Zone, representing a substantial capital investment of USD 16 Million. This new facility is expected to provide employment opportunities to 450 individuals, with a noteworthy commitment to gender diversity, as 50% of the workforce is expected to be female. Moreover, 06 sick units have also been revived in this zone.

Furthermore, the visit witnessed groundbreaking ceremonies for enterprises

in 02 sectors within the Nowshera Economic Zone. These included PPRC and PVC pipes, and plastic crates. The collective investment in these ventures is estimated at PKR 210 Million, offering employment to approximately 330 individuals. This was followed by a general visit to the near to construction soap and chemical industry with capital investment of PKR 500 Million having 250 employees.

The ceremony comprised of active participation of all attendees in a tree plantation initiative led by Minister Dr. Syed Aamer Abdullah, emphasizing the commitment to

environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility. In a gesture of recognition, the Minister was also accorded a Guard of Honor by the Rescue 1122 team.

This visit marks a pivotal moment in the economic landscape of Nowshera/Risalpur in particular and KP in general, showcasing the commitment of the government and private sector to drive investment, create employment, and contribute to the sustainable development of the region.

## PTI making conspiracy to delay election: ANP

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial spokesperson of Awami National Party (ANP), Samar Haroon Balour, has stated that the petition of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the Lahore High Court against the Election Commission’s notification was an attempt to delay the general elections, which was not acceptable at all.

In a statement here Thursday, she expressed that due to the PTI’s petition, preparations for February 8 were disrupted and PTI would be responsible for the delay.

She mentioned that PTI had failed to develop any narrative for the election, so the party was exploiting delays as a tactic. The spokesperson emphasized that ANP had reservations about postings/transfers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but any delay was not acceptable.

She termed the PTI’s filed a petition in the Lahore High Court a conspiracy against the elections on February 8 next year. She reiterated that the ANP was ready for elections and wanted it to be held at any cost.

# PESCO notifies power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Thursday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Haripur-Havelian Transmission Line on 16th December from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. resultantly, consumers of 132 KV AMC, Nathiya Gali,

Abbottabad, Kholian Bala grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, it said that power supply will remain suspended from Besham Transmission Line on 17th December from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Hattar 1, 2, Hattar Special Zone Haripur Kholian Bala and Haripur and Havelian

grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will also remain suspended from Hattar-Saadi Cement Factory Transmission Line on 17th December from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. resultantly, consumers of 132 KV Saadi Cement Factory grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.





## In brief

### Sale of mobile SIMs banned F.P. Report

MINGORA: District Administration Swat, under section 144, has imposed ban on selling of mobile SIMs in streets and residential areas, said a notification issued here Thursday. According to district administration, the ban has been imposed for a period of two months hence forthwith. It was said that illegal business of selling mobile SIMs through fake finger prints may create law and order situation. All the authorized dealers, customer service centers have been directed to stop selling mobile SIMs without getting proper permission from the concerned regulatory authority. Strict action would be taken against those found guilty of violating the order of district administration, said that notification.

### PPP leader from joins PML-N

DADU (INP): Sardar Yasir Babbar, a prominent figure in the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) hailing from Dadu Tehsil in Sindh, has joined Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). He announced his decision after meeting with PML-N Sindh President, Bashir Memon, and Kheal Das Kohistani. In this crucial gathering, Sardar Yasir Babbar extended his unwavering support and trust in the leadership of Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif within the PML-N. Sardar Yasir Babbar also submitted an application seeking the ticket of PS Tarasi from Dadu. Furthermore, another key PPP leader from Badin, Jam Kamal Chang, is likely to join PPP ranks in coming days. PML-N Sindh chief Bashir Memon and former MNA Kheal Das Kohistani met with former PPP MNA from Dadu Sardar Kamal Chang and extended him invitation to join PML-N.

### Five killed, nine injured

BAHAWALPUR (INP): At least five people were killed and nine others injured in collision between passenger bus and a truck on late Wednesday night, rescue sources said. According to details, the accident took place on National Highway in Bahawalpur when an over speeding passenger while trying to save a rickshaw rammed into a truck moving ahead. The truck caught fire after collision. The accident led to loss of five lives besides leaving nine others injured. Rescue teams reached the scene and extinguished the blaze after efforts of more than one and half an hour. The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities.

### Three arrested

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Bahawalpur police have arrested a notorious thief gang and recovered stolen motorcycles and cash from its possession. According to a spokesman for Bahawalpur police, the notorious Moeen gang was involved in lifting motorcycles and depriving people of cash and valuables in the Qaimpur area of the district. "Following a tip-off, a team of PS Qaimpur headed by Station House Officer, Muhammad Ahmad Cheema conducted a raid and arrested the three members of the gang including the head," he said. He said that the police had recovered 11 motorcycles and cash Rs 874,000 from the possession of the accused. The suspects were identified as Moeen, Nadeem and Dilshad. The spokesman added that the recovered motorcycles and cash would be handed over to the owners.

# Minister lays foundation stone of manufacturing unit

## F.P. Report

NOWSHERA: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Tribal Affairs, Dr. Aamer Abdullah visited Nowshera on Thursday and laid the foundation stone of the latest Splint Manufacturing Unit to be established with Canadian investment of 16 million US dollars in Export Processing Zone.

This unit will be the largest factory of its kind in terms of production in the world and all its production will be exported. Currently, the largest factory of this type in the world consists of 3 assembly lines, while this factory will have 8 assembly lines.

The industrial unit will generate employment opportunities for 800 people with 60% women and they will be extended all the facilities according to international labour standards. During the visit, the Caretaker Minister also laid the foundation stone of two

units of leather and plastic pipe manufacturing at Nowshera Economic Zone. A total investment of 210 million rupees has been made in these projects, which will provide employment to about 330 people.

The provincial minister also inspected the under-construction unit of soap and chemicals industry in the economic zone, which is being constructed at a cost Rs.500 million that will provide employment to around 250 people. Earlier, on arrival at Nowshera Economic Zone, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company, (KP-EZDMC), Javed Iqbal Khattak and other officers of the company welcomed the caretaker minister.

The provincial minister was given detailed briefing and was told that with the efforts of the company 6 sick industrial units of various sectors have been e in the in the export processing zone. Speaking on this

occasion, the caretaker minister described the establishment of factories as an important step in the economic development of the province.

He expressed the hope that the current useful policies for investment in the province will continued in the future as well to attract investors. He appreciated the tireless efforts of the entire team of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company in bringing large Canadian investment to the province in a short period of time and ensuring the establishment of this unit here. The caretaker minister assured the investors of all possible support on behalf of the provincial government and said that they will leave no stone unturned in provision of all facilities as their success is the success of the province. During the visit, the caretaker minister was also presented a guard of honor by the team of Rescue 1122 while he also planted saplings in the newly constructed units.

# Tribal disapproves killing of co-tribesman in Tirah

## F.P. Report

JAMRUD: The tribesmen of Koki Khel put the body of a tribal on road in protest who had been allegedly shot and dead by a Frontier Corp (FC) soldier here in Tor Darra, Rajgal area of Tirah Valley district Khyber last day.

Led by Malik Naseer Ahmad Koki Khel, a large number of Koki Khel carrying the coffin of the deceased, Tila Akbar Afridi suspended the Pak-Afghan highway at Bab-e-Khyber by putting the dead body on it. The protestors chanted slogans against the cold murder of a local tribal and said until

they get justice they will not give up their protest.

Addressing to the angry mob Malik Naseer Ahmad Koki Khel, Ex-Parliamentarian Iqbal Afridi, Khan Wali, tehsil chairman Said Nawab and others condemned the killing of an innocent tribesman and said blood of tribal people was much cheaper than water.

Anti-tribesmen attitude and irresponsible practices of the troops in the tribal region had earned a bad name for the forces, they added and said blood and honor of tribesmen was as sacred as citizens of the down towns. They asked the forces and other con-

cerned authorities to file First Information Report (FIR) against the accused and demanded his court martial besides granting of Shaheed package to the late Tila Akbar Afridi in addition with provision of government job to a child of the deceased a the killed person was the lonely source of income for the family.

They also insisted on abolishing unnecessary security forces checkpoints in the area that had multiplied their miseries. Malik Naseer threatened that until fulfilling the abovementioned terms they would not renounce their agitation.



QUETTA: Ajman-e-Tajran Balochistan President Rahim Agha addressing a press conference.

# JI members reject election of tehsil acting chairman

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Jamaat-i-Islami members of tehsil council Balambat on Thursday rejected the election of the council's acting chairman and convenor and announced to challenge the election.

The announcement was made during a meeting of the JI affiliated village council chairmen. Speaking on the occasion the JI members tehsil council Naikdar Khan, Munaem Shah, Rahim Zada, Shah Hassan, Shabir Ahmad, Dilawar Khan and others termed the election of the acting chairman Sheikh Naseeb Rawan and convenor Sahibullah as a drama and an unconstitutional act under the local government rules.

They alleged the opponents in their absence elected each other which they would never accept. They demanded the election commission to take notice of the matter and declared this election as null and void.

Earlier in the day the members from the ruling PTI with the support of PPP and ANP members elected Sheikh Naseeb Rawan of the PTI as acting chairman of the Balambat tehsil council who later on while exercising his

powers elected Sahibullah of the PPP as convener of the council. The tehsil chairman position had been vacant because the PTI elected chairman Asim Shuiab had gone underground since May 9 riots. He was wanted by police in several cases.

Talking to local journalists after the election the newly elected acting chairman Sheikh Naseeb Rawan said that he would vacate the position once its actual chairman Asim Shuiab returned to the council. He said the council's members had suffered due to his absence and he would run the council with the consultation of the PTI, PPP and ANP members.

**AD assumes office:** The newly appointed Assistant Director Local Government Umar Rahman took over the charge of his office here on Thursday.

The cabinet of All Secretaries Village Councils Association (ASVCA) called on him to welcome him. The ASVCA president Muhammad Zeb along with former president Salahuddin discussed matters and issues faced by VC secretaries with him and hoped that the AD office would work in close liaison with them. They also

appreciated the services of the outgoing AD Amir Nizam Durani for the people of Lower Dir district. The ASVCA leaders also called on the newly promoted officials of local government department Zarbaz Khan and Kiramatullah and felicitated them on their promotion to the post of Supervisor in BPS-14.

# Closure of paramedical office flayed

## F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Paramedical Class IV Association Shangla has condemned the closure of Class IV office in Lady Reading Hospital and said that certain officials are trying to suppress the voice of lower grade employees.

Talking to media, President of the association, Shoukat Ali condemned the discrimination against Class IV and said that workers have not been given salaries that reflect the failure of medical teaching institute LRH.



QUETTA: Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani along with President Balochistan Awami Party, Nawabzada Khalid Magsi addressing a press conference.

# PHC CJ visits District Jail Kohat

## F.P. Report

KOHAT: Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, the Chief Justice (HCJ), Peshawar High Court visited District Jail Kohat on Thursday. His lordship was warmly welcomed and received by the District & Sessions Judge & Superintendent Jail, Kohat.

The Chief Justice inspected each and every barrack personally and gave a patient hearing to all the prisoners by listening to their complaints and submissions individually. During the visit it was pointed out that 45 prisoners of district Hangu were stationed at Kohat district Jail. The Chief Justice directed to make necessary arrangements for immediate shifting of these inmates to the Jail of their home district instead.

Besides, the Chief Justice also directed that cases of under trial prisoners shall be expedited and those who were behind the bars in cases involving petty nature offences shall be released forthwith after obtaining bail bonds. Likewise, the Hon'ble Chief Justice observed that provision of Solar system, video link facility and exhaust mechanism were indispensable facilities for facilitation of inmates therefore, these issues would be taken with the concerned Department for immediate action.

# DC services appreciated

## F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Hectic efforts of the Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad proved fruitful for supply of fertilizer to Hafizabad district by a fertilizer company and a goods train consisting of 55 bogies carrying twenty thousand bags of fertilizers have been reached at Hafizabad.

Deputy Commissioner said that this fertilizer will be provided to farmers at control rate on merit and transparently under the supervision of officers of district administration and agriculture department. She said that another train loaded with fertilizers would be reached shortly so that provision of fertilizer to farmers could be sneered according to needs of farmers for sowing wheat crop in the district. She said that stocks of all fertilizer dealers was being monitoring and verified on daily basis to overcome complaints of farmers regarding shortage of fertilizer in the district.

**ECP appointed ROs:** District Election Commissioner Hafizabad Khalid Rasheed has said that Election Commission of Pakistan has appointed Returning Officers for one seat of National Assembly and three seats of Provincial Assembly Punjab while training of returning officers will be started from 16, December.

He said that Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Sundas Irshad appointed as District Returning Officer, ADCR Imtiaz Ali Baig Returning Officer Constituency NA-67 while General Assistant Revenue Saghir Ahmad Bajwa, AC Hafizabad Munawar Hussain and AC Pindi Bhattian Rashid Iqbal have been appointed as Returning Officers Constituencies PP-37, PP-38, PP-39 respectively.

# Mayor demands return of land for medical college

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Mayor Mardan City Himayatullah Mayar advocate has termed the decision of provincial government Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as sheer injustice with public, regarding returning of approved 1000 kanals land for medical, nursing colleges and other institutes, to its owner.

He was talking to media-persons here on Thursday. Mr. Himayatullah Mayar claimed that the previous Awami National Party-led provincial government of KPK had approved 1000 kanals of land for medical institutions.

He pointed out that the previous ANP-led provincial government had planned to build and establish Bacha Medical University, two nursing colleges, paramedical institute, cancer hospital, Khyber institute of neuro science and research, different hospitals, flats and sports complex on the said approved 1000 kanal land.

He alleged that the incumbent KPK caretaker provincial government had decided to return land to its owner because the government had no fund to pay them their land amount. On the other hand, he lamented that the provincial government had been paying Rs. 4

billion annually for BRT project, adding that the government had to pay Rs. 8.5 billion for BRT project in coming year of 2024.

The city mayor Himayatullah Mayar advocate claimed that he had called on December 18, an emergency meeting of city local government wherein all organisations including political parties, traders' unions, legal fraternity, students and doctors' organisations were invited so that to raise a united voice against the said issue. Himayatullah Mayar had demanded of the KPK government to take the decision back, for the bright future of Mardan district.

# Magistrate orders recording of statements on 17th

## Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Judicial Magistrate Fahim Ahmad ordered Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Wing for recording witnesses on 17th January, on Thursday.

However, the accused Bacha Khan, Rahim Khan and Gul Samar had challenged FIA Cyber crime report that it can't be maintainable and adjourned for several times by the court.

The counsel Tariq Kakar and Shafiq Javed advocates argued that FIA had obtained record from Gul Samar shop in the presence of his sons and produced hard-drive in this regard. Judicial Magistrate Fahim Ahmad ordered recording of witnesses statements on 17th January 2024 and adjourned further hearing.

**Eight persons burnt in gas leakage explosion in Nowshera:** At least eight

persons were burnt due to gas leakage explosion at Nowshera district.

Police said the incident occurred at ASC colony at Badrahi where members of a family gathered for breakfast sustained burnt wounds. The injured were shifted to Qazi Hussain Ahmed hospital Nowshera for treatment. Police said the injured includes three children whose identity could not be immediately ascertained.

# KKH University sets strategic course with finalization of KPIs

## F.P. Report

KARAK: The Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, convened a meeting of academic and administrative departments experts to deliberate and finalize the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that will steer the institution's trajectory over the next three years.

Chaired by Treasurer Hafiz Ismail Khan, the meeting attended by Director Planning and Development, Muhammad Rashad Khattak, Head of the English Department Dr. Syed Hanif Rasul Kaka Khel, Head of Communication and Media Studies Dr. Muhammad Anwar, Director of Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) Muhammad Shah Din, Director of the Office of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORIC) Dr. Anwar Khan, Superintendent Academics Umer Gul, Assistant Director of Students Financial Aid Noor Ul Wahab, Assistant Registrar



(Meetings) Syed Naveed Gul Bukhari, Assistant Treasurer Asif Ghani, and Superintendent Budget Tahir Gul.

The focal point of the meeting was the finalization of Key Performance Indicators for the years 2023-24, 2024-25, and 2025-26. The comprehensive set of KPIs encompass various aspects such as Budgetary Provision, Student Enrollments in BS, MS/MPhil, and PhD programs, Scholarships, Faculty Development, Training, Research, Industry Collaborations, Patents filing and Quality Enhancement Indicators.

Treasurer Hafiz Ismail Khan expressed his gratitude to the Heads of Departments and Section Heads for their invaluable insights and contributions in the finalization of the University's KPIs. Recognizing the importance of collaborative efforts, he highlighted the commitment of the university to providing high standard education and fostering an environment of continuous improvement. The finalization of these KPIs sets the stage for a strategic roadmap, guiding the university's endeavors towards excellence and sustained growth.

# MIS inaugurated at MMC

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Chairman Board of Governors Atta Ullah Khan inaugurated Management Information System (MIS) at Bacha Mardan Medical Complex (MMC), on Thursday.

During the inauguration ceremony, Dean Bacha Khan Medical College Professor Dr. Amjad Ali Khan, Director Hospital Dr. Tariq Mehmood, Secretary Board of Governors Azhar Khan, Director Finance Muhammad

Sheraz, Principal Bacha Khan Dental College Professor Dr. Munir Khan, Manager Information Technology Mohsin Ali and Manager Human Resource Itlaf Ahmad along with others were present at the occasion.

Manager IT Mohsin Ali briefed the participants regarding operations and procedures of MIS while claimed that it will ensure transparency as well as good government at MMC. He added that patients

will be facilitated digitally from obtaining receipt prescriptions of medicines and medical examinations.

Chairman Board of Governors Atta Ullah Khan appreciated IT department efforts in the establishment of MIS system which ultimately benefit public especially patients. He argued that administrative, financial and medical along with other departments are digitized to ensure good governance public sector institutions.





## Cyclone weakens while still lashing Australia with flooding rain

CANBERRA (AP): The first tropical cyclone to hit Australia in the current season weakened to a low pressure system but continued to lash the northeast coast Thursday with flooding rain and left almost 40,000 homes and businesses without power.

Cyclone Jasper crossed the Queensland state coast as a category 2 storm on a five-tier scale that whipped the sparsely populated region with winds of up to 140 kph (87 mph). The cyclone crossed near the Aboriginal community of Wujal Wujal, 110 kilometers (68 miles) north of the city of Cairns, though many of its 300 residents evacuated before Jasper struck.

Katrina Hewitt, who operates tourist accommodation at Wujal Wujal and did not evacuate, said the community was largely unscathed except for damaged trees. "It looks amazing. No flooding, no breakages of buildings," Hewitt said. "It was a big waiting game. We just didn't know what was going to happen,"

she said. Hewitt expected Wujal Wujal would be isolated for days by fallen trees blocking roads.

The winds quickly eased as the storm tracked west across land, but heavy rain was forecast to continue Thursday with the risk of flooding. Several roads were closed by fallen trees and floodwater. Emergency services officers rescued 12 people and a dog from floodwaters at the town of Mossman, Queensland government minister Cameron Dick said. Almost 40,000 homes and businesses had lost power, which amounted to 25% of electricity customers in the cyclone-affected area, Dick said.

Government meteorologist Angus Hines said some weather stations in the region reported more than 40 centimeters (16 inches) of rain in the 24 hours to Thursday morning. "The rain that is coming in now is falling onto places that are already saturated. It's falling onto rivers that are already swollen and running high," Hines said.

Jasper progressed over land relatively slowly, at around 10 kph (6 mph). Betty Hinton, who runs an ice cream business in Daintree village, estimated the edge of the cyclone's eye passed directly over her home during a sleepless night.

