

Mortar shell injures 7 women
F.P. Report

WANA: Seven women were injured of mortar shell fired from unknown location in Makin area of South Waziristan on Friday. A group of women was engaged in collecting firewood from mountainous area of Bazai when mortar shell fired from unknown destination hit them. Seven women were injured in the incident and shifted to hospital where one woman lost a eye.



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CJP going abroad

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa will go abroad during the winter holidays from next week, it was learnt on Friday. Justice Sardar Tariq Masood will take over the charge of Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan in the absence of the CJP Qazi Isa. Justice Masood will take oath as Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan Saturday and he will perform the duties of Acting CJP for two weeks.

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MUZAFFARABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq addressing a press conference along with Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Ch. Anwaar-ul-Haq.

SC suspends LHC order on election officers paving way for Feb 8 polls

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Following much deliberation over measures to avoid delay in holding of sought-after general elections, the Supreme Court Friday evening suspended the Lahore High Court's poll-related order, paving way for the elections to take place on February 8, a major demand of political stake holders and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Sardar Tariq and Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, took up the appeal filed by the ECP on the LHC order halting the training of district returning officers (DROs) and returning officers (ROs). "The election commission should do its job [...] we will not micromanage you," CJP Isa told the ECP's team at the court, noting that there should be no hindrance in staging the polls now.

In its order on the ECP's petition, the three-member SC bench ruled that the LHC would not hold further hearings on the petitions related to the appointment of polling officers and that any matter pertaining to the issue should be referred to the top court. The LHC's decision, which came on a plea filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawyer Umair Niazi, suspended ECP's decision to appoint the ROs and DROs from the executive branch.

The single-member LHC bench then referred the matter to the court's chief justice, seeking the formation of a larger bench to hear the issue further. The LHC, today, constituted a bench to hear the case on December 18. However, after the top court's order, the issue will not be taken up in the high court as the petitions have been deemed "non-maintainable" by the SC.

CJP Isa, while reading out the order, also issued a contempt of court notice to the PTI lawyer, seeking an explanation from him as to why proceedings should not be initiated against him. The apex court stated in its order that the LHC bench issued an order exceeding its jurisdiction.

"The SC declared in its [November 3] order that no one will be allowed to derail the democracy," it said, adding that the president and the ECP decided the poll date after consensus among all the stakeholders. The CJP said that the ECP lawyer stated that this court had stated that no one would be allowed to hinder the elections.

"LHC's judge passed the order in undue haste," he said, adding that the petitioner is a member of the same political party — PTI — on whose plea polls had been ordered by the SC. The apex court stated in its order that the LHC bench issued an order exceeding its jurisdiction. "The SC declared in its [November 3] order that no one will be allowed to derail the democracy," it said, adding that the president and the ECP decided the poll date after consensus among all the stakeholders.

The CJP said that the ECP lawyer stated that this court had stated that no one would be allowed to hinder the elections. "LHC's judge passed the order in undue haste," he said, adding that the petitioner is a member of the same political party — PTI — on whose plea polls had been ordered by the SC. The court then issued a contempt of court notice to PTI's Umair Niazi, seeking an explanation for violating the apex court's order.

At the outset of the hearing, CJP Isa clarified that the benches are being constituted under the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023. "It was my wish that senior-most judges should be part of this

bench and I proposed the same. However, Justice Ijazul Ahsan could not come due to his engagements. Then, I asked Justice Mansoor Ali Shah."

CJP Isa then asked ECP's lawyer Sajee Swati what was the hurry that he had to appear before the court at this hour. In response, Swati said: "Our petition regarding the February 8 elections needed to be heard today." The CJP — who was set to leave abroad today — asked the lawyer what would have happened if he had boarded his flight. "But well, it's my constitutional responsibility and I have to fulfill it."

The ECP's lawyer then informed the court that the LHC had suspended the commission's notification to appoint ROs and DROs from the bureaucracy. "The LHC's order stopped the election process," Swati said. When the court asked the lawyer to explain the issue further, he said that PTI's Umair Niazi had moved the LHC seeking the appointment of the DROs and ROs from the judiciary and not from the executive.

Accepting the PTI's petition, he said, the LHC suspended the commission's notification. The lawyer further said that for the ECP, its priority was the judicial officers, but the judiciary declined. He also noted that it isn't the ECP that provides the list of the officers for polling duties, the government does — rebutting PTI's allegations of bias.

The ECP's lawyer also said that PTI has demanded elections be held in a transparent manner under Article 218. At this, Justice Shah wondered whether Article 218 that transparent polls cannot take place. The lawyer then said that the PTI wanted the provision of appointing DROs and ROs from the bureaucracy to end forever.

(Continued on Back Page)

Petrol price drops for next fortnight

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a major relief to the inflation-struck masses, the caretaker government dropped the price of petrol for the next fortnight by Rs14 per litre.

In a notification, the Finance Division said the new prices of petroleum products for the fortnight — starting from December 16 and remaining in place till December 31 — were recommended by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA).

Petrol's price has been dropped to Rs267.34 per litre, while diesel rate has been decreased by Rs13.50 per litre to Rs276.21 per litre, according to the Finance Division's statement.

The division further said that Kerosene oil's price has been slashed by Rs10.14 per litre to Rs191.02 and the light diesel oil will be available at Rs164.64 per litre after a reduction of Rs11.29. The fuel prices were expected to fall in the next fortnightly review due to a substantial drop in global oil prices over the past two weeks. The government reviews the prices of petroleum products every fortnight and adjusts them according to the international market trends and the exchange rate of the rupee.

Solangi: ECP to announce action plan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Friday the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) would announce its action plan in the light of the Constitution and law.

Talking to the media outside the ECP he said under Article 218(3) of the Constitution, the only constitutional body responsible for conducting elections in the country was the Election Commission. "We neither can question the Election Commission, nor we can supervise it, in fact, the Election Commission supervises the caretaker government," Murtaza Solangi maintained.

He said if anyone had a complaint with the ECP, he could contact the Election Commission. The ECP under the Constitution enjoyed the power to appoint District Returning Officers, Murtaza Solangi remarked. The present caretaker regime was appointed under the constitutional process.

He said everyone had the right to freedom of expression under Article 19 and 19A of the Constitution, media was free, and there was no restriction on it. To a question, he said that the caretaker government was providing equal opportunities to all registered political parties and leaders of political parties had the right of criticism.

Imran summoned

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a fresh development in the controversial "illegal marriage" case, former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has been summoned to appear before the District and Sessions Court Islamabad on December 18.

Senior Civil Judge Qudratullah, in a one-page written order, granted Bushra Bibi, Khan's wife, exemption from attending the upcoming hearing. However, to ensure her future presence, she must deposit a personal security bond of Rs 50,000. The order further directed the Superintendent of Adiala Jail, where Khan is currently incarcerated, to facilitate his participation in the hearing. Due to technical limitations, Khan's earlier request to attend via Skype was denied. The jail authorities are now responsible for ensuring his physical presence at the next hearing.

ECP issues schedule for Feb 8 elections

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Acting in compliance with the Supreme Court order issued earlier, the Election Commission of Pakistan on Friday issued the election schedule for the upcoming February 8 polls.

In a notification, the ECP said the public notice would be issued by the RO on December 19 with the dates for filing nominations with the RO from Dec 20-22. The ECP said the names of the nominated candidates would be published on Dec 23 and the last date for scrutiny of their nomination papers would be from Dec 24-30.

The last date for filing appeals against the RO's decisions on rejecting or accepting nomination papers is January 3 with the last date for deciding the appeals by an appellate tribunal on Jan 10. The revised list of candidates will be published on Jan 11 and the last date for withdrawing one's candidature is Jan 12.

The ECP said election symbols will be allotted to political parties on Jan 13 with polls set for Feb 8. The electoral watchdog added

that the election programme shall also apply to the seats reserved for women and non-Muslims in the National and provincial assemblies.