"The fact that it traveled so slowly was very trying," Hinton said. "I've been in cyclones before, a much stronger cyclone than Jasper, and it wasn't so heart-wrenching." "This one just went on and on and on and there just didn't seem to be any relief from it, and so for 14 hours we were buffeted here and then the heavy rain started," she said. Hinton said her house was built to withstand the strongest cyclones and was not damaged. Cairns Airport had closed due to the worsening weather and was expected to reopen Thursday. Charlie Casa, a manager at the electricity company Ergon Energy, said the Port Douglas, Daintree and Mossman regions were worst effected by power outages.

## ‘We would vote for peace - if we had a vote’

DR CONGO (BBC): After heavily armed rebels surrounded her small village in eastern Democratic Republic Congo, Musa Bi walked for seven days with six young children until she reached a UN-run refugee camp. The 42-year-old is filled with worry, with no idea of the fate of her husband and two other children, as the family was separated in the chaos that followed the advance by the M23 rebels.

She has little thought for the 20 December presidential election - and while the conflict taking place around her may be dominating the campaign, there will no voting in several areas of the North Kivu province where she lives because of the unrest. "M23 came. They were fighting with our [government] soldiers. We started running and those who could not run away, they were killed," she tells the BBC. Fortunate to survive, Mrs Bi and her children slept in other villages until they reached the Bushagala camp only to be once more spending the nights out in the open, often in the rain. When the BBC met them, they had been at the camp at the base of the Mount Nyiragongo volcano for six days, waiting for the UN refugee agency to register them so they get a tent - and food rations.

But the agency is so overwhelmed by the influx of those fleeing - 700 to 1,000 each day - that Mrs Bi is patiently waiting her turn, while relying on those already registered to share their food - normally made of sorghum and millet flour - with her and her little ones. The UN estimates that nearly seven million people are internally displaced in DR Congo, the highest number on record. Yet at Mrs Bi's village near the town of Masisi, her

family was self-sufficient, growing food on their nearby farm - until they were driven out by M23, who are on the offensive again as a regional ceasefire initiative flounders. The fighters, initially Congolese army deserters, accuse the government of marginalising the country's ethnic Tutsi minority and refusing to negotiate with them. They regard the verdant hills around Masisi as their true homeland. President Félix Tshisekedi, who is seeking a second five-year term, has been whipping up nationalist fervour by casting the rebels as a front for what he calls the "expansionist aims" of neighbouring Rwanda - and going as far as to compare its president to Germany's World War Two leader.

"I'm going to address Rwandan President Paul Kagame and tell him this: since he wanted to behave like Adolf Hitler by having expansionist aims, I promise he will end up like Adolf Hitler," Mr Tshisekedi said at an election rally in the east on Friday. "However, he [has] met his match, someone who is determined to stop him and protect his country." Mr Kagame has not responded, but a Rwandan government spokeswoman said such comments were "a loud and clear threat".

Rwanda has always denied backing the M23, but for many years has criticised the Congolese authorities for failing to disarm ethnic Hutu rebels - some of whom are linked to the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Hundreds of militias proliferate in the mineral-rich region, where the military has failed to get a grip on security for the last three decades. All armed groups eye the profits as the metals mined end up in products such as mobile

phones, cars, planes and jewellery. In a further sign of nationalist fervour ahead of the election, Mr Tshisekedi has boosted out an East African peacekeeping force - about a year after he welcomed it. Earlier he ordered the withdrawal of the UN mission, known by its acronym Monusco, which has deployed more than 17,000 personnel, including 12,000 soldiers.

This does not surprise the commander of the UN troops, who acknowledges that they have failed to protect people like Mrs Bi from the advancing rebels. "When people say Monusco was not doing their job sometimes, they are not wrong, we must accept that," says Lieutenant General Otávio Rodrigues de Miranda Filho of Brazil. "The biggest challenge when I arrived here was to change the mindset of my troops. To motivate them and to make them understand that we have to be much more proactive and effective. Otherwise we lose the confidence of the population." Mr Tshisekedi is frustrated that neither force has taken a more robust approach to the M23, which is now only around 35km (20 miles) from Goma, the main city in the east with a population of about one million, over which Mt Nyiragongo looms.

This has raised the prospect of Goma falling to the rebels, just as it did briefly a decade ago. This gave way to a regional peace deal and the formation of a UN intervention brigade, made up of troops from the Southern African Development Community (Sadc), to bring the M23 to heel and disarm them. The fighters eventually moved into camps, mainly in Uganda.

## Hackers linked to Russian spy agency claim cyberattack

LONDON (Reuters): A hacking group believed by Kyiv to be affiliated with Russian military intelligence claimed responsibility for a cyberattack that knocked Ukraine's biggest mobile network operator offline. Attack on Kyivstar, which has 24.3 million mobile subscribers and more than 1.1 million home internet users, knocked out services, damaged IT infrastructure, and silenced air raid alert systems in some parts of Ukraine.

A group of activist hackers, or "hacktivists", called Soltsepyok said in a post on the Telegram messaging app that it carried out the cyberattack, and published screenshots appearing to show that the hackers had accessed Kyivstar's servers. Russia has repeatedly denied being behind such cyberattacks. Ukraine's State Service of Special Communications and Information Protectorate (SSSCIP) said in a statement it was investigating the incident with the SBU domestic intelligence agency.

"Responsibility for the cyberattack was taken by one of the Russian groups whose activities are associated with the main directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation," it said, referring to Russia's GRU military intelligence agency. "This once again confirms Russia's use of cyberspace as one of the domains of the war against Ukraine," it said, without naming the group that has claimed responsibility. Earlier this year, the SSSCIP identified Soltsepyok as a front for a Russian hacking group dubbed "Sandworm" which has been previously linked to the GRU.

It was not immediately possible to contact the GRU for comment. In its Telegram post announcing the hack, Soltsepyok thanked unidentified "concerned colleagues" at Kyivstar. The SBU said that it had opened a treason case following the cyberattack. "We attacked Kyivstar because the company provides communications to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, as well as state bodies and Ukraine's security forces," that post said. "To the other offices helping the Ukrainian Armed Forces: be prepared!" A source close to Kyivstar told Reuters that military communications had not been affected by the attack. Sandworm has been tracked by cybersecurity researchers as one of Russia's most powerful hacking groups, responsible for cyberattacks against Ukraine's energy sector. "They regularly launder their operations through paper thin hacktivist personas," said John Hultquist, who heads threat analysis at Google's Mandiant Intelligence.

"Sandworm is Moscow's weapon of choice for cyberattacks. No other actor comes close in terms of the imminent threat they pose to critical infrastructure in Ukraine," he added. In response to a request for comment from Reuters, a representative of Soltsepyok confirmed it had carried out the attack and referred to the internal Kyivstar documents posted to the groups' Telegram channel.

## Russian soldiers' wives make camouflage nets, minefield signs

MOSCOW (Reuters): Natalia Yermakova's husband, Alexander, has been fighting in Ukraine for over a year after responding to President Vladimir Putin's mobilisation call as a volunteer. Wounded in the leg, he was operated on and then sent back to the front. A believer in what Russia calls its "special military operation" against Ukraine, Natalia is toiling as a volunteer in a "Family Battalion" in Moscow.

She is one of a group of around 40 mostly female relatives of mobilised men who thread camouflage netting, make signs to mark minefields, gather candles to be used in dug-outs, and put food parcels together in their free time. As Putin positions himself to win a fifth presidential term in March, casting himself as the right man to lead a military campaign that the West says is a colonial-style war of aggression, it is people like Yermakova whom Putin is relying on to hold his support base together. Her work takes place in an office belonging to the ruling United Russia party, which is adorned with Russia's red, blue and white flag and portraits of politicians such as Putin.

There are similar groups working around Moscow, she said. The relatives take turns accompanying the deliveries they assemble - in a more-than-30-year-old van - to the Russian military in what Yermakova calls "the new territories" - Ukrainian land annexed by Russia. "We really want to support them (the soldiers) morally and emotionally and send them a message...that what they are doing there is needed by people here," Yermakova told Reuters, while taking a break from threading a giant camouflage net. Some wives of Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine are demanding that their husbands, who



they say have not been given enough breaks to spend time with their families, be demobilised and their places taken by others.

"THE WAY IT HAS TO BE' But Yermakova, 37, does not share that concern. She was able to be with her own husband for some time after he spent several months recuperating in Moscow following an operation on his leg. "If our government decides to act in such a way it means that's the way it has to be," said Yermakova. "I believe that Russia is waking up, waking up from its sleep, and understands that it (the war) is not just happening for no reason and that there are compelling reasons for it."

That's a reference to the Kremlin's narrative that the conflict is part of a wider existential struggle for a fairer world order against what Putin sees as a decadent West bent on containing Russia. The West brands Russia's actions in Ukraine as a brutal and unprovoked land grab, but this view

finds little purchase among Russians like Yermakova. They accuse Ukraine of mistreating Russian speakers in the east since 2014 when a Russian-backed uprising erupted there. Kyiv denies the charge. Yermakova said threading camouflage nets to help conceal trenches and to fit on soldiers' helmets was the volunteers' main task because it could help save their husbands' lives by keeping them safe from enemy drones. She and others have also started sewing bandages and baking apple and cabbage pies to send to their men.

Yermakova said she had made several delivery runs, describing the area close to the frontline as "a different world". Despite the grim nature of war, she said that she and her husband tried to bring a bit of normality to their lives by practising tango dancing, something they both loved, on the rare occasions they saw each other.

## Russia's new Black Sea naval base alarms Georgia

TBILISI (BBC): In early November, 50 Georgian opposition MPs addressed Nato and EU member states calling for a unified stance against Russia's plan to establish a permanent naval base in the breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia. The Kremlin's plans have raised fears that the base could drag EU-hopeful Georgia into Russia's war in Ukraine and harm Tbilisi's own plans for a port on the Black Sea.

"We unanimously and firmly condemn Russia's occupation, militarisation and other actions aimed at annexation of the occupied regions of Georgia, a new expression of which is the opening of a permanent Russian naval base in Ochamchire port," read the MPs' statement. Weeks earlier Abkhazia's de facto leader, Aslan Bzhania, had confirmed an agreement had been signed with the Kremlin on a permanent naval base in the Black Sea port of Ochamchire. Abkhazia is internationally recognised as part of Georgia, but it has been under the control of Russian and separatist forces since the 1990s. Georgia's foreign ministry has condemned Russia's plan as "a gross violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia", although authorities in Tbilisi have played down the significance of the permanent naval base, describing it as not an imminent threat.

"Even if they start constructing the base in Ochamchire, it will take them at least three years," Nikoloz Samkharadze, the head of Georgia's Foreign Relations Committee told the BBC. "We are concentrated on imminent threats, and not on threats that might come in the future." He says the government is more focused on Georgian citizens being killed or kidnapped by Russian forces near the line of occupation that separates Georgia from its breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. "We do not observe any moves to start construction in Ochamchire," BBC Newsnight and Verify have

analysed satellite imagery that indicates new dredging and construction work at the port, since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

According to Abkhazia's de facto administration, that dredging work meant Ochamchire could now host larger cargo ships with a displacement volume of up to 13,000 tonnes. Ukraine's intelligence agency claims the work is to enable battleships from Russia's Black Sea Fleet to use Ochamchire as a safe harbour. If Russia were to use Ochamchire to attack Ukraine or if Ukraine chose to target Russian naval boats there, then Georgia would become party to the war, says Natia Seskuria of the Royal United Services Institute. "If Putin needs Georgia to be involved or in some ways be dragged in this war, he will do it if it's in his interests and he has all the capabilities to put pressure on Georgia, unfortunately," she said. Not only does that play into Georgian fears of being sucked into the war, but there are concerns that Tbilisi's own plans for a mega-infrastructure project on the Black Sea coast could be impeded.

A deep sea port in Anaklia is the nearest Georgian town to Russian-controlled Abkhazia. The Anaklia project is seen as vital for boosting commerce along the so-called Middle Corridor, the fastest route to deliver cargo between Asia and Europe. The route avoids using Russia as a land conduit, and the World Bank has estimated that it could halve travel times and triple trade volumes by 2030.

The Kremlin has long opposed it as a US project and Russia's foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, has claimed that US navy submarines would be able to dock there. But while Georgia has a broadly pro-EU population, its government has a complex relationship with Moscow. In 2020 the Georgian government cancelled a contract to build the deep-sea port, which had been awarded to a consortium backed by Western banks and investors. Mamuka Khazaradze, who

led the original Anaklia Development Consortium, says the government in Tbilisi derailed the port's development to appease Moscow. "The biggest problem we have with this government [is] they are serving Russian interests, because Anaklia is not in the Russian interest to be built," he said. And he said that the proof of it was the Russian base being built only 30km (18 miles) up the Black Sea coast. His consortium has taken the Georgian government to international arbitration.

"We dredged five million cubic metres of sand, 11 metres deep. We put in 3,500km of pipes," said Mr Khazaradze who heads the opposition party Lelo. The Georgian government has insisted the deep-sea port plan will be revived, and the winning bid will be announced shortly. Nikoloz Samkharadze, who chairs the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, said accusations that his government was pro-Russian were "absurd". "How on Earth can a pro-Russian government sign an association agreement with the European Union, get a visa-free regime with the European Union, and candidate status for the European Union?" Mr Samkharadze said. But he said Tbilisi was obliged to tread carefully with its northern neighbour. "We have had three wars with Russia in the past 30 years. We do not have the Nato security umbrella. We do not have the EU's economic solidarity." He suggested Russia was using Ochamchire to threaten Georgia over its ambitions to join the EU.

A final decision on Georgia's bid for EU candidate status is expected from European leaders at their December summit this week. "Russians... always use the best timing in order to undermine first Georgia's stability, and second Georgia's quest for European integration," he said. "They try to show to our European and American partners that they are masters in the South Caucasus, so they can do whatever they want."

## ‘Fighting is all around’: Myanmar faces deepening humanitarian crisis

YANGON: In late October, Sai Lam had an uneasy feeling. The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), an ethnic armed organisation operating in Myanmar's northern Shan State, was massing forces near his village on the Chinese border and he sensed that fighting was imminent. So the 27-year-old, who had already secured a job in the construction sector in China's Yunnan province in order to support his family, decided to expedite his plan.

He travelled from his village near the town of Mong Ko up to the border gate of Muse, and then crossed into China using a temporary border pass. His wife and mother, meanwhile, stayed behind to look after their farmland and newborn baby. Days later, the MNDAA, together with its allies the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Arakan Army, launched Operation 1027, a joint offensive on military outposts in northern Shan State. Sai Lam's family were forced to flee at dawn on October 27. They returned 10 days later, after the MNDAA had declared control over Mong Ko and the surrounding villages. Although the situation around Mong Ko has calmed, the military has relentlessly attacked other areas where it has lost ground, including the nearby town of Namkham, which it bombed on December 1 and again a week later. Worrying that the military could also attack Mong Ko, Sai Lam

wants to bring his family to China, but they are unable to flee, because the roads out are now inaccessible due to the fighting. "They are still very scared and alert at all times because the military often fires heavy artillery and bombs from jets," he said.

Despite the challenges his family has endured, Sai Lam continues to support the ongoing resistance to the military, which seized power from the elected government in February 2021. "We are being oppressed, so we don't want the military to win," he said. "We expect that if the military loses and local resistance forces gain control, we may have more freedom and opportunities." He and others interviewed for this report have been given pseudonyms due to the risk of military retaliation. Since the start of Operation 1027, Myanmar has seen the most significant escalation in hostilities across the country since the coup, which sparked a widespread armed uprising. Resistance forces have in recent weeks managed to overtake hundreds of military outposts, including strategic border crossings with China and India. They are also closing in on Loikaw, the Karenni State capital, as well as Laukkai, an enclave notorious for transnational human trafficking and online scams. Analysts now say that the military is at its weakest since the coup, with some even suggesting its imminent collapse. But alongside

resistance gains, there has been a serious humanitarian cost. From October 26 to December 8, more than 578,000 people were newly displaced on top of nearly 2 million who were already displaced before the surge in fighting according to the United Nations, which said 363 civilians had been killed and 461 injured since late October. And at a time when UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations have struggled to reach affected populations, it is community-based organisations, charity groups and local volunteers who are taking life-threatening risks to help civilians.

"We all know that doing this kind of work is very dangerous, but if we don't do it, there's no one," said Nway Thitsar, who works with a Christian faith-based organisation operating in northern Shan State to deliver food aid. "I can hear the sounds of bombing and gunfire all the time," she added. "[But] I'm still safe enough that I can help people facing danger." Even before the start of Operation 1027, Myanmar was experiencing unprecedented levels of armed conflict and a humanitarian crisis. Within months of the coup, autonomy-seeking ethnic armed organisations had joined forces with newly-formed groups, commonly known as people's defence forces, to drive the military from power and establish a federal democracy. In response, the military

scaled up its use of "four cuts," a strategy it has long employed against ethnic minorities in the country's border areas and which seeks to starve resistance groups of food, funds, intelligence and recruits by going after their civilian support base. Since the coup, it has bombed schools, hospitals and displacement camps across the country, burned tens of thousands of homes, and committed widespread atrocities including torture and mass executions, according to the UN. In March this year, its human rights office found that the military's use of four cuts was driving a "perpetual human rights crisis" across Myanmar.

The crisis has only worsened in recent weeks. In Shan State, some of the most intense fighting has been near Laukkai, one of several criminal hubs along Myanmar's eastern border run by Chinese gangs. Capitalising on China's desire to crack down on the industry, which also involves the large-scale trafficking of Chinese nationals, resistance groups have declared combating cybercrime as one of their goals. As they close in on Laukkai, the city has seen a mass exodus, but those fleeing face a perilous journey. On November 11 and 22, shelling killed multiple civilians as they attempted to leave by car. There are also few places of refuge. About 40,000 people have taken shelter in an autonomous region run by the United Wa State Army,

Myanmar's most powerful ethnic armed organisation, but most displaced people are stranded.

About 50,000 are camping under tarpaulin sheets at the border, where China built an electrified metal fence topped with razor wire during the pandemic. On November 25, Chinese authorities fired tear gas to disperse the displaced, but most have nowhere else to go. Some people also remain trapped in Laukkai, where many are squatting in unfinished construction sites, according to Nway Thitsar, whose organisation is working to send them food in spite of roadblocks, checkpoints, telecommunications outages and active conflict. Their funds are also being siphoned off on inflated fuel costs. "If we go to one site which has around 100 migrant workers, the cost of petrol to get there could have fed another 100 people," said Nway Thitsar. "We feel like it's a waste." Many UN agencies and international organisations, meanwhile, remain confined to their offices in northern Shan State's largest city, Lashio, according to a national staff member of an INGO who spoke on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak on behalf of his organisation. He said that safety precautions and operational challenges had left many international organisations unable to respond to needs in the worst-affected areas.

"Our organisation avoids risks, so we only work inside Lashio," he said. Most international organisations and UN agencies, he added, regard the military as the de facto authority and rely on its permission to travel or distribute aid even though it commonly restricts access. "They only go and do activities which the military allows," he said. Fighting has also escalated in Myanmar's southeastern Karenni State and in northwestern Chin State, where, as in other parts of the country, the military has responded with disproportionate force. As soon as resistance forces began capturing military bases in the Karenni State capital of Loikaw, the military began bombing the city and surrounding areas in an ongoing campaign that has displaced thousands and resulted in the destruction of the city's market and other infrastructure. In total, Karenni resistance forces claim that since they scaled up their operations on November 11, the military has conducted at least 477 air strikes on the Loikaw area. In Chin State, it has acted similarly, bombing the towns of Laliempi, Paletwa and Rezaia following resistance gains, and causing significant hardship for residents even though most had already fled. Salai Thomas, who serves as secretary of the Zotung Federal Council, a resistance-affiliated civilian administration in central and southern Chin State, said the military's air attack on Rezaia on November 29 destroyed 60 homes. — Agencies



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## Ombudsman office, a no-profit shop

**W**AFAQI Mohtasib (Federal Ombudsman) Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has directed the investigation officers and the heads of federal agencies to ensure timely implementation of Wafaqi Mohtasib's decisions since no slackness would be tolerated on this count. According to him, the Federal Ombudsman has so far decided about 178000 complaints since January, and the number of complaints likely touch an all-time high figure of 190000 by the year-end. The National Ombudsman noted that his office is a poor man's court and its main purpose was to redress the grievances of oppressed and 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. According to him, the officers of Wafaqi Mohtasib had put in their best to reach out to the public to resolve their complaints through Khulli Katchehries and Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD), without the allocation of additional budget and manpower.