"Last date of filling of separate priority list for seats reserved for women and non-Muslims before the ROs is Dec 22," the notification read. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja had earlier confirmed that the election schedule would be announced tonight.

The apex court had hours earlier ordered the electoral watchdog to announce the election schedule by tonight after it suspended a Lahore High Court order that had stayed the appointment of returning officers and district returning officers from the bureaucracy. In another post on X, the ECP said the election management system was also formally launched according to Section 13 of the Election Act 2017.

The electoral watchdog also stated that the training of ROs will be resumed and conducted on Dec 17-18 whereas DROs will be trained on Dec 19. During an informal meeting with

journalists on Friday in Islamabad, the CEC termed the top court's decision as in the wider national interest. "I never said the election may be delayed," he said, adding that the ECP was fully prepared for polls.

Raja said it was practical for the election schedule to be released after the training of ROs was completed. He urged anyone who had an issue with the appointed ROs to refer to the ECP. "Training of DROs, ROs and stationary officers will begin from Monday," Raja said. "The election schedule was prepared, now some changes are being made to it." Raja apprised the journalists of his meeting with three Supreme Court judges earlier on Friday, describing his meeting with the chief justice as "pleasant".

"I am grateful [to him] for getting us out of trouble." He made it clear that the names of each RO were checked before finalisation, highlighting that it was the ECP's duty to ensure a level playing field for all the political parties. "In the city where one party gets permission to hold a meeting, everyone will get it," he said.

No one can dare cast an evil eye on Pakistan: PM

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday, reiterating Pakistan's principled position and support on the Kashmir issue, categorically said that no one could dare cast an evil eye on Pakistan and that its desire for peace should not be misconstrued as weakness or hesitation to face any aggression.

"Pakistan is not a war-mongering nation. But if anyone thinks that we are weak, shying away or hesitating, they should remove this misunderstanding. Muzaffarabad is not Gaza and New Delhi is not Tel Aviv...No one can dare to kill 4,000 children here," he said in an interaction with the students of different colleges and universities of Azad Jammu and Kashmir during his two-day visit.

Expressing his confidence in Pakistan's defence capabilities in the context of the Indian aggression, he said though Narendra Modi and Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel had same attitudes, but they had different implementing capability and response mechanisms.

To a question, the prime minister strongly rejected the rumours of any change in Pakistan's policy to follow suit India to merge the AJK in it, he said, "No one can think of such a stupid act. Nobody can dare."

He said that the rumours were spread by the enemies to create misunderstandings and that Pakistan had a principled journey with the Kashmiris for decades, backed by the sacrifices of 90,000 people. He said Pakistan had fought three wars with India on Kashmir and was ready to face any kind of aggression. "Are we fighting the wars to make Kashmir (part of) KP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)? This is out of question," he commented and reiterated Pakistan's resolve of not budging an inch from its principled position. To a suggestion about a corridor between the AJK and the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), he said India was not allowing the Kashmiris move freely even from their homes in Srinagar, what to talk of traveling to the AJK. It would be possible when the Kashmir question would go to its final settlement.

"We should strive to take the issue to the final settlement," he added. He said the only solution to the Kashmir dispute was to hold a plebiscite as per the United Nations Security Council's resolutions. He said during the visit, he held detailed consultations with the AJK parliamentarians across different political parties and Hurriyat leadership, and mulled over how to project and exploit the matter in collaboration with the society and the diaspora.

Coming to the Gaza situation, the prime minister said Pakistan would continue to raising the voice against Israel which was using brutal force against the Palestinians. He said Pakistan had sent a field hospital and doubled its humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people. He said the immediate focus should be to achieve ceasefire and establishment of a humanitarian corridor.

"Gaza is close to our hearts... Israel earned nothing but hatred. Israel earned no fame," he remarked. About the repatriation of foreigners, Prime Minister

(Continued from Page 1)

Bilawal pays tribute to APS martyrs

F.P. Report

KARACHI / ISLAM-ABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has termed the massacre of Army Public School (APS) Peshawar as a terrible day in the national history and said that the memory of this horrific bloodshed is still fresh in the minds of every Pakistani.

According to the press release issued by Media Cell Bilawal House, the PPP Chairman, in his message, paid glowing tribute to the innocent martyrs of the tragedy and their martyred teachers and once again expressed solidarity with their families. "We will not forget the martyrs or this tragedy. We stand by the families of victims of terrorism," he said, adding that no one can understand the grief of martyrs' families better than him, because he is the son of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that PPP is determined to root out extremism and terrorism in the country, adding that the PPP will ensure that the Pakistani nation never again has to go through the deeply painful moments like the APS tragedy. "We have to win the war against extremism and terrorism, and we will, undoubtedly, win this war," he said and pointed out that the previous PPP government under the leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari had defeated terrorism in Swat.

COAS, US civil-military agree to enhance ties

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), COAS called on key US Government and Military officials during his ongoing visit to US including, Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, General Lloyd J. Austin (Retired), Secretary of Defence, Victoria Nuland, Deputy Secretary of State, Jonathan Finer, Deputy National Security Adviser and General Charles Q Brown, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Matters of bilateral interests, global and regional security issues, and ongoing conflicts were discussed during the meetings. Both sides agreed to continue engagement for exploring potential avenues of bilateral collaboration in pursuit of shared interests.

During the meetings with defence officials, counter terrorism cooperation and defence collaboration were identified as core areas of cooperation. Both sides reiterated the intent to increase interaction and explore ways to expand the scope of mutually beneficial engagements.

COAS underscored the importance of understanding each other's perspectives on regional security issues and developments affecting strategic stability in South Asia. In this context, COAS especially highlighted the importance of resolving the Kashmir Issue in accordance with international law and rele-



vant UNSC resolutions.

COAS also interacted with the Pakistani overseas community. In a reception hosted by Embassy of Pakistan, COAS met members of the Pakistani community. COAS appreciated the positive role being played by Pakistani overseas community towards the country's progress and development.

During interaction, topics of varying dimensions were discussed and COAS appreciated efforts of Pakistani Diaspora. He also welcomed & encouraged the diaspora to invest through SIFC which is already yielding success in various dimensions. COAS also highlighted that US is the largest export market for Pakistan constituting 21.5 % of our total exports and dispelled rumours

about special screening, denial of visas and detentions.

Army Chief said "Pakistani diaspora anywhere around the world is held in high regard as they are ambassadors of Pakistan and contribute significantly to Pakistan in varying domains. Members of the Pakistani community expressed their pride in role and contributions of Pakistan Army towards well being of Pakistan."

COAS extended good wishes to the complete Pakistani community in their efforts. He also met Mr Tanweer Ahmed who graciously had donated \$ 9 million for NUST in the field of IT development in Pakistan. COAS appreciated him and said Pakistan is proud of heroes like him.

MCL removes encroachment

LAHORE (APP): The Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) carried out an anti-encroachment operation and demolished illegal structures in the provincial capital on Friday.

A spokesperson for the MCL told the media that an anti-encroachment squad removed 90 encroachments during the last 24 hours in various locations of the city. Encroachments were removed from Amir Road, Ghory Shah Road and Shadbagh in Shalamar Zone. More than 25 warning notices and challans were also issued during the period, while four truck-loads of encroachments materials were shifted to the MCL junk yard.

During the operation, banners were removed and various spots were preserved from wall chalking.

MCL Chief Officer Iqbal Freed supervised the operation and warned that action would continue till clearance of the city roads and bazaars. He urged citizens to cooperate with the MCL and its anti-encroachment squads to eliminate encroachments and bring back the lost glory of the provincial capital. Meanwhile, the MCL completed patchwork at more than 35,900 square feet area during last three days while patchwork and repairing process were under way at eight roads on Friday.

PU awards 5 PhD degrees

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab University (PU) awarded PhD degrees to five scholars in different subjects after approval of their theses.