Founded in 1983, the Federal Ombudsman Office is the least known and poorly performed institution of the State of Pakistan. Historically, the awareness about the role and task of the Ombudsman Office and accessibility to the office remained limited in a majority of areas, affecting its outreach and ability to address public grievances and play its role effectively. Meanwhile, insufficient infrastructure, limited authority, and no cooperation from the sister agencies and other government departments remained major hurdles in the service delivery of the Ombudsman secretariat throughout the past. Owing to these circumstances, the office became a ceremonial and flashy setup, while delay or failure in red-dressing public complaints led to a massive backlog and ill-repute of the institution. Meanwhile, the modus operandi and working style of the federal Ombudsman office include holding Khulli katchehries and Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) which means mediating talks/ agreement between petitioner and accused to settle their mutual issue. Plea bargains or IRDs do not substitute justice for the victim rather it is like trading of justice and facilitation of a give and take deal between victim and criminals. Historically, such informal methods of dispute resolution should not and must not be encouraged by the state institutions particularly courts and adjudicators, that meant for justice delivery and service to the public. In fact, a plea bargain or IRD is a failure of the system, during which a victim joins hands with the oppressor in a state of duress, compulsion, and disappointment from the laid down mechanism and state institutions.

Unfortunately, Pakistan's state institutions and public offices including basic utility providers, the Police, the FIA, the Anti-Corruption Establishment, the Federal and Provincial Ombudsman Offices, the Judiciary, and local governments often publish fake data and bogus statistics regarding their performance and achievements, whereas all institutions failed in providing relief to the public in their respective domains and current day modern technology is being used by them for shedding off their workload and elude their responsibility instead of using those blessings to enhance their professionalism and improve their service to the public. Unfortunately, online portals, cell phone messaging, cameras and computers, Khulli Katcheries, and the latest innovations could not benefit the public, as those innovations are being used by government departments for bookwork to avoid accountability. Meanwhile, those modern technologies and sane mechanisms do not operate mechanically but are being handled by corrupt government officials, who do not owe a kind heart or a sagacious mind to use their position in service to humanity and their countrymen.

The Chief Ombudsman should re-evaluate the data provided by his juniors as the public is very disappointed with the so-called poor man's court which is practically a poor court, with limited authority, an understaffed and poorly managed institution. There is a dire need for stringent reforms within the Ombudsman setup, together with induction, and training of manpower, work methodology, case management, and strict implementation of recommendations along with robust outreach to the public to ensure broader accessibility and awareness among the masses. So, the idea of an Ombudsman could work in true letter and spirit and play an effective role in mitigation of public grievances and improve service delivery of the government institutions in the country.

## Trade in terrorism and AfPak ties

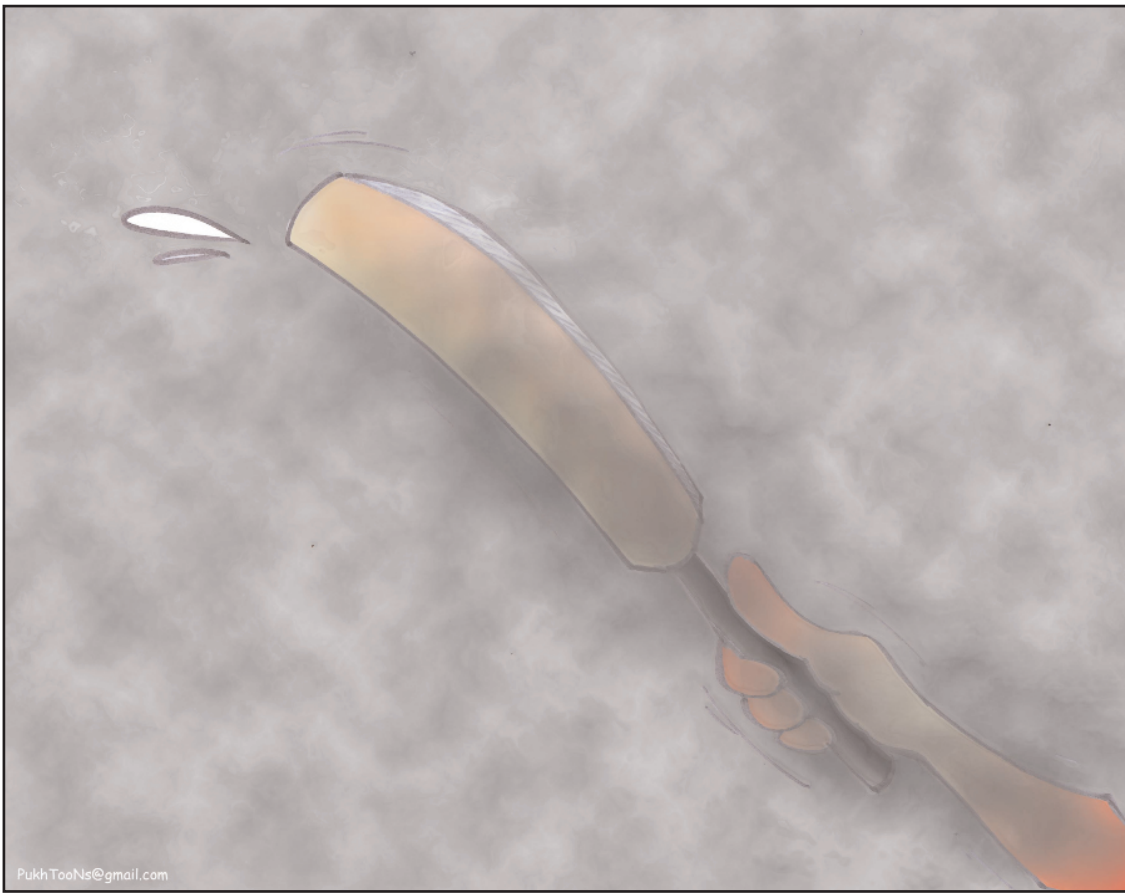
**PAKISTAN'S Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has urged Afghan authorities to hand over TTP Leadership to Pakistan especially those involved in terrorist activities inside Pakistan. According to her, Pakistan has sufficient evidence against them and the state will take stern action against them according to its laws. The spokesperson said the Afghan government should fulfill its obligations and not allow the use of its land against Pakistan.**

Terrorism has shaped into a grave challenge for Pakistan, as the ruthless terrorist outfits have launched a fresh terrorism offensive against the people and the state of Pakistan. The country has faced significant security challenges, particularly along its western border with Afghanistan as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Erstwhile FATA has been the primary target of terrorist activities over the past months that caused significant human and economic losses to Pakistan. The bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have suffered an extreme blow, after Pakistan publicly blamed the Taliban leadership for taking lenient actions against TTP miscreants presently camped in its country. The Pakistani authorities also accused Afghanistan of ignoring their concerns by resisting taking effective action against anti-Pakistan elements inside Afghanistan. The foreign ministry has delivered a strong demarche to the Afghan Charge D'Affaires over the recent deadly attack in Dera Ismail Khan. While the government of Pakistan demanded that the Afghan government must denounce this act at the highest level, conduct an investigation into it, and take stern action against those responsible.

The government of Pakistan has once again renewed its calls for Afghan interim rulers not to withhold and take decisive actions against the Pakistan's proscribed militant outfits amassed in their country, so peace prevails in the region. The courtesy, brotherhood, and good neighborliness are reciprocity, a two-way traffic, and vice versa. It is high time that the Afghan rulers must review their priorities vis-a-vis terrorism, the TTP, Pakistan, and the interest of the people of Afghanistan. The people and the government of Pakistan are the biggest bidder for regional peace, and prosperity and resolute supporter of cordial bilateral relations with Afghanistan, but all that good neighbourliness will not be at the cost of security and territorial sovereignty of Pakistan. In fact, non interference in each other's nations, smooth and cooperative ties are in the best interest of both countries. As soon as the leaders across the durand line grasp this reality, it would be better for their nations, and the whole region.

### Important Notice

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## Israel should learn from French mistakes in Algeria

Moncef Khane

**ON May 7, 1945, Nazi Germany signed the act of military surrender to the Allies. The next day, people all over the world, including in occupied Algeria, took to the streets to celebrate the end of World War II.**

An estimated 134,000 Algerians fought with the Allies and 18,000 of them gave their lives to defeat Germany. And so, on May 8, 1945, in Setif, a city east of Algiers, some 5000 "moslems", as Algerians were called by the colonial power to erase their national identity, marched in celebration. But they also marched clamouring for the end of over a century-long French colonial rule over their country. French police seized banners and eventually opened fire, killing demonstrators. Clashes erupted with 102 French settlers killed.

In the following fortnight, a blood frenzy overtook French authorities and settlers who massacred some 45,000 Algerians. Rural areas around Setif and the town of Guelma believed to be sympathetic to Algerian nationalists were bombed by the French air force. Settlers avenged their compatriots by hunting down and lynching "the savages".

To establish themselves in Algeria and legitimise their presence there, the colonists had dehumanised the indigenous population to the extent of perceiving them as nothing more than vermin. This allowed French colonists and their occupation army to kill Algerians in their thousands, with little or no moral qualms.

The Setif massacre brought the colonial power another nine years of relative peace but in the end, it only served to harden the Algerian resolve to be free. On November 1, 1954, they embarked on their ultimate war of resistance against French occupation. After eight years of "a savage war of peace" as British historian Alistair Horne put it, Algeria won its independence but at a heavy price: The war claimed the lives of some 1.5 million Algerians; some 20 percent of Algeria's "Moslems".

What is happening in Palestine today, predominantly in Gaza but also in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, is of course not

identical to the events that marked the end of French rule in Algeria. Yet there are many similarities between them, as the modus operandi of most colonial enterprises follows a set pattern. Colonisers dehumanise indigenous populations to keep them pliant and to justify the use of brutal force against them when they try to resist their subjugation.

They ensure that the colonised are powerless militarily, but often make the mistake of assuming this lack of military prowess also means that they lack the strength and resolve to resist oppression and defeat occupation. When they eventually realise their misjudgment and acknowledge that they cannot sustain their position indefinitely, they intensify their brutality to preserve the status quo for as long as possible. This is what happened in occupied Algeria in the latter years of French rule, and this is what we are witnessing in occupied Palestine today. When France responded to the killing of 102 settlers by carpet-bombing villages and killing tens of thousands of people, it was hoping to achieve much more than avenging the deaths of its citizens and eliminating "terrorists". It was using extreme violence to eliminate all native resistance. It wanted to break their will to resist.

Today, Israel is following a similar trajectory. It is now apparent that the goal of Israel's war on Gaza is not to avenge hundreds of Israeli civilians and military personnel killed on October 7.

If vengeance were the primary motive, the killing of over 8,000 Palestinian children and babies and reducing most of the Strip into rubble would have likely been enough for Israel to call it a day. Killing all "terrorists", completely annihilating Hamas to ensure the safety of the colony, does not seem to be the primary goal of Israel's war either. Israel's leaders undoubtedly know that even if their military could somehow eliminate all "terrorists" in Gaza, it would not be able to eliminate Palestinian aspirations for liberty and resolve to resist the occupation in

every way possible. So if the aim is not to avenge the deaths of its citizens, or "eliminate terrorists", what is Israel trying to achieve?

Israel is executing a multifaceted plan to protect, entrench and expand its colonial enterprise. It goes something like this: First, break Palestinian will and spirit. Show them that Israel can do as it pleases, with total impunity, and in full view of an impotent world. That no matter how much violence and humiliation they experience, neither fellow Arabs nor the so-called international community would come to the rescue. That not even the sight of premature Palestinian babies suffocating in powerless incubators or the thought of thousands of children wasting away under the rubble could make the Western powers rethink their support of Israel.

Second, once their will is sufficiently weakened, order Palestinians to leave their homes and their land. Order them to move, on foot, towards some vaguely defined "safe zone". Once the displacement is complete, declare that Hamas is in their midst and bomb the "safe zone" anyway. Repeat the cycle until the entire Strip is destroyed, and all surviving Palestinians are pushed out into the Egyptian Sinai. Israel will make sure to complete this plan unless, of course, the Western governments, first and foremost the US, have a change of heart and intervene to make the carnage stop.

When France was working through its own bloody plan to maintain its occupation in Algeria, then US President John F Kennedy made one such intervention. He clearly voiced his belief that French rule over Algeria was not sustainable in the long term, condemned colonialism, and openly rooted for Algeria's independence. In the end, the US's principled stance on the issue during the Kennedy era played an important role in the success of Algeria's liberation struggle. Kennedy was open about his support for Algerian independence even before becoming president.

In July 1957, as a young Senator, he delivered a his-

toric speech criticising the Eisenhower administration's political and military support for French colonialism and called on the US to support Algerian self-determination. "The most powerful single force in the world today is neither communism nor capitalism, neither the H-bomb nor the guided missile - it is man's eternal desire to be free and independent," he said. "Thus the single most important test of American foreign policy today is how we meet the challenge of imperialism, what we do to further man's desire to be free."

He went on to explain how the French insistence to rule over Algeria, against the will of the Algerian people, is harming the US, NATO and the entire global community, and concluded that "[t]he time has come for the United States to face the harsh realities of the situation and to fulfill its responsibilities as the leader of the free world - in the UN, in NATO, in the administration of our aid programs and in the exercise of our diplomacy - in shaping a course toward political independence for Algeria". Kennedy knew France was fighting a war it can never win, and wanted the US to be honest with its ally. Today, the history is repeating itself. A leading US ally, Israel, is engaged in a war it cannot win against a people suffering under its occupation. But unlike Kennedy, the current US President Joe Biden is not living up to the occasion.

Rather than telling Israel the hard truth, that it can not extinguish the Palestinian people's "eternal desire to be free and independent", President Biden is unconditionally backing the ongoing colonial assault on Palestine. Indeed, just as France was not "defending itself" when it killed hundreds of thousands of Algerians to stop them from achieving independence, Israel is not "defending itself" against Palestinians living under its occupation. It is waging a modern-day colonial war, trying to claim more land, and seemingly committing genocide in the process. Biden should learn from Kennedy, end its support for Israel's unwinable war and war crimes, and remain on the right side of history.

## Why Europe is not free to relate to China

Yanis Varoufakis

**AS the 24th EU-China Summit concluded on Thursday, it is natural to want to look behind the declarations and official speeches to identify the deeper forces shaping the European Union's relationship with China and its policies toward China. But to understand the nature of these forces, it is crucial to go back to the very beginning, August 1971, when the United States ended the Bretton Woods international financial system designed by itself.**

The reason we need to go that far back in time is that the EU's business model was shaped in response to that tumultuous transition from a fixed exchange rate system to the era of financialized capitalism. Similarly, China's momentous rise, and its evolving links to Europe, need to be examined under the same light.

Under the Bretton Woods system, fixed exchange rates between European currencies and the dollar (i.e., Europe's dollarization) worked well as long as the US maintained a trade surplus with the European countries and Japan - in the sense that the dollars pumped into Europe would migrate back to US soil - courtesy of US net exports to Europe. However, once the US became a deficit country, sometime in the late 1960s, Bretton Woods was no longer sustainable and was speedily replaced by what I call a Dark Deal that Washington surreptitiously offered Europe and Japan.

The Dark Deal was rather simple: "We shall keep demand for your products high, using our trade deficit. In return, you will voluntarily invest your profits in our FIRE - finance, insurance and real estate sectors." Thus, the US dollar became a glorified IOU. The US could use it to buy more or less everything that Europe's and Japan's factories could produce, paying in dollars that European and Japanese capitalists had no alternative but to invest in the US' FIRE. Why call this Dark Deal? Because, along with fabulous riches for US and European capitalists, it yielded permanent wage repression in net exporting countries, such as Germany, a slow burning recession in the rest of Europe, and a massive industrial decline in the heartlands of the US.

China's momentous rise in the 1990s found the US and the EU in this strange relationship. China's economy benefited from Washington's Dark Deal which was now extended to export entire factory lines from the US to China, whose output would then be exported to the US, with US citizens paying for it in dollars that their Chinese recipients would then invest in Wall Street, for example, in US treasury bills. And what would Wall Street do with these savings? They would invest much of European, Japanese and Chinese profits into new capital equipment around the world. In short, the US recycled other people's moneys and kept a significant portion of the resulting profits and rents.

This US-centered global recycling mechanism broke down in 2008 once and for all. What had happened was that, on the back of the billions of dollars of European and Asian profits rushing into Wall Street on a daily basis, the US and UK financiers built tsunamis of unsustainable bets (also called structured derivatives) which, inevitably, crashed and burned, first when Lehman Brothers collapsed and then

in a vicious domino effect that brought down the entire North Atlantic and European banking system.

At that point, the West practiced universal austerity for the majority and huge money printing on behalf of finance and its Big Business clients. The result was a superb recovery for financial markets, but a collapse of productive capital investments (as business could see that the majority could not afford pricey new goods), depression for the West's working class, soulcrushing levels of inequality, and the rise of the racist ultraright both in Europe and the US.

Two things saved Western capitalism: the Western central banks' money printing already mentioned and ... China. Immediately after Lehman's collapse, the Chinese government wisely boosted investment to replace the anticipated loss of foreign demand with domestic investment. Thus, China was immunized from the Western financial crisis virus. In the process, China's investment spree played a major role in stabilizing both the US and the problematic eurozone.

This is the historical background against which to understand the current relationship between China and the EU: The EU needs China much more than China needs the EU, but it is restrained by the US in its relationship with China. To see this, note that before the 2008 crisis hit Europe, emanating from Wall Street, the very foundations of the EU were faulty, for unlike the US, which has a Federal Treasury, a fully unified banking system and a federal aggregate investment program (which, of course, includes the large budget of its mighty military-industrial complex), Europe has none of that. As a result, after 2008, with Greece being the canary in the coal mine, as European populations were being immersed in harsh austerity, most European governments were allowed to sink into unpayable debt, leading to investment levels lower than the already low levels of the US and far lower than those of China.

Fifteen years later, we can see the results. In 2008, Europeans earned, in aggregate, 10 percent more than the US citizens. By 2022, the US citizens were earning 26 percent more than Europeans. Moreover, Europeans are becoming poorer not just collectively but also privately. What is worse is that for fifteen years, since 2009, Europe has failed to invest, unlike China or the US, into the technologies of the future: batteries, solar power, microchips and artificial intelligence. Most importantly, while the US and China have invested massively in the new cloud-based capital that grants its owners great power over the emerging nexus of Big Tech and digital financial transactions, Europe has not.

By adding an East-West divide to Europe's existing North-South divide, and by boosting inordinately its energy costs, the crisis in Ukraine has diminished even further Europe's autonomy to choose its own policies vis-a-vis China independently of the will of the US. In conclusion, when the European and Chinese officials meet at the 24th EU-China Summit, Europe's representatives will have far fewer degrees of freedom to choose their negotiating position than they once had. Europe is not what it used to be. And that is good for the peoples of neither Europe nor China.