According to a spokesperson for the university, Naila Rehman, daughter of Muhammad Sanaulah, was awarded degree in the subject of History; Muhammad Abbas, son of Ghazan Mehmood, in the subject of Urdu; Mukarram Ali Khan, son of Altaf Khan, in the subject of Administrative Sciences (Management); Nazeer Hussain, son of Muhammad Shafi, in the subject of Information Management; and Gaitee Sahar Sharif, daughter of Sharif Sahab Din, was awarded the PhD degree in the subject of Zoology.

Police seize large betel nut haul, arrest supplier

KARACHI (APP): During a routine patrol in Shah Faisal Colony police station, Korangi district, law enforcement officials apprehended an alleged supplier of betel nuts commonly used in gutka production. A substantial quantity of betel nut intended for gutka production, estimated at around 5 maunds, was confiscated from the suspect's possession, as stated by a spokesperson from the Korangi district police.

The arrested individual, identified as Saifullah, was known for supplying betel nuts to gutka manufacturers across Shah Faisal, Korangi, and Landhi areas.

A case has been filed against the detained suspect, with ongoing investigations into the matter.

Baqar warns against artificial shortage of Insulin, ARV, anti-hypertensive drugs

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar has said that there is no shortage of Insulin (Anti Diabetic), Anti-Rabies Vaccine (ARV) and Anti-Hypertensive Drugs in the province and directed the health department to ensure their availability in every government hospital.

"I will not tolerate if any patient suffered due to artificial shortage or black marketing of the medicines," he told the health department.

The chief minister had received a complaint that there was an acute shortage of Insulin, ARV and antihypertensive drugs in the government hospitals and even in the market. The CM in the light of the complaint got a detailed report about the available stock of the medicines in the government hospital and in the market.

The health department told the CM that 2,955 vials, 84252 vials of Insulin and 2003,967 packs of anti-hypertensive were available in the government hospitals stocks and government hospitals.

The report regarding the availability of the said medicines in the open market said that 187,138 packs of anti-hypertensive drugs, 20,700 vials of Anti-Rabies Vaccine and 23,486 vials/pens of Insulin (Anti-Diabetics) were available in the open market. The report said that two companies, M/s. Getz Pharma and M/s. Elli Lilly Pakistan were producing Insulin. One of the companies, M/s. Getz Pharma

informed the health department that they were producing Insulin in sufficient numbers keeping in view the market demand while the other company, M/s. Elli Lilly was of the view that the company was facing a problem relating to the import of Insulin due to a delay in the approval letter of import from DRAP Islamabad.

The CM took up the matter with DRAP authorities and urged them to ensure timely approval of import letters so that patients may not suffer.

The report said that as far as the anti-rabies Vaccine (ARV) was concerned, it was an imported item, besides, the National Institute of Health (NIH) Islamabad was the only institute throughout Pakistan which was producing ARV.

The chief minister also talked to the federal government to ensure the availability of ARVs in the market. The interim CM has directed the health department to activate its drug inspectors to ensure the availability of the said medicines in the market and any kind of black marketing or artificial shortage would not be tolerated.

Meanwhile, The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd.) Maqbool Baqar strongly condemned the terrorist attacks in Attock and Khyber areas of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, here Friday.

He expressed his deep grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of police and security forces personnel. He also prayed for the eternal peace of martyrs.

CM inaugurates 5-day International Scientific Conference at KEMU

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the 43rd Annual 5-Day International Scientific Conference at King Edward Medical University (KEMU), here on Friday.

He visited stalls showcasing innovations by students and teachers, including the Brain Tumour Detector OCT Python and a laparoscopy simulator, developed by the King Edward researchers. He announced dedication of Mayo Hospital's surgical tower to Prof. Dr. Faisal Masood. Additionally, he announced his intention to recommend Dr. Maqbool Ahmed for a civil award, acknowledging his role in constructing the surgical tower with one-

and-a-half billion rupees.