*The China Daily*

## BRI a story of commerce, connectivity and culture

Andy Heng

**THE Belt and Road Initiative was first proposed by President Xi Jinping at the Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan in September 2013. In November 2014, when our bank's vice-chairman was in town, a journalist from Hong Kong asked him his view on the BRI. With great humility, he turned and asked, "what is BRI?"**

So much has changed since. In November 2017, Francis Yeoh, chairman of Malaysia-based YTL conglomerate gave a speech on the initiative at the Fortune 500 Forum. Yeoh compared the initiative with the Marshall Plan, where massive funds were set aside to rebuild Europe after World War II, with the focus on infrastructure. Granted, the analogy is far from perfect as the Marshall Plan was conceived immediately after WWII while the BRI has come up during peacetime. Yet, Yeoh's speech galvanized us all, builders, bankers, policymakers.

In 2019, Bruno Macaes, a

geopolitical expert, published a book on the initiative, titled Belt and Road: A Chinese World Order. In it, a former Portugal writes that "the best image of the Belt and Road is not the trains crossing the Eurasia super-continent, or the ports and industrial parks opening up along the way. It's the cities being built up from scratch. These are what will change the physical and human landscape of the planet, creating new ways of life, new ideas, new adventures".

Stephen Green, former chairman of HSBC, recommends Macaes' book as "essential reading for us all." Beijing celebrated the 10th anniversary of the initiative at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation on Oct 17 and 18. China Daily reported on the glowing benefits of the BRI, while SCMP and Lianhe Zaobao were more nuanced. The Western media were less generous. One (Financial Times) questioned the wisdom of the BRI's invest-

ments. Euronews alleged that the initiative's loans drive debt-ridden countries to bankruptcy. Whatever happened to balanced media coverage? The diametrically opposing reports reminded me of the old saying, "everyone did as he saw fit". But what is the truth?

The initiative deserves better storytelling. As a banker and a student of history, I would begin with the 3Cs - Commerce, Connectivity and Culture, no puns intended with gold, gospel and glory used in the 15th century Portugal. Commerce is a good place to start. Between 2013 and 2022, two-way investments between China and the Belt and Road countries topped \$380 billion, of which, China's outbound direct investments exceeded \$240 billion, benefitting 67,000 enterprises in the world. Chinese firms in the United States hire 89 percent of local employees, creating

thousands of jobs, feeding millions of families. Using Nobel laureates Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo's phrase, these are "good economics for hard times". The second "C" - Connectivity. The Piraeus Port in Athens, the China-Laos Railway, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway are some Belt and Road projects that connect cities and peoples. One cannot over-emphasize the importance of connectivity in facilitating commerce and cooperation. Aaron Friedberg, a Princeton University professor who believes that China and the US are contesting for supremacy over Asia, highlights the power of the initiative's connectivity in this manner, "depending on which ones (countries) are included, these countries may already comprise close to two-thirds of the world's people and nearly one-third of its total GDP".

Kishore Mahbubani,

touches people deeply. They will forget everything else, but they will not forget how you treat them in their identity."

Upon his return to Chang'an, Xuan Zang documented his sojourn in a historic travelogue, Da-Tang Xiyu Ji (Great Tang Records on the Western Region), detailing the geography, economic activities and climate. And in the past years, Chinese leaders and Indian leaders visited each other's hometowns and enhanced understanding about exchanges between civilizations.

To conclude, how does one see the Belt and Road Initiative? This is the answer of Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema in his interview with CGTN in September, "who would not want to be part of the global civilization? Who would not want to uplift his own people from poverty? Who would not want to help their women who walk 5 kilometers for water every day? Who would not want to be part of this great story?"



# Harvard is right to back its president

**L**AST week, the presidents of several preeminent American universities testified before Congress about the waves of antisemitism hitting their campuses in the wake of the Israel-Hamas war, and what they are doing (or not doing) to prevent and punish it. It was an abject disaster for the presidents, who represented the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania.

They walked into predictable traps, making themselves look both wholly unprepared and insufficiently concerned with antisemitism. Saddled with the baggage of previous encroachments on free speech under the guise of student emotional safety, and wading into hotly contested rhetorical waters about Israel and Gaza, the three presidents struggled to articulate a convincing position in support of free expression. Instead, they came back to a few themes, including that context matters when it comes to determining permissible speech on campus.

This has been met with much backlash. After enormous pressure from donors, University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill has resigned, and there are calls for other university presidents to do the same. And certainly, all three women failed at anticipating the predictable outcome of these hearings.

But still: On the merits, they are correct. Context does matter. And permitted speech should be as broad as possible. GOP Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York was arguably the most effective questioner at the disastrous hearings - or, really, the most effective trap-setter. An exchange she had with Magill quickly went viral. In it, Stefanik asked Magill, "does calling for the genocide of Jews violate Penn's rules or code of conduct? Yes or no?" She was referring to the now-common pro-Palestine chants "from the river to the sea" and the use of the word "intifada," which Stefanik suggested should be punished under university codes of conduct.

Magill answered: "If the speech turns into conduct, it can be harassment. Yes." Stefanik pushed back: "I am asking, specifically calling

for the genocide of Jews, does that constitute bullying or harassment?" After another brief exchange, Magill said, "It is a context-dependent decision." When Stefanik turned her questioning to Harvard president Claudine Gay, asking, "Does calling for the genocide of Jews violate Harvard's rules of bullying and harassment? Yes or no?" Gay responded, "It can be depending on the context."

At the heart of this issue is whether universities should punish speech that many find abhorrent,

**And the answer is: They should limit it as seldom as possible, and allow speech to be as broad as possible. That includes speech that students find uncomfortable, offensive or upsetting. It does not include speech that threatens or harasses or incites.**

but that does not cross the line into direct threats or incitement to violence. Instead, there have been pro-Palestinian movements that have used widespread and popular slogans with contested meanings. For example, "from the river to the sea" is broadly understood as promoting freedom for Palestinians from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Some who use it say they mean a single state in what is now Israel where Jews and Arabs live peacefully side by side; others say they mean freedom of movement and full rights for Palestinians; others, including the terrorist group Hamas, use it to mean an Islamist state in place of Israel, ostensibly with Jews pushed out or killed.

The replacement of Israel with a single peaceful state is a pipe dream, and that the end of Israel would mean the end of a large Jewish presence in the region - mass expulsion at best, mass murder quite likely. So, I am sympathetic to the horror so many feel when they hear this slogan chanted. The demise of Israel could very well be another Jewish genocide. The possible outcome of a slogan with various interpretations is not, though, the same thing as calling for a genocide. And, in any case, the question shouldn't be about my feelings, or Stefanik's feelings or

even the feelings of students on campus. It should be about where, when and why administrators limit campus speech. And the answer is: They should limit it as seldom as possible, and allow speech to be as broad as possible. That includes speech that students find uncomfortable, offensive or upsetting. It does not include speech that threatens or harasses or incites.

Obviously, these can be difficult lines to draw. But they should be drawn as narrowly as they can be. It does not seem reasonable to say

that any student calling for Palestinian freedom from the river to the sea is harassing or inciting violence against Jews. Students who care about the lives and futures of Jews have good reason to feel badly shaken by the rise of antisemitism around the US and in the rest of the world. Everyone should demand that our institutions, including those of higher learning, step in to prevent and punish antisemitic harassment, vandalism and violence. All of our communities should disavow antisemitism: Reject it, challenge it, ostracize and loudly condemn those who engage in it.

But we should not demand that college administrators punish speech - even speech that some find ugly and offensive. Ironically - or, more accurately, hypocritically - many conservatives were making this same argument when the ugly speech being penalized or shut down (or often not penalized or shut down) was used to attack racial minorities, and when progressive students were asking their schools to do more to punish speech they found offensive.

The standard conservative line was that liberal professors and "woke" politics on the part of sensitive snowflake college kids were infringing on free expression, even

as conservatives were at the same time banning books and pushing "Don't Say Gay" legislation. They had a sliver of a point, though: According to the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, an organization that pushes for expansive free speech norms, many college students have been punished or threatened with discipline for their expression; The New York Times has reported on an instance in which the University of Tennessee punished a student for "vulgar" expression before she filed a federal lawsuit against the university. Many progressives have urged universities to do more about hate speech, and administrators have too often shrugged when mobs, hecklers and protesters shut down scheduled speakers. Now, it's clear that key conservatives see an opening, as university administrators decline to universally punish or curtail pro-Palestinian speech.

It's all incredibly cynical, aimed less at protecting Jewish students and more at undermining important institutions, particularly those deemed "liberal." The right-wing war on education is long-standing, and the Trump-era assault on American institutions well-established. This latest round of "gotcha" leveled at university presidents isn't about protecting Jewish students. It's about eroding trust in institutions of higher learning, and scoring political points. It's also coming at a time when pro-Palestinian speech is being widely curtailed, punished and threatened. After Magill resigned, Stefanik's response made clear she thinks this is a dark game: "One down. Two to go," she said.

One of those she wants to go is Harvard President Claudine Gay, who said, "We embrace a commitment to free expression even of views that are objectionable, offensive, hateful." In the midst of the backlash against Gay, Harvard's board backed its president. And that is exactly what universities should do: Embrace a commitment to free expression and impose limitations only where that expression is dangerous - not simply objectionable, offensive or even hateful. It's a standard they should have stood up for sooner. But it's not too late for all of us to endorse it now.

CNN

# How Arab eco-normalisation of Israel covers up its crimes

Manal Shqair, Hamza Hamouchene & Hafawa Rabhi

**A**S world leaders gathered in Dubai for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28), Israeli President Isaac Herzog and a delegation of two dozen Israeli officials were allowed to join them. That is despite the fact that Israel is not only committing genocide in Gaza, but also ecocide of devastating proportions.

COP28 is yet another venue Israel has used to greenwash its image and solidify its normalisation with Arab states. Indeed, Herzog met with a number of Arab leaders who have chosen to normalise relations with Israel and have pursued joint "green initiatives" with Israeli companies. So-called environmentally friendly collaborative projects between Israel and Arab states constitute a form of eco-normalisation - the use of "environmentalism" to greenwash and normalise Israeli oppression and environmental injustice.

This effectively extends Israeli green colonialism - which has been devastating Palestine for decades - into the rest of the Arab world. Resisting it must be part of Arab solidarity and struggle in support of the Palestinian cause. One prominent example of eco-normalisation is a United Arab Emirates-backed Israeli-Jordanian deal to exchange desalinated water for energy.

In November 2021, Jordan, Israel and the UAE signed a declaration of intent for Project Green and Project Blue, jointly known as Project Prosperity. It envisioned the construction of a 600MW solar power plant by Masdar, a UAE state-owned renewable energy company, on Jordanian territory to sell electricity to Israel and the expansion of an Israeli water desalination programme to export 200 million cubic metres of water to Jordan. The three countries intended to announce a concrete agreement on the implementation of the projects at the COP28 in the UAE, but ahead of the start of the conference, Jordanian foreign minister Ayman Safadi said that his country would not sign anything due to the war in Gaza. However, there has been no official announcement about the full termination of the deal. While the future of the project is uncertain at this time, it still has contributed to Israel's eco-normalisation. It has helped support an image of the country as a green technology pioneer "assisting" its "underdeveloped" neighbours suffering from the consequences of climate change.

The project effectively covers up Israel's responsibility for water scarcity in Jordan. Israel has been depleting its neighbour's water resources by usurping control over the Jordan River and restricting access to the resources of the Yarmouk River. It controls double the water share it should be entitled to under the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention and refuses to abide by previous sharing arrangements. Mekorot, the Israeli national water company, has played a leading role in depriving Jordan of its fair share of water. It has been diverting water from the Jordan River to Israeli communities, including ones in the Naqab desert, which is directly affecting water availability for Jordan. It also has created a water supply network for the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, depriving the native Palestinian population of adequate access to water resources and effectively imposing water apartheid on them. It has been enabled to do so by the Israeli military occupation and its Military Order 158 of 1967, which declares that Israel has full control over all water resources in the occupied territories and none can be developed without its permission - which, of course, Palestinians almost never receive.

Despite the leading role it is playing in pushing Jordan and the occupied West Bank towards water scarcity, Mekorot has been touted internationally as a "pioneer" in water desalination technology. Its participation in water projects, especially in the Global South, has contributed to Israel's greenwashing efforts. Those would

undoubtedly continue even as Israel triggers what is already shaping to be a water catastrophe in Gaza.

Even before the ongoing brutal war, the Gaza Strip was struggling with a major water crisis. It was estimated that 96 percent of the water in its aquifer was contaminated and unfit for human use. This was very much due to the fact that the siege Israel imposed on the Strip in 2007 had prevented proper water and wastewater management and treatment. Since mid-October, even the few existing wastewater and desalination facilities have become inoperable as Israel has cut off electricity and fuel supplies. In addition, the Israeli bombardment has targeted water pipes and sewers throughout Gaza. Experts in public health have raised concerns about the looming outbreak of infectious diseases, including waterborne diseases like cholera and typhoid. Israel's plan to flood tunnels under Gaza with seawater may lead to the further contamination

**In Gaza, before the war, Palestinians lived with just a few hours of electricity per day due to the Israeli siege. As part of the complete blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip since October 7, Israel has totally cut off electricity from reaching Gaza and targeted alternative sources of energy like solar panels. Even the solar panel systems operating in hospitals such as al-Shifa have been bombed. Israel's exploitation of Palestinian resources to the detriment of the Palestinian people masked in the form of "green projects" is a perfect illustration of green energy colonialism. Energy colonialism refers to companies and states plundering and exploiting the resources and land of impoverished countries and communities to generate energy for their own use and benefit.**

of underground water and soil, resulting in a water-related environmental and human disaster.

The eco-normalisation of Israel has also extended into the energy sector. A few months ahead of COP27, in August 2022, two Israeli companies, Enlight Renewable Energy (ENLT) and NewMed Energy, signed a memorandum of understanding to develop renewable energy projects in Jordan, Morocco, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain, as well as Saudi Arabia and Oman, which have not officially normalised relations with Israel. Their plans include the development, construction and operation of wind and solar power plants and energy storage. These projects, of course, bolster the image of Israel as a hub for creative renewable energy technologies and help greenwash its image.

Both Enlight and NewMed have been involved in projects that reinforce the Israeli occupation and apartheid. Enlight has two wind farm projects in the occupied and annexed Golan Heights and is developing another wind energy project in the northern part of the Naqab desert and the southern part of the occupied West Bank, in partnership with several illegal Israeli settlements. NewMed is a subsidiary of the Delek Group, which has been involved in gas exploration projects in disputed maritime areas, near Palestinian and Lebanese waters. It also owns a chain of petrol stations across illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank and Golan Heights and supplies fuel to the Israeli occupation forces. Of course, the native Palestinian and Syrian populations of these occupied territories do not benefit from Israeli energy projects and they are effectively denied sovereignty over their energy resources.

Palestinians inhabiting Area C have no access to the electricity grid in the area, which has been developed by Israel to serve Israeli illegal settlements. The Israeli authorities also refuse to issue them permits to set up solar panels, which could provide an alternative source of energy. In Gaza, before the war, Palestinians lived with just a few hours of electricity per day due to the Israeli

siege. As part of the complete blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip since October 7, Israel has totally cut off electricity from reaching Gaza and targeted alternative sources of energy like solar panels. Even the solar panel systems operating in hospitals such as al-Shifa have been bombed. Israel's exploitation of Palestinian resources to the detriment of the Palestinian people masked in the form of "green projects" is a perfect illustration of green energy colonialism.

Energy colonialism refers to companies and states plundering and exploiting the resources and land of impoverished countries and communities to generate energy for their own use and benefit. As we have argued in our book Dismantling Green Colonialism: Energy and Climate Justice in the Arab Region, renewable energy colonialism is an extension of the colonial relations of plunder and dispossession. It effectively maintains the same political, economic

# Dutch Far-Right victory shows time on Putin's side in Ukraine

**T**HIS Sunday, viewers across Russia saw state television celebrate the "stunning" victory of far-right populist Geert Wilders in last week's Dutch elections. With his party winning 37 out of 150 parliamentary seats - 12 more than the center-left GL/PVDA in second place - the result came as a shock for Europe and good news for the Kremlin.

Wilders, who rose to notoriety with proposals to ban the Quran and close mosques, has shown an affinity for President Vladimir Putin's Russia. In 2018, four years after 193 Dutch nationals were killed in the downing of flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine, he traveled to Moscow and met with senior Russian politicians, "proudly" wearing a pin heralding Dutch-Russian friendship. A spokesperson for the center-left D66 party called him "Putin's useful naïf" for the visit, in which Wilders praised Putin for "standing up for the Russian people." Today, Wilders believes that the Netherlands must end its military support for Ukraine. His Party for Freedom (PVV) - of which he is the only member - declares in its manifesto that the Netherlands should "not send our money and defense equipment such as F16s to Ukraine." Instead, it says, the Dutch should "keep it for our own armed forces."

Wilders has long been highly critical of the Netherlands' governing centrist coalition, which has taken a strong stance on the war. Outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte, a strong favorite to become the next Secretary-General of NATO, pushed the US to step up its supplies of material such as tanks. Elsewhere, Rutte's government took the lead as the largest found-

ing member of a coalition providing Ukraine with F16 jets. A Wilders premiership would change that, turning the Netherlands' staunch defense of Ukraine into skepticism, perhaps even jeopardizing the promised dozens of fighter jets Ukraine desperately needs. Whether Wilders' ideas become policy will depend on whether he manages to form a new government, and who his partners would be if successful. Despite having won the most seats in a chamber where two-thirds are held by other right-wing parties, gaining the support of a majority of parliamentarians will not be easy. One of the more likely coalition partners, the pro-Ukrainian, center-right Party of Freedom and Democracy (VVD), has already announced it would not enter into government with the PVV, instead choosing to support policies on a case-by-case basis.

The other major party on the right, Pieter Omtzigt's New Social Contract, supports military and financial aid for Ukraine, NATO membership for Kyiv, and a tribunal for Russian war criminals in The Hague. A failure by Wilders to form a new government would probably lead to new elections, which could leave him in an even more powerful position. Even if Wilders does not manage to form a government straight away, his victory poses challenges. As in Slovakia, where Robert Fico replaced a pro-Ukrainian government, it deals a blow to the EU's promise that it would support Ukraine for "as long as it takes." Instead of convincing the Kremlin that it will not be able to achieve victory on the battlefield, it signals

that Moscow's strategy of waiting for Europe's support for Kyiv to wane is working. In doing so, the doves like Wilders are self-defeating. Their desire for peace convinces the Kremlin that a longer war will lead to Russia's victory at the cost of even more lives.

The decimation of the Dutch centrist coalition, which lost almost half its seats, sends a message to other European leaders. Wilders' campaign largely steered away from addressing the issue of Ukraine explicitly. Instead, he weaponized concerns around immigration and nativism to mobilize a broad range of disaffected voters. Similar issues are at play elsewhere in Europe. The European Parliament will go to the polls this spring, and leaders are mindful of the threat the extreme right poses to their own positions. A shift in stance would come at a bad time for both Ukraine and Europe. The war the Kremlin expected to last three days is approaching its third year. Kyiv's vaunted summer counteroffensive has failed to replicate the sweeping gains of late 2022, leaving the country in desperate need of rearmament just as critical support from Washington becomes harder to secure. All this means that European support is needed more than ever, not less. During an upcoming meeting of EU leaders in December, the European Council will try to strike a deal setting Ukraine along the path to membership, which is at risk of being vetoed by an obstructionist Hungary. A deal is needed before the Council's rotating presidency in July 2024, which would inevitably further

dash President Volodymyr Zelensky's ambitions for his country. Wilders' victory serves as an unwelcome reminder to pro-Ukrainian leaders that time may not be on their side - and neither may be their electorates.