CM Naqvi inspected a home dialysis machine and locally manufactured surgical instruments for plastic surgery. He took keen interest in a special machine designed for sciatica pain. Overseas graduates of King Edward Medical College presented him with substantial donations for the medical college and hospital. Graduating doctors contributing to the institution received shields in acknowledgment. Vice Chancellor King Edward Medical University, Professor Dr. Mahmood Ayaz, expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister on behalf of students and faculty.

NATIONAL HIGHWAYS & MOTORWAYS POLICE
Procurement Notice (PN)
No. 02/MT/NHMP/SEW/2023

Invitation to Bid

1. The National Highways & Motorways Police, Sector SEW Motorway North Zone has reserved Funds for the procurement planned out of financial year 2023-24. The NHMP intends to apply part of the proceeds of this Fund to cover eligible payments under the contract for the procurement "Procurement of following items".

S No	Items Description	Remarks
1	Tyres	Quantity and Detail of Items is mentioned in Bidding Documents
2	Fuel Filters Assemblies	
3	Disc Pads	
4	SPARK PLUGS	

2. The National Highways & Motorways Police, Sector SEW Motorway North invites sealed bids from eligible Manufacturer/Supplier for the supply of abovementioned items.

3. **Single Stage Two Envelop Bidding Procedure** of Principal Method of Procurement (i.e. Open Competitive Bidding) will be used by adopting **Least Cost Based Selection (LCBS) Technique** for the subject procurement, in line with the Public Procurement Rules, 2004 and any Regulations, Regulatory Guides, Procurement Guidelines or Instructions issued by the Authority (from time to time)

4. All Proposals must be accompanied by a Bid Security mentioned in the Bidding Document.

5. Bidding documents can be obtained from the office of DSP/CPO Line Headquarters, SEW, NHMP, Karnal Sher Khan Interchange during office hours before the closing date.

6. In case opening date(s) is declared as a Public Holiday by the Government, the next working date shall be deemed to be the date for submission and opening of tender(s) at the same time and place.

7. The original bid (as prescribed in Bid Data Sheet of the Bidding Document) in accordance with the provisions of Rule 36(b) of Public Procurement Rules, 2004 and terms and condition defined in the bidding document must be delivered at the address mentioned below **on or before 11:00 Hours on 03-01-2024**. The Bids will be opened publicly on the same day at 11:30 Hours in the presence of Bidder's representatives who choose to attend the opening session to be held at the office of Lines HQ, SEW Karnal Sher Khan interchange.

DSP/CPO Line Headquarters,
(Secretary Purchase Committee)
Sector SEW, Karnal Sher Khan interchange.
Cell: 0333-8119977

PID(P) 495/23

PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)
INVITATION TO BID

Sealed bids (in accordance with PPRA Rule No. 36(b) are invited by below mentioned office for the following requirements in Pak Rhs.-

Description & Bid No.	Bid Fee (PKR) Non-Refundable	Fixed Bid Security (PKR)	Bid Submission Date/Time	Bid Opening Date/Time/Place	Last date for issuance of Bidding Documents	Basis PKR (Price)
Procurement of Digital Voice Logging System(DVLS) 48 Channels Qty.01 for MIAP Multan & 32 Channels Qty.01 for BKIAF Peshawar (With Installation & Commissioning) HQCAA/1992/227/XXLN	1,500/-	As Mentioned in Bidding Documents	09-01-2024 1030 Hours	09-01-2024 1100 Hours Log. Center (S) (Log. ANS Branch)	08-01-2024	F.O.R.

Bids may be submitted as per conditions set out in Bidding documents downloadable (free of cost) from the CAA website www.caapakistan.com.pk (visible / downloadable after publication/uploading of Invitation to bid notice) and obtainable physically from the address given below **on any working days between 0900 Hrs to 1230 Hrs by paying Bid Fee (non-refundable) through deposit slip in Account No. 6-1-2-20614-714-115525 (Title of account "Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority")** in Habib Metropolitan Bank Ltd. Star Gate Branch Karachi and submitting the request letter along with bank deposit slip, proof of Active Taxpayer, GST/NTN certificates of the bidder. **No Bidding Documents would be issued on the Bid opening date.** Bids must be dropped in Bid Drop Box placed at under mentioned office by or before due date as per schedule.