Of course, there are caveats to concerns about Wilders' success. Despite becoming the largest party, the PVV received less than 25% of the vote in an election where Ukraine did not feature as a major issue, indicating there may be little support among the Dutch people for abandoning Kyiv. Earlier this year the election of far-right Giorgia Meloni as Italian prime minister sparked fears that Rome would withdraw its support for Kyiv. But upon taking power, she continued her country's firm pro-Ukrainian stance. After the war started, Wilders hardened his stance on Russia, declaring it in his manifesto to be the aggressor. Unlike Meloni, however, he has shown no sign of shifting his position on support to Ukraine. A Wilders premiership would still mean a dramatic shift for what was previously one of Ukraine's staunchest supporters in Western Europe, both in terms of direct deliveries of military aid and political support at the European level.

Even if he doesn't succeed, the Kremlin has reason to celebrate. By showing the strength of a populist right running on an own-citizens-first message when EU support to Ukraine is most needed, he is undermining the common front European leaders have tried desperately to show. Putin believes that time is on his side. The slow decline of Europe's support for Ukraine shows he may be proven right.

The Moscow Times

# Cleverly plan for immigration gives the Tory headbangers something to mosh about

**F**OR a glimpse of the future, I crashed a Starmer speech to the Resolution Foundation, a Lefty think tank packed with ironic beards and decorated in the blue of minty fresh breath. "I imagine this is a room that likes a graph," said Keir, and the economists laughed politely knowing that this would be the last laugh for the next 30 minutes - a long slog through "tough times", "careful stewards" and "securonomics".

Then Starmer was interviewed by Zanny Minton Beddoes, not a Victorian gardener but editor of The Economist (one of those little magazines you get for free on planes); she asked, if Labour won't borrow to invest, what is now the difference between the main parties? The answer, said Keir, is WE believe in "mission-led government". And who is your model for

that, comrade? "Margaret Thatcher." Oy, British politics really is in a mess. Later, when the Commons debated Gaza, the Labour benches were full and the Tory ones mostly empty; as the order paper turned to immigration, the Labour lot buzzed off and the Tories marched in.

Both sets of backbenchers believe their leaderships are too centrist, be it on a Gaza ceasefire or mass migration - though, on the latter, the Tory Right is very happy with James Cleverly's latest wheeze. We will cut migration by 300,000, he announced, by raising the salary threshold for a visa and stopping care home workers from bringing in dependants. Not fair, complained Joanna Cherry of the SNP: some of her relatives are looked after by Filipinos, so if we

cut off cheap migration, who will care for the elderly? Not British workers, Joanna, and certainly not me. No, the only solution I can see is to send the elderly to the Philippines - thus reducing the need for migration and giving my mother some of that warm weather she's always saying she could do with. Tory Neil O'Brien complemented Cleverly on his "excellent package". Tom Hunt said "shame it's taken so long". Labour's Neil Coyle, by contrast, complained that "national economic interest" is being sacrificed to suit "Tory headbangers", prompting one heavy metal Tory, Lia Nici, to pump her fist in the air, while Jonathan Gullis looked ready to toss himself into the mosh pit of diachards.

But why, Cleverly was asked, should foreign workers be forced

to leave their loved ones at home if they come here? There's no forcing anyone, he replied with a bluntness that is growing on the House of Commons; folks choose to travel to the UK just as "my mother came to work ... in the 1960s". And he's right! The best reason to climb a social ladder is to reach a point where one can comfortably pull it back up. This policy isn't going to win the next election. But it was fun to observe - to the delight of Tory MPs - that while the Labour leadership is forced by expediency to endorse migration control (Yvette Cooper and James Cleverly accused one of copying the other), the Labour backbenchers hate it and would prefer to fling the border wide open. The next election will probably not be about choice - for there isn't one. It'll be about trust.

The Telegraph



# Traders apprised Bilalwal about issues

PESHAWAR (APP): Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Bilawal Bhutto held out assurance of playing his role with full dedication for resolution of problems being faced by business community of the country, especially of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Bilawal gave this assurance during meeting with office bearers of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and business community of KP under the leadership of Malik Mehar Elahi, Haji Fazal Elahi, Sartaj Ahmad Khan and Adnan Jalil here at Zahir Shah House on Thursday.

During the meeting, businessmen apprised the PPP Chairman about the problems they faced and hardships due to slump in business in the country in general and KP in particular.

Earlier, Sartaj Ahmad of FPCCI presented a detailed briefing about the efforts being made by him and his team members from the platform of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) for the betterment of business community of the province.

He said majority of the districts from Chitral to D.I.Khan are deprived of official patronage from the center as a result of which, business community and industry is suffering due to non-resolution of problems they faced.

He said that the wheeling policy of electricity was not given due consideration under which the industry would be provided electricity at cheap rates.

Similarly, the suggestions of business community for increasing border

trade is given heed by quarters concerned, he continued.

Malik Mehar Elahi, on the occasion, highlighted demands of small traders of the province.

Speaking on the occasion, Bilawal Bhutto said that he would play his role for resolution of problems being faced by business community. He also made a clarification that PPP was not against corporate sector and giving undue consideration to SMEs.

He said PPP is well wisher of small traders but this not given a wrong perception that we are ignoring corporate sector.

He also stressed upon all the politicians to come above from traditional politics and give their inputs in national development by increasing commerce and trade in the country.

## Foreign reserves reach \$12.2b

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan reached US\$12,206.4 million while the reserves held by the central bank stood at \$7,040.8 million.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that SBP's reserves increased by \$21 million to \$7,040.8 million during the week ended on December 08, 2023.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks also inched up to reach \$5,165.6 million, it added.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on December 01, 2023, were \$12.107 billion. Among them, foreign reserves held by the central bank were \$7.02 billion while net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were \$5.087 billion.

# Jubilee Life receives Top 25 Companies Award



**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: Farhan Faridi, Group Head, Retail Operations, Marketing and Administration at Jubilee Life Insurance receives the Top 25 Companies Award by Pakistan Stock Exchange from Honorable Prime Minister of Pakistan Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar at a ceremony held at Mohatta Palace, Karachi.

This is the fourth time that Jubilee Life has won the prestigious accolade in the last decade and it is the only insurance company in Pakistan to bag the award this year.

The annual awards by PSX evaluate organizations on a qualitative as well as quantitative basis where financial performance, CSR initiatives, and reporting on SDGs are just some of the criteria for rigorous evaluation.

Jubilee Life's robust financial management as well as commitment beyond the numbers remain exceptional, a feat that was recognized by the leading regulatory authority for companies in Pakistan, the PSX.

Jubilee Life remains devoted to serving its customers with dedication and achieving further laurels in times to come.

# Pakistan Stock Exchange gains 170 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 170.03 points, a positive change of 0.26 percent, closing at 65,450.19 points against 65,280.16 points the previous trading day.

A total of 981,194,616 shares valuing Rs.23.743 billion were traded during the day as compared to 1,358,411,606 shares valuing Rs. 37.657 billion the last day.

Some 389 companies transacted their shares in

the stock market; 198 of them recorded gains and 174 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 17 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Kohinoor Spinning with 160,178,500 shares at Rs.5.40 per share, Bank of Punjab with 89,773,616 shares at Rs.6.97 per share and Hascol Petrol with 79,313,000 shares at Rs.8.33 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.175.00 per share price, closing at Rs.22,275.00, whereas the

runner-up was Sapphire Fibres with a Rs 85.00 rise in its per share price to Rs1,784.50.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.350.00 per share closing at Rs 10,000.00, followed by Service Industries with Rs.23.28 decline to close at Rs.624.72.

**Gold rates up by Rs.5,700 per tola**

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.5,700 and was sold at Rs.218,300 on Thursday compared to its sale at Rs.212,600 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.4,887 to Rs.187,157 from Rs.182,270 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.171,561 from Rs. 167,081, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs.70 to Rs.2,650 whereas that of ten-gram silver went up by Rs.60.01 to Rs.2,271.94.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$54 to \$2052 from \$1,998, the Association reported.

## Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Maersk Selstar, Wide Alpha, Gamsunoro and Dolphin-02 scheduled to load/offload Container, Fuel oil and Chemicals, berthed at Container Terminal, Oil Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Seaways Olive, Ullswater and Santa Valentina also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours to unload Gas oil, LPG and Coal respectively.

A total of ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, Wide Alpha, MSC Jemima, Al-Deebal and Manticore left the port on today morning and four more ships, Dolphin 02, Basrah, Maersk Seletar and FJ Viola are expected to sail on Thursday.

Cargo volume of 141,088 tonnes, comprising 67,147 tonnes imports cargo and 73,941 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,353 Containers (2,127 TEUs Imports and 2,226 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 10 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, OBE Dinares, Agios Porfyrios and Ullswater & two more ships, Ensemble and APL Qingdao schedule to load/offload Rice, Soya-Bean seed, LPG, Chemicals and Containers are expected to take berths at WM-1, FAP, SSGC, EVTL and QICT respectively on Thursday, while two more Container ships, Big Breezy and Mombasa Express are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Friday.

# SNGPL's gas theft crackdown continued

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 158 connections while 649 under billing cases processed and imposed fine Rs 14.7 million.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 14 connections on illegal use of gas while another 15 on use of compressor and four under billing cases have been processed. The team also imposed fine of Rs 0.134 million against gas theft and under billing cases and also lodged 1 FIR against gas pilfers.

The regional team of Rawalpindi disconnected 4 connections on illegal use of gas. The regional team of Islamabad disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas.

In Multan 4 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas while another one on compressor use, 73 under billing cases have been processed and amount of Rs 0.13 million booked against under billing cases.

The team of Sheikhpura disconnected 19 connections on illegal use of gas, while another seven on use of compressor, 73 under billing cases have been processed and fine of Rs 0.13 million imposed against under billing cases.

In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 83 connections on account of direct use of gas illegal use of gas and imposed fine of Rs2.47 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 1 FIR against gas pilfers.

In Bahawalpur 83 under billing cases have been processed by the team and also imposed fine of Rs 0.12 against under billing cases.

In Sahiwal, one connection was disconnected on illegal use of gas while another 1 on use of compressor.

In Faisalabad two connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas while another 2 on use of compressor, 3 under billing cases have been processed and amount of Rs 0.02 million booked against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Abbottabad disconnected 3 connections on illegal use of gas and 486 under billing cases have been processed. The team also imposed fine of Rs 11.61 against gas theft and under billing cases.

# PARC to establish 574 m2 aeroponics green houses

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) in collaboration with Korea Program on International Agriculture (KOPIA) will construct 574 m2 aeroponics green houses and 21,600 m2 screen houses in order to enhance output of potatoes and to achieve self-sufficiency in certified seed potato production.

The facility will be established under the project "Pakistan-Korea Joint Program on Certified Seed Potato Production System"

to produce 160,000 tons of certified seed potato annually, said an official of PARC here on Thursday.

He said that in this regard the KOPIA signed technical cooperation projects and contract for construction of green/screen houses for seed potato production through Aeroponics.

The Aeroponics potato projects will pave ways for self-sufficiency in seed potato production, he said adding that innovations in agricultural research will

maximize agricultural productivity, he added.

Pakistan and Republic of Korea are working jointly on agriculture technology transfer projects for seed potato production through aeroponics, fodder production, chili drying and improvement in artificial insemination in cattle, he added.

He said that the conventional potato plants typically yield only five tuber seeds, whereas aeroponics plants have the potential to produce 50 to 60 seeds

each, he said adding that the Pakistan currently cultivates potatoes on approximately 300,000 hectares of land.

Due to the substandard quality of domestic seeds, the country imports 15,000 to 20,000 tons of potato seeds annually, he said adding that by implementing the aeroponics potato seed project, Pakistan could potentially save Rs2-3 billion each year and attain self-sufficiency in potato seed production.

## China's gold prices mixed

BEIJING (APP): China's benchmark prices for spot interbank gold transactions were mixed Thursday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

The benchmark price for gold that is 99.95 percent pure or above stood at 467.25 yuan (about 65.73 US dollars) per gram, up 0.17 yuan from the previous trading day, while the price for gold that is 99.99 percent pure or above fell 1.75 yuan to 466.01 yuan.

Spot transaction prices on the interbank price inquiry market are allowed to rise or fall within 15 percent from the benchmark prices each trading day.

# Tokyo stocks close lower

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed lower on Thursday as the yen grew stronger against the dollar weighing on exporter shares, after the US Federal Reserve signalled interest rate cuts next year.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index lost 0.73 percent, or 240.10 points, to 32,686.25, while the broader Topix index ended down 1.43 percent, or 33.57 points, at 2,321.35.

Even though some high-tech shares were bought in early trade, "US long-term (bond) yields further declined in after-hours trading, prompting the yen's appreciation (against the dollar)", which weighed on Tokyo stocks, Iwai Cosmo Securities said. Mega banks and automakers led the declines, he added.

A stronger yen against the

dollar is generally seen as a negative factor to Japanese exporters as it deflates their repatriated profits and dampens price competitiveness in foreign markets. The dollar fetched 141.40 yen in late Tokyo hours, down from 142.67 yen in early Asia time and from 142.89 yen in New York.

The dollar-yen was at 145.80 in late Tokyo hours on Wednesday. The greenback tumbled after the US central bank, as expected, kept interest rates flat for its third straight meeting, while Fed projections suggested three rate cuts next year. In Japan, four cabinet ministers who belong to a faction that was headed by the late prime minister Shinzo Abe tendered their resignations over political fund graft claims.

"Its impact on (the Bank of Japan's) monetary easing policy, that had been

promoted by the Abe faction, is in focus," senior analyst Ryotaro Sawada of Tokai Tokyo Research Institute said.

Among major shares in Tokyo, Toyota dropped 3.82 percent to 2,571.5 yen, Panasonic dived 4.48 percent to 1,363.5 yen, and Sony Group slipped 1.07 percent to 12,960 yen.

## USC reduces prices

ISLAMABAD (APP): Utility Store Corporation (USC) Thursday has reduced the Ghee and cooking oil prices of well-known brands across the country. The spokesman told that the price of ghee of well-known brands had been reduced by 17 rupees per kg. While the prices of cooking oil have been reduced from Rs.37 per liter to Rs.48 per liter, said a press release issued here. Ghee will be available at Rs 482 per kg instead of Rs 499, while cooking oil will be available at Rs 470 to Rs 422 per liter and other branded cooking oil will be available at Rs 518 per liter instead of Rs 555. The new prices have been applied immediately and it should be noted that for the convenience of general consumers, Utility Stores Corporation is taking steps to reduce the prices of other items.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Mr. Kaleem Ullah Civil Judge II Elaq Qazi Malakand at Batkhela, Case No 92/1, Next Date: 20-12-2023. Mr. Fazal Aleem Versus Wazir Hassan and others, proclamation against: (5/1) Fazal Qadar S/o Abdul Qadar (6) Sadiq Akbar S/o Nadar resident of Piran Nawagai (12/4) Shah Zaman S/o Mujria Bibi (L) res: of Nawagai Piran (19) Umar Wahid S/o Samria Bibi (22) Said Rasheed Khan S/o Fateh Rawan resident of Umar Khan Banda Piran Tehsil Batkhela. In the above title case the service of you above named defendants is not possible with ordinary means, hence you are hereby informed through this proclamation to attend this court on 20/12/2023 at 08:00 a.m in person or through appointed agent/attorney or through counsel, otherwise you shall be placed and proceed against ex-parte.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Fasih ur Rehman Civil Judge-III/Illaq Qazi Kabal district Swat. Case No. 40/1. Institution 17/03/2023. Next hearing date 11/01/2024. Mst. Raham Saba widow Ghazi D/o Abdur Raziq R/o Shah Dehrhai Tehsil Kabal district Swat VS Dolat Khan etc. Notice to: - Waris 4/3 Alamgir S/o Azaz ur Rehman R/o Shah Dehrhai Tehsil Kabal district Swat (Presently Abroad). In the above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 11/01/2024. Ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this Court.

# 'Harvest, Post-Harvest Management of Citrus Fruits' held

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: PHDEC conducted a webinar on the topic of "Harvest and Post-Harvest Management of Citrus Fruits.". The aim of the webinar was to bring the maximum of the stakeholders on board to discuss harvesting, post-harvest handling of citrus to minimize the post-harvest losses, and availability of premium quality citrus in domestic and international high-end-market. Target audiences of the webinar were processors, progressive growers, R&D and private companies.

Pakistan is 15th largest citrus fruit producing country with 2.4 MMT annual production and Pakistan has 4 Lac Acre of citrus cultivated area which leaves room for value-added products of citrus. Pakistan has a quite low number of citrus recipes and there is a need for introducing more value-added products for household and other industries.

Zulqarnain Zaka, Assistant Manager (Agri-products) welcomed all the participants and informed the participants about the purpose of webinar. Mr. Zaka added that PHDEC has been emphasizing now on product development under its mandate. He also gave a short presentation about the vision, mission, mandate and objectives of PHDEC.

Khawar Nadeem, Manager Agri-Products PHDEC, extended a warm welcome to the participants, providing valuable context on

PHDEC's instrumental role in the horticulture sector and its expansive mandate. Mr. Nadeem emphasized that PHDEC's commitment remains steadfast in supporting initiatives that bolster the prosperity and well-being of horticulture cultivators and farmers.

Dr. Muhammad Azher Nawaz, Associate Professor, Department of Horticulture Sciences, Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Shared the current area and production of Citrus in Pakistan and last 10 year's growth trend. He explained the reasons of low production in Pakistan and impact of malpractices and lack of knowledge of recommended production technology of citrus on quality, yield and post-harvest losses. He also trained

the growers on harvesting, safe handling, packing and packaging of citrus. He also explained the causes of Post-Harvest losses, lack of skilled labors, Immature/premature/over mature harvest, poor sorting and grading practices/poor temperature and relative humidity in storage/Improper packing and washing. He recommended that citrus growers should adopt modern techniques for harvesting post-harvesting and government should provide facilities of packing materials/refrigerated trucks for transportation and access to market to minimize post-harvest losses. Citrus crop is one of main sources of income for the people of rural areas so, the production of this crop may be converted into an industry.

Arrangement of field days, seminars, lectures on pest management and demonstration of improved production technologies will improve overall condition of citrus crop of Pakistan.

He explained about the post-harvest losses of citrus at different stage from harvesting to packing and transportation. He briefed about the techniques to minimize post-harvest losses. He also explained the method of harvesting and time of harvesting of citrus, and modern techniques of sorting/grading and packaging of citrus.

Athar Hussain Khokhar, the CEO of PHDEC, thanked all the participants for attending the webinar and assured the audiences that PHDEC will keep organizing such kind of

activities virtually and on ground for the development of Horticulture industry of Pakistan. He informed to the participants about PHDEC's upcoming activities besides capacity building workshops, webinars. He welcomed the stakeholders to contact PHDEC in case if anybody needs a support or assistance. He extended PHDEC full support to the stakeholders in any product and export related matters.

A large number of participants from growers, processors, exporters, R&D and academia participated in the webinar and appreciated the PHDEC's initiative of conducting the webinar on an important topic of Harvest and Post-Management of Citrus Fruits.





## In brief

## Pakistan to take on New Zealand today

LAHORE (APP): New Zealand Women will face Pakistan Women in the 2nd One Day International (ODI) cricket match in Christchurch on Friday. New Zealand Women lead the series by 1-0. PCB sources told APP on Thursday. In the first One Day International, New Zealand Women beat Pakistan by 131 runs in Queenstown. Batting first, New Zealand Women had scored 365 runs for four in the allotted fifty overs. In Reply, Pakistan Women were all out for 234 runs.

## Arsenal boss cleared of misconduct charge

LONDON (BBC): Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta has avoided punishment from the Football Association over comments he made about refereeing following last month's 1-0 defeat by Newcastle. Arteta called the video assistant referee's decision to allow the Magpies' winning goal at St James' Park "embarrassing" and a "disgrace". He was later charged with misconduct. But the FA said that an independent Regulatory Commission found the charge to be not proven after a hearing. "It was alleged that his comments constituted misconduct in that they were insulting towards match officials and/or detrimental to the game and/or brought the game into disrepute," the FA added in a statement. In the written reasons for the charge not being proven, it was revealed Arteta claimed that: "The word 'disgrace'... has a very similar spelling and pronunciation to the Spanish 'desgracia'." "The Spanish word has connotations of misfortune, tragedy or bad luck rather than the connotations of the English equivalent which suggest contempt, dishonour or disrespect." "While the English meaning may lead to interpretations of abuse or insult, this was not the intended meaning."

## Premier League's first female referee

LONDON (BBC): Rebecca Welch will become the first female referee for a Premier League fixture when she officiates Fulham's match against Burnley on 23 December. Welch, 40, began refereeing in 2010, and in January became the first woman to referee a men's Championship game. Sam Allison will also take charge of a top-flight match in December, making him the Premier League's first black referee for 15 years. He will oversee Sheffield United's match against Luton on 26 December. Uriah Rennie - the league's last black referee - retired from officiating in English football's top four divisions in 2009. The EFL's last non-white referee - Jamail Singh - retired in 2010. "These are pivotal moments for Rebecca and Sam, who are two officials of real quality," referees' chief Howard Webb told BBC Sport. "They deserve their opportunity." In July, the Football Association laid out plans to recruit 50% more referees from "historically under-represented" backgrounds by 2026, targeting an increase of 1,000 women referees and 1,000 black or Asian referees at all levels of football in three years. Currently, 8% of officials are of black or Asian ethnicity, but only 3% in professional football. No black or Asian referee has taken charge of a Premier League game since Rennie's final match in 2008. Former firefighter Allison, who has previously spoken about encouraging more officials from under-represented backgrounds, was promoted to the Football League in 2020 and was moved up to the Championship earlier this year.

## David Warner hits 164, Pakistan debutants impress on first day of Perth Test

PERTH (PPI): David Warner produced an outstanding 164 on the first day of play of the first Test at Perth Stadium, to give Australia an ideal start to the Benaud-Qadir Trophy. The home side chalked up 346 runs in 84 overs while losing five scalps in the day, which all came courtesy of the Pakistan pace attack. The visitors, who fielded a bowling attack of four pace options, saw each of their fast bowlers return with at least a wicket each.

According to a PCB statement on Thursday, Pat Cummins won the toss and elected to bat first on the Perth wicket. Left-handed openers Usman Khawaja and David Warner batted through the first session to give a solid start to Australia, who crossed the 100-run mark without loss of a wicket.

The 126-run commanding partnership mounted pressure on the visitors until left-arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi struck to take out Khawaja, who had to walk back to the

pavilion after scoring 41 from 98 including six boundaries.

Next batter in, Marnus Labuschagne managed 16 off 25, with just a solitary four, before right-arm seamer Faheem Ashraf trapped him LBW. Warner was then joined by Steven Smith, who walked out to bat in the 38th over with the scorecard reading 159-2.

The two batted together to add 79 more to the total with Smith contributing 31 off 60 deliveries, including four boundaries. He was caught behind off right-arm pacer Khurram Shahzad, marking the debutant's maiden Test wicket.

Following the fall of the third wicket, Travis Head got off the mark with a boundary on the second ball he faced, setting the tone for the rest of his knock. He hit a quick 53-ball 40, showcasing six fours, which was cut short when he was caught by Salman Ali Agha off Aamir Jamal's bowling for the latter's first Test scalp.

Warner, who remained on the crease for the majority of the day's play, struck the most noteworthy performance of the day. He constructed a solid knock that yielded 164 runs off 211 deliveries, smashing 16 boundaries and four maximums. Aamir struck again, shortly after removing Head, to claim the prized wicket of Warner, dismissing him on the last ball of the 75th over.

All-rounder Mitch Marsh (15 not out, 31b, 2x4s) and wicketkeeper-batter Alex Carey (14 not out, 32b, 1x4) remained on the crease, with Australia at 346-5 in 84 overs at the close of play on the first day.

The second day's play will resume at Perth Stadium from 7:20 PKT on 15 December.

Scores in brief: Australia 346-5, 84 overs (David Warner 164, Usman Khawaja 41, Travis Head 40; Aamir Jamal 2-63, Khurram Shahzad 1-62, Faheem Ashraf 1-65, Shaheen Shah Afridi 1-75)

## Brigadier Mujtaba Haider congratulated Ibrahim Mohib and assured to patronize him



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan National Squash Champion Ibrahim Mohib met Director of Sports Brigadier Mujtaba Haider of Pakistan Army.

The Director of Sports of Pakistan Army encouraged Ibrahim Mohib by inviting him to a special meeting, and congratulated him for winning the champion title by showing an excellent perform-

ance in the National Squash Championship played in Lahore, and gave him a trophy and cash prize. He said that you have talent, if you continue to perform in the same way, then it will not be far when you will become the world champion. Brigadier Mujtaba Haider said that they will fully patronize you, all you have to do is make the name of Pakistan shine in the world.

Secretary Army Sports Major Salman was also present in this meeting.

Ibrahim Mohib, a talented player of Pakistan Army from Peshawar, who represented Pakistan in the Scottish Junior International event in Scotland, said that Brigadier Mujtaba Haider encouraged him a lot, his support and patronage gave me a lot of encouragement. God willing, I will improve my game and fulfill their expectations.

Pakistan's famous squash player Ibrahim Mohib said that the aim of my playing is to make the name of Pakistan famous in the game and for that I am working very hard.

When I started playing squash, I decided that I will make Pakistan famous in this game and so far I have played in countless national events. And if Allah wills, I will prove my ability in the Scottish Junior International Championship.

He said that the joy felt by raising the Pakistani flag is indescribable. Ibrahim Mohib said that there is immense talent in this sport in Pakistan which needs to be brought to the fore.

## Squash League inaugurated under PMYP

ISLAMABAD (APP): The inauguration ceremony of the National Squash League (Men and Women) was held yesterday under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) at Air University Islamabad.

Deputy Chief of Air Staff (Training) Air Marshal Zulfikar Ahmed Qureshi was the chief guest.

While, famous squash players, Mr Qamar Zaman and Ms Sadia Gul, Member (IT) Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr

Jamil Ahmad and Vice Chancellor Air University Air Marshal Javaid Ahmed (Retd) also attended the ceremony.

Men and women squash teams, who have already won at a provincial level, also participated in the event.

Meanwhile, HEC athletes also shined in the National Athletics Championship.

Athletes won five gold, four silver and nine bronze medals in Men's games, while 13 gold, seven silver and nine bronze won in

women's games during the Junior Athletics Championship held at Artillery Regimental Centre, Attock.

Similarly, in the senior category's 51st Athletics Championship, the women's team secured 2nd position with 5 gold, 11 silver and 5 bronze while the men's team won 3rd position with 2 gold, 2 silver and 6 bronze. It is worth mentioning here that Athletes, who have won medals, are eligible for one-year scholarships and prize money.

## Aitana Bonmati, Erling Haaland and Lionel Messi on Best Fifa player shortlists

MADRID (BBC): Erling Haaland, Kylian Mbappe and Lionel Messi have been shortlisted for the men's player of the year at the 2023 Fifa Best awards.

Aitana Bonmati, Linda Caicedo and Jennifer Hermoso are the finalists for the women's award.

Julio Enciso, Guilherme Madrugada and Nuno Santos have been chosen as the final three for the Puskas award, which is for the best goal of the year. The winners will be announced on Monday, 15 January in

London. Norway and Manchester City striker Haaland, France and Paris St-Germain forward Mbappe, as well as Argentina and Inter Miami forward Messi, were chosen from an initial list of 12.

Barcelona and Spain midfielder Bonmati, 18-year-old Colombia and Real Madrid forward Caicedo, as well as Spain and Pachuca forward Hermoso, were shortlisted from 16 players.

The women's award is for performances from 1 August

2022 to 20 August 2023 and includes Spain's 2023 World Cup victory.

Best Men's player shortlist Erling Haaland (Norway/Man City) Kylian Mbappe (France/Paris St-Germain) Lionel Messi (Argentina/Inter Miami)

Best Women's player shortlist Aitana Bonmati (Spain/Barcelona) Linda Caicedo (Colombia/Real Madrid) Jenni Hermoso (Spain/Pachuca)



PERTH: David Warner walks off after his century.

## Fatima Sana becomes ODI captain to lead Pakistan women's team

CHRISTCHURCH (PPI): Fatima Sana has been named captain of the Pakistan women's team, taking over from Nida Dar, who has been ruled out from the second ODI against New Zealand women at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch on Friday, 15 December.

According to PCB information on Thursday, Nida is the third player from the 17-member squad selected for the New Zealand series to get injured on the tour. Earlier, Shawaal Zulfiqar (second T20I) and Diana Baig (one day before first ODI) got injured and were ruled from the remaining matches on the tour. Under Nida's leadership, Pakistan became the first Asian country to beat White Ferns in T20I series in their own backyard, while right-handed batter Shawaal's 41 off 42 balls, which included seven fours, was the highest score from the winning side in the first T20I. Diana, with her right-arm fast bowling, has bowled well in the powerplay in T20Is.

Nida, the regular captain, led the side in the first ODI at the John Davies Oval in Queenstown on Tuesday. However, she was struck by a ball on her own bowling in the 44th over of the innings. Nida was subsequently taken off the field due to the impact and Fatima was named the stand-in captain. Following assess-



comeback, earning the player of the series award in the three T20Is against White Ferns played from 3 to 9 December. Fatima bagged six wickets at an economy rate of 5.60 in the series and was named player of the match for her figures of 4-0-18-3 in the first T20I at the University of Otago Oval in Dunedin on 3 December.

In June, Fatima captained the Pakistan women's emerging team in the ACC Women's Emerging Teams Asia Cup held in Hong Kong, where the side narrowly lost to Bangladesh in the semi-final. In domestic cricket, Fatima has led PCB Blasters in the T20 Women's Cricket Tournament and took her side to victory, beating PCB Dynamites by seven runs at the Gaddafi Stadium on 9 December 2022. The Karachi-born player, known for her excellence since the start for her career, was named PCB's Emerging Cricketer of the Year in 2020 and also became the first Pakistan women cricketer to win the ICC Emerging Cricketer of the Year in 2021.

Fatima Sana said: "It is an honor to lead the Pakistan women's side in ODIs, although the circumstances are unfortunate with Nida Dar's injury. She has been an inspiration, and I wish her a speedy recovery."

## Hosts dominate day one on batting friendly pitch

LONDON (BBC): England's bowlers toiled in the Mumbai heat as India capitalised on a batting-friendly surface on day one of the one-off Test match.

India got to 410-7 as four players made half-centuries, including debutants Jemimah Rodrigues and Satheesh Shubba. England took two quick wickets on three separate occasions but India's batters impressively withstood the pressure each time. Seamer Lauren Bell was the pick of England's bowlers with 2-64.

England took early control as Bell and Kate Cross removed dangerous India openers Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma, before Test debutant Rodrigues and international debutant Satheesh

## Aqeel moves to semifinal of Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan C'ships

ISLAMABAD (APP): Top seed Aqeel Khan advanced to Men's Singles semifinal of the 9th Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan National Ranking Tennis Championships 2023 after registering victory against Abdullah Adnan at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex Islamabad on Thursday.

Aqeel warded off challenge from Abdullah in the quarterfinal 7-6(2), 6-2. The semifinal lineups of Men's Singles and other categories were completed on Thursday. Following are the results:

Men's Singles

Quarterfinals: Muhammad

Shoaib bt Barkatullah 6-

2-6-3; Mudassir Murtaza bt

Muzammil Murtaza 6-2,6-

2; M. Abid bt Yousaf Khalil

6-3,4-6,6-2; Aqeel Khan bt

Abdullah Adnan 7-6(2),6-2

Mens Doubles

Quarterfinals:

M.Abid/ Waqas Malik bt Hamza Roman / Saqib Hayat 3-6,6-3(10-3); Mudassir Murtaza / Abdullah Adnan bt M. Salar / Hamza Aasim 7-5,6-1; Yousaf Khalil / Barkatullah bt Ahmed Babar / Imran Bhatti 6-2,3-6(10-8); Shahzad Khan / Jalil Khan bt M. Shoaib / Muzammil Murtaza 6-4,6-4 Ladies Singles

Quarterfinals:

Amna Ali Qayum bt Rahat ul Ain 6-0,6-2; Sheeza Sajid bt Soha Ali 6-1,6-3; Esha Jawad bt Lalarukh Sajid 6-2,6-1; Sarah Ibrahim Khan bt

Mahrulkh Sajid 6-1,6-1 Boys Singles 18&under

Quarterfinals:

Hamza Roman bt M. Salar 6-2,6-2; Hamid Israr bt Kashan Tariq 6-0,6-0; Ahmed Nael bt Ahtesham Humayun 6-4,7-6(5); M. Hamza Aasim bt Asad

Zaman 7-6(3),6-0 Boys Singles 14& under 2nd Round: Haziq Areejo bt Ahmed Hussain 5-3,4-1; Nabeel Ali Qayum bt Uzair Khan 4-2,4-1; Muzammil Bhand bt M.Yahya 4-2,5-3; Abdul Basit bt Zohaib Amjad 4-0,5-4(2); Mahad Shehzad bt M. Arsalan 5-4(6),4-1; M. Hazik Aasim bt M. Shakib 4-1,4-0; M. Hasan Usmani bt Abdaar Ali 4-0,4-0; Razik Sultan bt Ayaan ul Haq 4-0,1-4,4-0

Boys / Girls Singles 12& under 2nd Round: Ali

Bacahni bt Azan Imran 4-

1,4-2; Ziyad Zaman bt Arsh

Imran 4-1,4-0; Ahmed

Hussain bt Majeed Ali

Bachani 4-1,4-2; Zohaib

Amjad bt M. Ibraheem

Cheema 4-1,5-3; Rashid

Ali Bachani bt Timujan Ali

Mirza 4-0,4-0; Razik

Sultan bt Anay Khan 4-0,4-

0; M. Shakib bt Moazzam

Babr 4-1,4-1



SARGODHA: A view of volleyball match played between Government College for Women Mianwali and Government College for Women Chandni Chowk Sargodha teams during Inter-Collegiate Division Women Sports organized by Higher Education at Government College for Women Chandni Chowk.





## In brief

### Rain-thunderstorm likely in upper KP, GB

ISLAMABAD (APP): Cloudy weather with rain-thunderstorm is likely in upper Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and north-western districts of Balochistan during the next 24 hours, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). Snowfall over the hills is also expected in the said areas during the period. According to the synoptic situation, a westerly wave was likely to affect western parts of Balochistan. Fog/smog is likely to persist in plain areas of Punjab,

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and upper Sindh during morning and night hours. Mainly cold and dry weather is expected in most plain areas of the country, while partly cloudy in upper areas. During the last 24 hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country, while very cold in northern areas. The lowest minimum temperatures recorded during the last 24 hours were Leh -11C, Skardu -07, Kalam -06, Gilgit, Srinagar -05, Gupis -04, Kalat, Rawalakot, Dir and Astore -03C.

### Bike lifter arrested, 6 motorbikes recovered

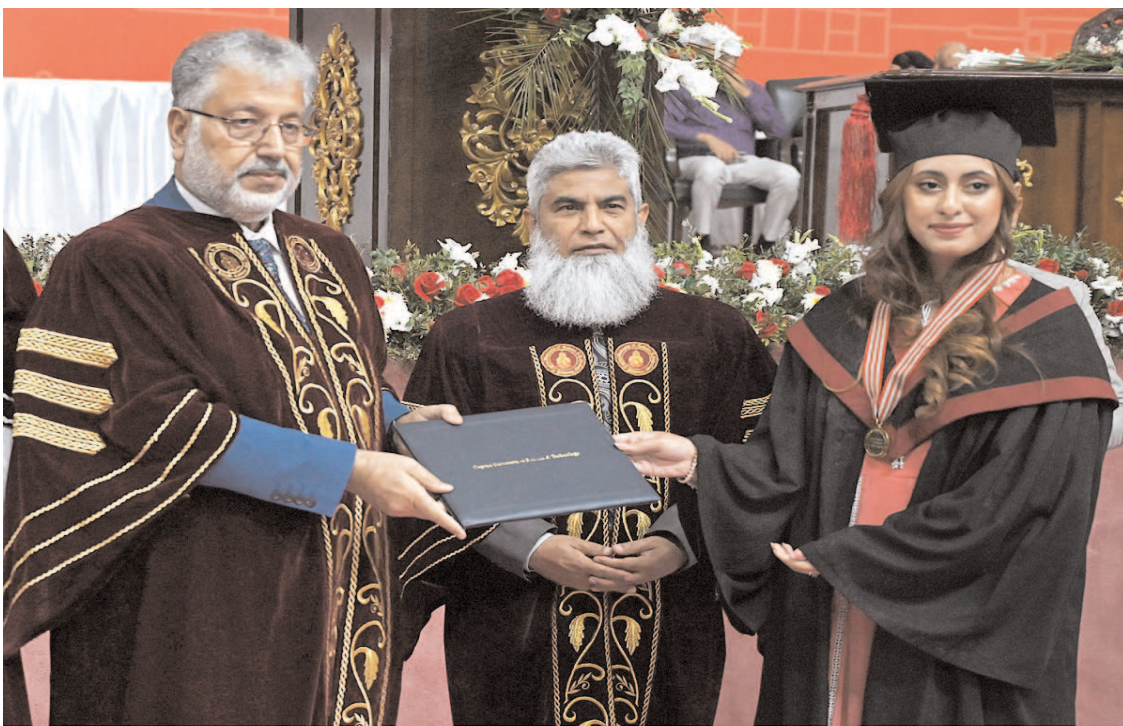
ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Karachi Company police have nabbed a gangster leading a gang of bike lifters and recovered six stolen motorbikes from his possession. According to police, Karachi Company police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a gangster involved in the theft of bikes from various areas of the twin cities. The accused was identified as Zahir. The police team also recovered six stolen motorbikes from his possession. Cases have already been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

### 34 outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police on Thursday apprehended 34 outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession. According to details, Aabpara police team arrested Anwar Masih and Waqar Ahmed and recovered 1,230-gram hashish and 25 liters of alcohol from their possession. Police also arrested Sharon Masih for decanting gas in cylinders illegally. Karachi Company police team arrested Danish and recovered 155 grams of heroin from his possession. The Sumbal police team arrested Ahsan, Abdul Wahid and Altaf involved in decanting gas in cylinders illegally. Tamol police team arrested three accused namely Saleem, Safer and Sohail and recovered a total of 3,587 gram heroin from their possession. Similarly, the Sangjani police team arrested Kashif, Asghar and recovered 1,260 grams hashish from their possession. Industrial-Area police team arrested two accused namely Danish Shakeel and Saddam and recovered two 30 bore pistols from their possession.

### Seminar to create awareness

RAWALPINDI (APP): To control rapid population growth an awareness seminar organized by the District Population Department was held at Jinnah Hall, Murree here on Thursday. Speaking to participants as chief guest, Deputy Commissioner Murree Agha Agha Zaeer Abbas Shirazi said that family planning was vital for development issues, including gender equality, poverty, maternal health, human rights and environmental protection.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Higher Education Commission Professor Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed awarding medals and degrees among the position holder students during Convocation-2023 of Capital University of Science and Technology (CUST).

## Dr. Umar Saif terms role of technology as crucial for economic development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Dr. Umar Saif Thursday emphasized the crucial role of technology in achieving economic development.

He underscored its ability to drive innovation, boost productivity, and enhance efficiency across diverse industries.

The minister made these remarks during the foundation-laying ceremony of the Indigenous Research and Development Agency (IRADA) at the National Science and Technology Park, NUST, here on Thursday. Highlighting the objective of IRADA, he emphasized its role in fostering collaboration between the defense sector, academia, and industry in

Pakistan for technological advancement.

He noted that while linkages between these sectors have existed, IRADA aims to formalize and institutionalize these connections.

During the event, Dr. Saif Umar expressed his vision for IRADA, envisioning a collaborative effort involving NUST, universities, industry, and the Defense sector.

He emphasized the potential for joint projects and products that can be commercialized to contribute significantly to the country's economic development. Drawing a historical parallel, the minister referred to the launch of Sputnik by Russia in 1957 and the subsequent creation of DARPA by the

USA.

He highlighted the success of connecting the defense sector, academia, and industry, resulting in the invention and commercialization of transformative technologies such as the Internet, GPS, and cryptography. The minister informed that NUST has graciously agreed to host IRADA and provide the necessary ecosystem for its success. The Ministry of Science and Technology will fund and support IRADA as an independent entity, he added.

The minister said this initiative will bring together the top minds in academia, defense, and industry, furthering Pakistan's technological advancements and economic growth.

### Dr Nadeem visits King Hamad University of Nursing

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan on Thursday visited the under-construction King Hamad University of Nursing reviewed the construction work and expressed his satisfaction.

The project manager while giving a detailed briefing about the construction work said that the project was to be completed by the end of 2024. The minister directed to complete the remaining work of the university within two months, on which the project manager assured to complete it within two months.

Dr. Nadeem Jan said that King Hamad University of Nursing is a state-of-the-art university from which 500 nurses will receive their diplomas every year. He said that the university is a gift from Bahrain to the government of Pakistan which has a capacity of 200 nurses to study in the nursing university.

He said that nursing was the backbone of the health sector and this sector is of utmost importance in Pakistan. He said that Pakistan is facing a shortage of nurses and the government has formulated an integrated strategy to meet this shortage. He said that large-scale reforms are underway to improve the field of nursing.

### PMIC extends deadline to complete PIMS HVAC project

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Prime Minister's Inspection Commission (PMIC) on Thursday gave a five-day extension to the authorities concerned to complete the project of installation of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) plant at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) by December 25.

Earlier, the PMIC had given the deadline for the project's completion by December 20. A PMIC team made another visit to the project and reviewed the progress on ongoing work of the HVAC regarding the installation of the central air conditioning system in the whole building of the hospital. The visit took place in the wake of the deep concerns expressed by the prime minister over the unwarranted delay in completion of the PSDP projects including "Replace and Upgradation of HVAC Plant Room Equipment and Allied Works at PIMS, Islamabad".

### Police launch campaign against drug abuse

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have launched a comprehensive awareness campaign in the federal capital aimed at eliminating drug abuse and protecting the youth from the harmful consequences of narcotics. As a pivotal part of this endeavour, CPO/DIG Operations Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari delivered an insightful lecture at the IAU, shedding light on the perils of substance abuse and outlining preventive measures.

The lecture garnered active participation from professors, students, and university staff. Capital Police Officer Bukhari underscored the adverse effects of drug usage, particularly among the youth, emphasizing the threats it poses to both health and prospects. Attendees were urged to proactively engage in safeguarding themselves and their communities from this menace. Recommendations were put forth for educational institutions to organize seminars and anti-drug marches, fostering a collective effort against substance abuse.

During the lecture, CPO/DIG Operations addressed queries from the audience, providing clarity on Islamabad Capital Police's legal actions against drug-related offenses.

## Religious scholars denounce DI Khan attack

ISLAMABAD (APP): Religious scholars on Thursday condemned the terrorist attack on the security personals in Dera Ismail Khan, urging the masses to identify anti-social elements to protect the country of the scourge of terrorism.

Dr. Abdul Rehman, Head of the Shaykh Zayed Islamic Research Centre, Islamia University Peshawar, said the country is going through a critical situation and the entire nation stands shoulder to shoulder with its brave soldiers who are always ready to lay down their lives in defense of the motherland.

Speaking to Radio Pakistan, he paid rich tribute to security personnel who embraced martyrdom during this cowardly attack. "No power on earth can undo Pakistan and such cowardly acts cannot weaken the spirit of armed forces," he remarked. Maulana Muhammad Tayyab Qureshi, Chief Khateeb, Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, said the martyrs are our real heroes; their great sacrifices will not go in vain, adding that the whole world recognized the eternal sacrifices of the security forces in the war against terrorism.

"These cruel people want to destabilize the country; they are not only enemies of Pakistan but of the whole humanity and the entire Ummah," he added.

Maulana Dr. Atta-ur-Rehman, Secretary General of Rabt-ul-Madaras Pakistan, denounced the act, saying that such elements had no religion and were ultimately destined to face defeat. Maulana Muhammad Shoaib, a prominent scholar, expressed deep sorrow and regret over the martyrdom of the soldiers in the terrorist attack and prayed for the high status of martyrs. He vowed that the terrorists could never succeed in their nefarious aims and the entire nation was standing with the security forces in the war against terrorism.

## HEC, Microsoft signs ETA to modernize tech education in country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under the long-term cooperation between the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Microsoft signed the Education Transformation Agreement (ETA) the other day, aiming to further modernize technological education in the country.

At the same time, the Imagine Cup competition, Founders Hub and AI Skilling for students was launched, in which participants will present their innovative projects and entrepreneurial endeavors. The event was graced by the presence of Nasir Jami, Federal Secretary for Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication.

"In the era of AI, education stands at the threshold of unprecedented transformation. The collaboration between Microsoft and HEC through the Education Transformation Agreement is a testament to our commitment to fostering innovation and equipping the youth with the skills needed for the future," remarked Jibrin Jamshad, Country Principal Officer and Regional Education Lead at Microsoft.

The event commenced with address by Dr. Zia Ul Qayyum, Executive Director HEC, setting the tone for an insightful day of discussions and partnerships and highlighting the important role of the Founders Hub and AI Skilling. In his notable speech, the Secretary Information Technology and Telecommunication stated that embracing Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence was not just a choice, it was a strategic imperative in our rapidly advancing world. These innovations act as a compass, guiding us through progress and unlocking new frontiers, shaping a future marked by innovation, efficiency and endless possibilities, he concluded.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman HEC, Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad expressed his optimism about the collaboration and stated, "The ETA with Microsoft represents a commitment to embracing technology in education and fostering a culture of innovation. This collaboration, he said is enabling us create a dynamic and adaptive learning environment for our students, he added.

## Pakistan Railways move ahead to adopt digital work place solutions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is taking steps to become an E-office soon to digitalize its service and improve internal efficiencies through electronic administration.

The e-office platform aims to cater for the need for effectiveness and transparency in Governmental processes and service delivery mechanisms as well as help government departments to go paperless.

The idea is being implemented with the help of the National Information Technology Board (NITB) which will be responsible for providing the relevant training to the staff of Pakistan Railways.

E-Office is a digital workplace solution that replaces the existing method of manual handling of files and documents with an efficient electronic system. According to an official source, Pakistan Railways will be on e-office soon which will not only facilitate the users but also make the entire system of the department transparent. Listing other steps taken by the department, the source revealed that Pakistan Railways has

developed a software application for journalist concession card management.

All the related data for journalist concession cards across the country is managed by the Directorate of Public Relations. The software has been prepared and is linked with the centralized reservation centre as well. About the Networking Monitoring System (NMS), the source said that the software has been deployed on the premises of the Directorate of IT with the help of this system all network deployed all over the railways network is being monitored critically and in case of any disconnections the concerned service provider is taken up and pursued till the fault is removed. The efficiency of the network is being monitored through this system from audit perspective as well, it said.

Regarding the provision of internet facilities at different levels, the source said that the entire railway headquarters office is covered with internet service. Internet facility is also been provided at the Ministry via the PR Headquarters office (as a backup link).

It was decided by the management of Pakistan Railways to develop an e-ticketing system with the latest technology indigenously. To implement this idea, Pakistan Railways hired IT professionals from the market and developed the software, which has been deployed and in operation since May 2016.

As the e-ticketing system has now been deployed on the latest tools and techniques, to facilitate the management of earnings at the day's end, a train train-wise earning portal has been devised.

This portal indicates complete information about the financial aspect from the commercial point of view and provides the live incremental financial position concerning passenger earring. The software for the email exchange server has been installed in the IT Directorate with the viewpoint that emails being used previously from the web hosting company were bounced back as a result e-ticketing client of Pakistan Railways was not in a position to approach this office in case of complaints and claim of refund.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers busy in welding sui gas pipes for laying near Srinagar Highway in Federal Capital.



### Rain and snow predicted

KABUL (Ariana News): The Meteorology Department has warned of the possibility of relatively heavy rain, snowfall and floods in 18 provinces. The department said in a statement that bad weather is expected on Thursday, continuing through Friday and Saturday. The following province can be affected: Farah, Nimroz, Badghis, Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul, Uruzgan, Daykundi, Ghor, Faryab, Sar-e Pul, Bamyan, Maidan Wardak, Ghazni, Samangan, Balkh and Jawzjan.

## The Frontier Post

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 29, 1445 — Friday, December 15, 2023

### 64 Afghan refugees arrested

KABUL (Khaama Press): Turkish police have arrested 64 Afghan refugees in two different cities in Turkey. Turkish police stated that about 48 Afghan refugees were arrested by the police in the city of Agri in Turkey." However, authorities in the country have added that 16 Afghan refugees were also arrested by the police in the city of Sakarya in Turkey. This is while the Turkish police recently announced that they started the operation to arrest refugees lacking legal documents.

# Afghanistan's Russia fuel imports surge

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Taliban administration significantly increased its purchase of Russian liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) during January-November, as Russia reoriented its supplies amid the Ukraine conflict fallout.

In the previous year, Afghanistan and Russia entered into an agreement for the supply of gasoline, diesel, gas, and wheat, with Russia offering the Interim administration of Afghanistan discounted global commodity prices,

Reuters reported.

This agreement marked the first major international economic deal for the Taliban administration of Afghanistan since its return to power.

Industry data revealed that Russian LPG shipments to Afghanistan via rail in January-November surpassed 176,000 tons, a more than two-fold increase from the same period in 2022, according to Reuters.

Russia's total exports of LPG to Central Asia in the

first 11 months of the year also doubled, reaching 390,100 tons.

LPG, consisting of propane and butane, is primarily used as fuel for vehicles, for heating purposes, and for producing various petrochemicals.

Unlike oil, Russia's LPG exports have not been subject to Western sanctions.

However, in response to the political dynamics, Russia has shifted its LPG exports away from Europe, extending them to regions including Central Asia.

## Releasing of Americans US top priority

KABUL (TOLONews): The US Department of State's spokesman, Matthew Miller, said that Washington does not have a higher priority than the safety and security of US citizens overseas.

He made the remarks in response to a question about Ryan Corbett, an American who's been detained by the "Taliban" and has been held captive there for 16 months and how willing Kabul is to engage on the topic of detainees at the moment: "So I don't want to try to assess their willingness. What I will say is that, of course, we have no higher priority than the safety and security of US citizens overseas. Not just in this meeting but in previous meetings we have continually pressed for the release of Americans detained in Afghanistan. Special Representative West did meet with a representative of the Taliban this week and pressed for the release of Ryan Corbett and other American detainees."

"So I wouldn't want to assess their willingness other than to say it is the highest priority for us and we will continue to work on it," he said. Meanwhile, the Islamic Emirate's spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, said that "if any American came to Afghanistan and committed a crime they might be detained but there is no [American] soldier to be detained," he said. The political analysts said that Washington and Kabul should exchange the detainees in a bid to pave the way for an improvement of relations. "I believe that the release of this person [American detainee] will have a positive impact and it will help with the arrival of tourists," said Wahid Faqiri, an international relations analyst.

The US officials previously also said that they have discussed the fate of the Americans in Afghanistan in their meetings with the Taliban officials.

# Italian Embassy's Charge d'affaires meets Muttuqi



KABUL (Ariana News): Natalia Quintavalle, the Italian Embassy's Charge d'affaires for Afghanistan, and her accompanying delegation met with Amir

Khan Muttuqi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan on Thursday in Kabul, the ministry said in a statement.

According to the min-

istry, Muttuqi and Quintavalle discussed a number of issues including the forced deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan.

They also discussed Italy's increase of humanitarian aid to the country and cooperation in various sectors including health, agriculture and stalled projects.

## Administration Affairs now digital, online

KABUL (TOLONews): Noor-Ul-Haq Anwar, the head of the general directorate of the Islamic Emirate in Administrative Affairs, announced the activation of the electronic system in the procurement department.

Officials in Administrative Affairs said that the electronic procurement system, in addition to creating transparency, also prevents the loss of time in administrative work.

"Our people can get information about all projects in remote areas through the internet and this system," said Abdul Wali Sediqi, head of the procurement department in Administrative Affairs.

"When we entered, we also obtained some detailed information, some of which were in the treasury section," said Noor-Ul-Haq Anwar, the head of the general directorate of the Islamic Emirate in Administrative Affairs.

Meanwhile, the acting minister of the Economy



said that with the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate, the construction of large projects has been undertaken in various regions of the country.

Din Mohammad Hanif asked the investors who are staying abroad to return to the country and fulfill their responsibility towards the people. "We invite those people staying abroad, because [here] is their homeland and home, they should come and serve in their homeland," said Din Mohammad Hanif.

"In the process, we are fully cooperating with them, hoping for economic progress in Afghanistan," said Mohammad Yonis Momand, deputy of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment.

Diplomats from the embassies of Uzbekistan, Turkey, Iran, and some other countries, as well as a some foreign organizations, participated in the opening of the electronic system of the Procurement Department of the Administrative of Affairs.

# Palwasha seeks govt help to expand Bolani business

KABUL (Pajhwok): A woman, who sells Bolani and other foods on the Qala-i-Fathullah Road in capital Kabul has asked government to support her in opening a proper Bolani selling restaurant.

She believed government support to her business could help generate job opportunities for other people as well.

The Bibi Haji Bolani Shop on the 1st Qala-i-Fathullah Road attracted many people. Different delicious local foods such as Bolani, Ashak, Manto, Shorba and vegetable dishes are cooked by five women and offered to the customers.

Palwash Esa, the founder of this shop told Pajhwok Afghan News she started the business a year ago with the investment of 5,000 afis.

This business helped Palwash to deal with her daily house expense as well as she gives 120 afis to her workers. When she earns more, she increases the daily wages of her workers.

Palwasha has married two times, her first husband died while her second husband got second wife and currently live alone independently. From both marriages Palwash

got six children and she have to bring them up.

She has divided the place where she is doing business into two parts with the help of a brown curtain. On one side she entertains her customers and, on another side, prepares the food.

Palwasha said different dishes such as Bolani, Ashak, Beryani, Bamiah, Shourba, Burani Kachalo and others are on the bases of a timetable prepared in her mini restaurant and presented to the customers.

She said the number of customers specially the Bolani customers was raising on daily bases. She said although running the shop was not easy but she was still happy to provide her children lawful food.

Palwasha hoped that the day will come that she open more branches of Bibi Haji Bolani Shop.

She demanded the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' (IEA) to support women entrepreneur: "Find a permanent place for me so that I can transform my small restaurant into a big restaurant and involve more women in my work."

Farima Naderi, one of her workers, also asked

the IEA to provide them with a specific place for women who want to do business.

She said: "It's been seven months since I worked here, I'm satisfied with my work, because I was unemployed before, we cook different foods on different days of the week, I'm happy, thank you, I have a lot of customers."

She said the more the number of customers increases, the more their salary goes up.

Akhundzada Abdul Salaam, spokesperson for the ministry of Commerce and Industries, said they planned to create special markets for women entrepreneur in capital Kabul and some districts.

He said it is expected that a special women market would be opened in the Shahr-i-Naw Park where women themselves make business. "If Allah I willing, the work is underway and we hope that these markets would be soon built and women entrepreneur who start their work from zero would be able to make improvement."

He said the market would be a three-story building with a number of shops.

## Ancient sites in Uruzgan in disrepair

URUZGAN (TOLONews): Local officials of Uruzgan said that 60% of the historical places of this province have been destroyed or usurped by the local people.

Officials said they are trying to free these historic places from squatters and restore them.

Local officials added that currently 136 historical and ancient places are registered with this department, most of which are facing the danger of collapse.

Agha Wali Quraishi, the head of Information and Culture of Uruzgan province said: "We are trying to increase the attention to all the historical places that are in Uruzgan and are registered."

Meanwhile, the residents of Uruzgan asked the caretaker government to pay attention to the maintenance and reconstruction of these places and prevent their collapse.

"Most of the places that are historical are very valuable and the culture of our ancient people lies in these places, they have been lost," said Habibullah Hemat, a resident of Uruzgan.

"These express our identity and indicate the culture of our past people. These are important places," said Hamdullah Amani, another resident.

"Our historical places are facing danger from the people because the government does not care to maintain these places and most of these historical places have been destroyed," said Sediqi, another resident.

Kafir Qala, Takht-e Soleymann, Bozicha, Aab Garm, and Jaam-e-Buzurg are the historical and ancient places of Uruzgan province.

## Deported Afghan women face uncertainty, fear and depression

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Women's Section, in a new report, has stated that the forced deportation of female migrants from Pakistan has exposed them to pressure and risks arising from the uncertain situation in Afghanistan.

In the report of the United Nations Women's Section in Afghanistan, published on Wednesday, it is stated that among more than 428,000 forced returnees, 48% are women and girls.

Forced returnee women in interviews with the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Women's Section have said that they

have temporarily joined their relatives but have no clue about long-term residence.

According to the report, most of the returning migrants have been relocated in Nangarhar and Kabul provinces, facing uncertainty about their future.

Uncertainty about the future and enduring difficult conditions on the verge of winter have caused mental health problems for returning women.

The report emphasizes that the husbands of some of these women have disappeared or been arrested upon return. The women have also said that their belongings have remained in Pakistan.

Another concern for women mentioned in this report is the lack of a suitable environment for the lives of returning women in Afghanistan, where, according to United Nations agencies, restrictions have led to gender-based harassment in the country.

The United Nations Women's Section has identified the lack of identification documents as a serious challenge for returning women in receiving humanitarian aid.

The report states that the needs of both women and men deported from Pakistan are the same, but women, due to their gender, face multiple risks and an uncertain future.

It is noteworthy that the government of Pakistan ordered the deportation of more than one million undocumented Afghan migrants about two months ago, and so far, more than 428,000 people have returned to their country.

The Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations in Afghanistan, or 'UNAMA,' in a new report, has stated that the deportation of Afghan migrants from Pakistan will expose women's rights activists to persecution. UNAMA has also expressed concern about returning women who face human rights violations in Afghanistan after their return.

## Deputy PM Abdul Kabir returns to work after 3 months

KABUL (TOLONews): The Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, has returned to work after a three-month absence due to health issues, according to the Arg.

Earlier, TOLONews reported on the absence of Mawlawi Abdul Kabir in official meetings.

However, on Wednesday, the Arg said on X that the deputy political prime minister has returned to his office and is in good health.

"My health worsened and the doctor recommended that I rest. I was resting at home for one month and I was under treatment. Some made propaganda that I had traveled to a neighboring country for treatment but that was untrue and I was at home," Abdul Kabir said.

The political analysts said that the senior officials of the Islamic Emirate need to be present at meetings.

"At the current situa-



tion, his (Kabir's presence) is important because he is a member of the leadership and also a political deputy. He might be able to find solutions for many problems with meeting people and the international

community," said Amanullah Hotaki, a political analyst.

"I hope the cabinet of the Prime Minister makes good progress in governance regarding the political and economic situation

of the country," said Janat Fahim Chakari, political analyst.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir met with the former Japanese ambassador Takashi Okada on September 4.

# UNICEF appeals for \$9.3 billion for children

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has announced that \$9.3 billion is needed in 2024 to assist vulnerable children around the world.

UNICEF published a report stating that this amount of money is needed next year to help 24 million children.

According to UNICEF, climate change, earthquakes, the outbreak of diseases, and the increase in wars have put tens of millions of children and their families in difficult situations.

UNICEF also emphasized, referring to the recent earthquake in Herat, that the majority of the victims of this event are children.

The organization added that children in Afghanistan are at the top of the list of vulnerable children worldwide and has called for \$1.4 billion in aid to address their situation.

Furthermore, according to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Afghanistan is the most expensive project of this organization for the upcoming year.

It is worth mentioning that children in Congo and Sudan are facing more humanitarian crises after Afghanistan.

Several international relief organizations have also reported an increase in the needs of the people in Afghanistan and a decrease in aid due to budget shortfalls.

This is while the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) requested three billion dollars to provide humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.



# Our policy against anti-state elements is quite clear: KP CM

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah said that police has always played an important role in maintaining law and order as well as protecting the public and their properties, adding that being the most sensitive region in terms of law and order, policing in this province requires more dedication and unwavering commitment than usual.

"Our policy against anti-state elements is quite clear; both the federal and provincial governments, law enforcement agencies and public are at the same page in this regard", he said and added that stability of the country is dependent on peace and stability in the merged districts; administrative merger of erstwhile FATA has been completed but the financial integration is still incomplete which needs special attention. Due to the current financial instability at the national level, the development process in the newly merged areas is also slow. The funding issue of the merged districts has been taken up with the caretaker Prime Minister and it is hoped that the situation will get improved soon.

This he said while addressing the participants of the study tour of undertraining Assistant Superintendents of Police (ASPs) here at Chief Minister's House on Thursday. Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Additional Chief Secretary Home Abid Majeed and other relevant officials were also present on the occasion. The participants were briefed in details about the demographic aspect of the province, law and order situation with special reference to actions being taken against illegal spectrum, development portfolio of the province, overall economic situation, issues of the merged districts and other related matters.

The caretaker Chief Minister, welcoming the undertraining ASPs to Chief Minister's House has said that, no doubt newly inducted ASPs have worked hard to join the police service and offered themselves to serve the nation. He asked them to be honest, and dedicated to their professional obligations; you should support the truth and stand strongly against oppression, adding that all these positions, status, and even our lives are impermanent and unpredictable as we do not know, what's going to happen next. That's why, he said that all of us should try not to betray them.

Touching upon the role of policing for a peaceful society, the chief minister said that police has always played frontline role in establishing peace and protecting the life and properties of general public. Arshad Hussain Shah said that Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa police has played an unprecedented role in the war against terrorism in the province; none of the tactics by anti-state elements could dampen their morale. Responding to a question on this occasion, the Chief Minister made it clear that, whoever is against the state or its constitution, is the enemy of all of us; such elements would be dealt with iron hands and no one would be allowed to sabotage the writ of the government.

In response to another question regarding development process in the merged districts, the Chief Minister said that development of the merged districts has been the top most priority of the provincial government, but due to financial crunches at the national level, development and welfare activities in the merged areas are being affected. He maintained that unfortunately, the promises made at the time of merger, have not been fulfilled, which is the basic reason behind slow paced development in the merged districts.

However, he said that the caretaker provincial government is making sincere efforts to address these problems. We are optimistic to overcome these issues with the cooperation of caretaker prime minister, he added. Arshad Hussain Shah further said that his government is going to launch "Khushhal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program" under which, youth of this province would be imparted with technical skills as per the demands of international market and sent abroad for employment.

Youth of newly merged districts would be trained on priority under this program, he said. Arshad Hussain Shah said that the ultimate goal is to keep the youth away from negative and unhealthy activities by utilizing their capabilities in a positive manner and providing them employment opportunities. Additionally, they will not only be able to earn for themselves but also contribute to national development and prosperity as a responsible citizen, he remarked.

**KP CM briefs undertraining ASPs on law & order, merged areas issues:** Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah said that police has always played an important role in maintaining law and order as well as protecting the public and their properties.

Being the most sensitive region in terms of law and order, policing in this province requires more dedication and unwavering commitment than usual, he said. "Our policy against anti-state elements is quite clear; both the federal and provincial governments, law enforcement agencies and public are at the same page in this regard", he said and added that stability of the country is dependent on peace and stability in the merged districts.

He said administrative merger of erstwhile FATA has been completed but the financial integration is still incomplete which needs special attention. Due to the current financial instability at the national level, the development process in the newly merged areas is also slow. The funding issue of the merged districts has been taken up with the caretaker Prime Minister and it is hoped that the situation will get improved soon.

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He asked them to be honest, and dedicated to their professional obligations and should support the truth and stand strongly against oppression, adding that all these positions, status, and even our lives are impermanent and unpredictable as we do not know, what's going to happen next. That's why, all of us should try not to betray them. Touching upon the role of policing for a peaceful society, the chief minister said that police has always played frontline role in establishing peace and protecting the life and properties of general public.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police has played an unprecedented role in the war against terrorism in the province and none of the tactics by anti-state elements could dampen their morale. The Chief Minister made it clear that, whoever is against the state or its constitution, is the enemy of all of us; such elements would be dealt with iron hands and no one would be allowed to sabotage the writ of the government. The Chief Minister said that development of the merged districts has been the top most priority of the provincial government, but due to financial crunches, development and welfare activities in the merged areas are being affected. He maintained that unfortunately, the promises made at the time of merger, have not been fulfilled, which is the basic reason behind slow paced development in the merged districts.



**LAHORE:** President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the Annual Gold Medal ceremony of Tehreek-e-Pakistan Trust.

## CEC needs to remove reservations of all political parties: Kundi

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Information Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Faisal Karim Kundi has said that the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja needs to remove the reservations of all the political parties and ensure provision of level playing field to them during the upcoming general elections on February 8.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Thursday, he said that the PPP's stance on general polls was very clear that the ECP should conduct timely, free and fair elections in the country. Faisal Karim Kundi said that PPP's delegation has already met the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and apprised him about the reservations and need to provide level playing field in the upcoming polls. The CEC has assured them that there will be no delay in the elections, he added.

He said that the masses should decide to vote for any political party in general elections as it was the right of the people to vote and elect the party to rule in the country. The PPP leader said, "The masses will not accept any government unless free and fair elections are ensured. The credibility of the Parliament will be nothing if free, fair and transparent elections were not conducted in the country."

About the rumors regarding the ban on social media during elections, he said that PPP would fully oppose the restriction of social media as it was important tool to approach the masses during the elections. Faisal Kundi said that the country was facing critical law and order situation especially, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan and the social media was the best tool to access the people in the situation, adding that the ECP should also address the issue.

"PPP always talked about the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) in letter and spirit to root out the terrorism from the country," he added. He said that President Pakistan People's Party (PPPP) Asif Ali Zardari has categorically stated that transparent and timely polls was the only solution to get rid of all the challenges being faced by the country.

## 11 killed in days-long Israeli raid in West Bank

RAMALLAH: At least 11 Palestinians have been killed during a days-long raid by Israeli soldiers in Jenin in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian health authorities said on Thursday, amid reports of gunfire, hundreds of arrests and restricted hospital access.

A young man died from his wounds on Thursday morning as a result of the Israeli operation in the northern West Bank city that began earlier in the week, the Palestinian health ministry said. Two other Palestinians were killed overnight, it added. Israeli forces have searched hundreds of compounds and questioned hundreds of suspects since the operation began on Dec. 12, the military said in a statement. They dismantled six explosives laboratories, underground tunnel shafts and explosive devices, it said.

Since the start of the raid in the morning of Dec. 12, Israeli forces have arrested hundreds of citizens, with the majority of them since released, the Palestinian Prisoner's Club, an advocacy group said in a statement. Israel was not allowing ambulances to enter the camp to transport patients, Mahmoud Al-Saadi, director of the Palestinian Red Crescent in Jenin, said. "We have six ambulances, but we cannot even reach the patients who need to be transported to the hospital, some of whom need dialysis," Al-Saadi said. "The army did not allow us to enter," despite attempts to coordinate with the Red Cross and the UN Palestinian relief agency, he said, adding that soldiers were also stationed outside the Jenin Governmental Hospital.

Four soldiers were slightly injured by controlled explosions and gunfire from Israel's own forces, the military statement said. Soldiers occupied a mosque where sporadic shots could be heard in the distance, a video circulating on social media showed. Reuters could not independently verify the footage. Asked about the Palestinian deaths and reports of soldiers stopping ambulances reaching the sick, the military confirmed "ongoing counterterrorism activity" in the city and said more details would be provided after the activity ended.

Before the latest operation, the Palestinian health ministry reported 275 Palestinians had been killed in the West

Bank since the Oct. 7 attack out of Gaza on southern Israel by the Islamist movement Hamas that killed around 1,200 Israelis. The mounting death toll in West Bank violence, which has included a surge of Israeli settler attacks on Palestinian inhabitants, has underscored fears that the territory seized by Israel in a 1967 war could spiral out of control as Israel's blitz on the separate Palestinian enclave of Gaza proceeds.

Deadly bloodshed had been worsening in the West Bank even before the war in Hamas-ruled Gaza erupted. Palestinians want the West Bank to be the core of an independent state. In recent years, Israel has greatly expanded Jewish settlements there that most countries deem illegal. Israel disputes this and cites historical and biblical ties to the land. Earlier, the Israel's ambassador to the UK, Tzipi Hotovely, said that her country will "absolutely" reject any possibility of a two-state solution after the war in Gaza ends.

Asked how peace might be achieved absent an agreement to establish a Palestinian state, she told Sky News: "Israel knows today and the world should know now ... that the Palestinians never wanted to have a state next to Israel. 'They want to have a state 'from the river to the sea.' They are saying it loud and clear."

Hotovely criticized the Palestinian Authority for refusing to condemn the attack on Israel by Hamas on Oct. 7. And in response to UN calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, she said: "Ceasefire? No. It just basically means we would like to welcome another attack (like the one on) Oct. 7." She added: "Do you remember any country in the world creating a humanitarian corridor to the enemy? I don't remember you (the UK) helping Nazi Germany ... and I don't remember America helping the Japanese during the Second World War."

Hotovely also rejected a suggestion by US President Joe Biden on Tuesday that Israel was bombing Gaza "indiscriminately." Israel's campaign of airstrikes and ground assaults in Gaza over the past two months has killed more than 18,500 Palestinians, many of them women and children, according to Palestinian officials. — Arab News

## Timely elections crucial to eradicate terrorism from country: Siraj

**F.P. Report**

BATTAGRAM: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq emphasizing the necessity of a government with the mandate of the people for establishing peace and prosperity in the country has asserted that timely elections are crucial for eradicating terrorism.

He was addressing a public meeting in Battagram on Thursday during which local leaders Saeed Ahmed Khan and Muhammad Alam, along with hundreds of people from their tribe, announced their decision to join JI. Sirajul Haq expressed condolence to the families of the martyrs of Pakistan

Army in D.I. Khan terrorist incident and prayed for the quick recovery of the injured. He said the nation and the army are on the same page for the defense of the country.

Attributing economic damage to bad governance and corruption, he held the former ruling parties accountable for the people's plight. He criticized these parties for prioritizing personal gain, securing their self-interests, and exploiting the country's resources, while the common man suffered without opportunities to make ends meet. The JI chief highlighted the stark reality that a majority of the population in the country

lacks basic facilities, with millions suffering from drinking contaminated water and over 25 million children out of school due to poverty.

He contended that the former ruling parties were lacking a coherent narrative in the ongoing election campaign, accusing them of repeating old slogans and deceiving the public. He said the tested parties should present before the public their past performances in power rather than resorting to falsehoods. Siraj asserted that the track record of the former ruling parties was dismal and emphasized that the people's only viable option in the upcoming election is the JI.

## 6th Maritime Security workshop ends

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: "Considering the state of country's economy it is imperative to realize Pakistan's maritime potential, since a robust national maritime sector can be a great enabler for transition to a sustainable economic future", said Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf addressing the closing ceremony of 6th Maritime Security Workshop at Pakistan Navy War College, Lahore.

Maritime Security Workshop is Pakistan Navy's annual event which aims to generate understanding on the dynamics of maritime security, creating awareness about blue economy and exploring untapped maritime potential of Pakistan. The workshop participants included parliamentarians, policy makers, bureaucrats, academia, entrepreneurs as well as representatives from media.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Guest emphasized Pakistan Navy's commitments to raise awareness on issues of National Maritime significance and underscored PN initiatives in generating informed debate on security issues, Blue

Economy, strategic developments in the Indian Ocean Region and intense geopolitical rivalry. He also apprised the audience that Pakistan Navy is divesting resources for the socio-economic uplift of the less privileged segments of society, especially along the coastal belt.

Earlier, Rear Admiral Javaid Iqbal, Commandant Pakistan Navy War College during his welcome remarks gave a brief rundown of various activities during the conduct of workshop.

The nine day workshop brings about improved understanding of the maritime security and geopolitical underpinnings in the wider Indian Ocean. The workshop also highlighted the opportunities and challenges available in the national maritime sector of Pakistan and the manner in which it could help uplift country's economy. The participants were briefed on the role of Pakistan Navy in defending the national sea frontiers and in advancing maritime interests of the country abroad.

The workshop was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, academic discourse on security dynamics in the Indian Ocean Region, challenges and opportunities in

Pakistan's maritime sector, blue economy and its contribution towards Pakistan's economic prosperity and development of Gwadar Port within CPCEC were dilated upon. During the second phase, the workshop participants visited Naval Headquarters Islamabad, various Pakistan Navy installations at Karachi, Coastal and Creeks Area for orientation and familiarization. The participants boarded Pakistan Navy Ship and witnessed various naval exercises and procedures at sea. Other familiarization visits to maritime organizations included Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works, Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, Karachi Port Trust and Pakistan National Shipping Corporation, besides a filed visit to Gwadar Port and Jinnah Naval Base Ormara.

The participants expressed sincere appreciation for the commendable role and efforts of the Pakistan Navy in effectively addressing the maritime challenges faced by the country. Additionally, they offered valuable suggestions for the further enhancement of maritime sector, while presenting a proper on proposed maritime policy of Pakistan.

## PM reaffirms Pak's support to Kashmiris

(Continued from Page 1)

However, he said, the domestic legislation and judicial verdicts could not absolve India of its obligations. He said on the one hand, India wished to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council, while on the other its leadership took pride in trampling upon international laws. Such contradictions reinforced by the Hindutva ideology should be an eye-opener for the international community, he added.

He said thousands of Kashmiris had been killed, thousands faced forced disappearances and pellet gun injuries, and thousands of the women suffered molestation, while the human rights abuses were also documented in two of the UN reports. Questioning the conscience of the international community, he said despite killings, illegal detention of Kashmiri leaders and destruction of structures, India could not undermine their resolve for freedom.

He said India was afraid of Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Geelani even after his death and sought the death penalty for another leader Yaseen Malik which manifested its failure to suppress the spirit of freedom. He said Pakistan and the Kashmiris rejected the Indian meas-

ures of gerrymandering of constituencies and measures to change the demography.

The prime minister said the Kashmiris had long been deprived of normalcy in their land also hampering the development owing to the fearful environment. He said Pakistan wanted good neighbourly ties with India but its unilateral actions of August 5, 2019 had vitiated the environment leaving the onus on it to undo the situation.

Pakistan wanted peace with justice, not peace with injustice, he added. Coming to the belligerent statements by the Indian leaders regarding the AJK, the prime minister reiterated that Pakistan had exercised maximum restraint. Pakistan would never surrender to any form of threat or intimidation as it stood firm to safeguard its sovereignty and interests. He said Pakistan had no issue with the Hindu belief but Hindutva, as a considerable size of minorities in Pakistan enjoyed due rights and exercised freedom.

**PM visits Yadgar-e-Shuhada, lays floral wreath to pay homage to martyrs:** Caretaker Prime Minister

Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar visited Yadgar-e-Shuhada to pay tributes to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the freedom movement of Jammu and Kashmir.

On the occasion, the prime minister laid floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada to pay homage to the valiant soldiers of the armed forces. PM Kakar was also presented guard of honour by a smart contingent of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Police. Earlier, the prime minister arrived here on his two-day visit where he was received by Prime Minister AJK Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq. The prime minister's visit is an expression of solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir in the context of the confirmation by the Indian Supreme Court of India's unilateral and illegal move regarding the status of Jammu and Kashmir.

**AJK PM, Speaker meet Prime Minister Kakar:** Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq and Speaker AJK Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Lateef Akbar met with Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar here at the Speaker Chamber.

Prime Minister AJK welcomed PM Kakar on his arrival in Kashmir and thanked him for expressing solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir after the decision of the Indian Supreme Court. PM Kakar said hearts of all Pakistanis beat with their Kashmiri brothers and sisters. "The struggle of the Kashmiris for their freedom will not be shaken after the Indian illegal actions, but will further strengthen", the prime minister remarked.

**PM calls for resolving Kashmir dispute as per wishes of Kashmiris:** Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar called for permanent and final settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute according to the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

He was talking to a delegation of Hurriyat leaders from Jammu and Kashmir. The leaders thanked the prime minister for condemning the Indian Supreme Court's validation of the illegal and unilateral step of India regarding the status of Jammu and Kashmir. They praised the prime minister for his participation in the

special session of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, saying the PM represented the sentiments of Kashmiris during his address to the Assembly.

PM Kakar said he brought the message of State of Pakistan to Azad Jammu and Kashmir that Pakistan would always extend political and diplomatic support to the Kashmiris. The Foreign Ministry and Pakistani missions abroad would increase their contacts with international think tanks, media and academia to better highlight the case of Kashmir at the international level, he said, adding a strategy would be formulated to effectively present the case of Kashmir in Washington DC, London, Brussels and other important capitals of the world.

A meeting of the Foreign Ministry and Hurriyat leaders would be held soon so that the leaders could give their proposals to strengthen the Kashmir cause, he added. The prime minister emphasized that the overseas Kashmiris could play a very pivotal role for the Kashmir cause. "We categorically reject the decision of Indian Supreme Court regarding the illegal

position of India about the status of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir," he added.

PM Kakar said Jammu and Kashmir was an established dispute at the international level and was an unfinished agenda of the United Nations Security Council for more than seven decades. "The permanent and final resolution of Jammu and Kashmir issue should be according to the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people."

India could not absolve itself of its international obligations by hiding behind its so-called legislation and court decisions, he asserted. The Kashmiri leaders, including Mehmood Ahmad Sagar, Ghulam Muhammad Safi, Altaf Hussain Wani, Syed Faiz Naqashbandi, Sheikh Abdul Mateen, Saleem Haroon, Sheikh Muhammad Yaqoob, Imtiaz Wani, Syed Manzoor Shah, Manzoor Qadir, Hafiz Hamid Raza, Maulana Imtiaz Siddique, Syed Yasir Abbas, Syed Jawadul Hassan, Sardar Amjad Yousaf, Mian Abdul Waheed, Daniyal Shahab Madni, Dr Mushatq Sardar, Sardar Abdul Qayyum, Raja Farooq Haider, Sardar Attique and others attended the meeting. AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwaarul Haq was also present.