Bids will be opened in the public on the date, time mentioned in IT form. If it's holiday/off day on the date of opening, the bid will be opened on next working day at the same time and place.

Note: All bidders downloading the bidding document from CAA website shall immediately inform PCAA through Intimation letter (along with proof of active taxpayer list [ATL for sales tax] of FBR) and GST/NTN certificates at the address below OR on email: sajid.noor@caapakistan.com.pk, for inclusion in subsequent communication. PCAA will not be responsible for any lack of communication or non-receipt of information/Intimation letter by bidders due to ignorance / violation of this instruction.

Time period for performance of contract: Till the satisfactory completion of contract and warranty period.

PCAA reserves the right to accept/reject any or all bids due to cogent reasons which will be communicated to bidders on request. This advertisement is also available on PPRA website www.ppra.org.pk and CAA website www.caapakistan.com.pk.

Warning: Any financial instrument submitted by bidder, if found fake or got dishonored at any stage would result in blacklisting and legal action as per law.

Additional Director Logistics (ANS)
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JIAP Karachi Pakistan Tel: 021-9907-2265 & 2261 Fax: 021-99242675
www.caapakistan.com.pk

PID(K)#1768/23

DIRECTORATE GENERAL MINES & MINERALS, KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA
ATTACHED DEPARTMENT NEAR JUDICIAL COMPLEX, KHYBER ROAD, PESHAWAR, CANTT.
Phone: 091-9210244 - E-mail: dgmineskp@gmail.com website: www.kpminerals.gov.pk

AUCTION NOTICE No. 39

Open auction for the grant of 30 years mining lease in respect of following areas / blocks with call deposit & reserve price will be held on **10-01-2024** 10:00 AM in the Directorate General Mines & Minerals Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khyber Road Peshawar while application must be submitted 05 days before the auction date i.e. **04-01-2024**. In case of auction not conducted on the scheduled date due to any reason, the auction will be held on the next working day.

S. No.	File No.	Mineral	Acres & Location	Reserve Price	Call Deposit
MALAKAND DIVISION					
1	MDW/BNR/ML: Marble (134)/2004	Marble	102.349 acres Near village Torwasak District Buner	Rs. 500,000/-	Rs. 50,000/-
2	MDW/BNR/ML-Marble (97)/1996 (Block-A)	Marble	169.09 acres Near village Kalan/Chingalai District Buner	Rs. 1000,000/-	Rs. 100,000/-
3	MDW/BNR/ML-Marble (97)/1996 (Block-B)	Marble	169.09 acres Near village Kalan/Chingalai District Buner	Rs. 1000,000/-	Rs. 100,000/-
4	MDW/BNR/ML-Marble (89)/1995	Marble	181.26 acres Near village Ali Sher Tehsil Dagar District Buner	Rs. 1000,000/-	Rs. 100,000/-
5	MDW/BNR/ML-Marble (193)/2007	Marble	69.555 acres Near village Nanser Dagar District Buner	Rs. 1000,000/-	Rs. 100,000/-
6	MDW/BNR/PL-Baryte (14)/2006	Baryte	192.456 acres Near village Gora Khai District Buner	Rs. 300,000/-	Rs. 30,000/-
7	MDW/BNR/PL-Limestone (05)/2004	Limestone	46.69 acres Near village Jowar District Buner	Rs. 400,000/-	Rs. 40,000/-
8	MDW/BNR/PL-Limestone (07)/2005	Limestone	49.46 acres Near village Rega District Buner	Rs. 400,000/-	Rs. 40,000/-
9	MDW/BNR/PL-Limestone (04)/2002	Limestone	44.50 acres Near village Jowar District Buner	Rs. 700,000/-	Rs. 70,000/-
10	REA/DR/PL-Granite (1)/2020 Block-A	Granite	172.52 acres Near village Banda Kili District Dir Lower	Rs. 800,000/-	Rs. 80,000/-
11	RFA/DR/PL-Granite (1)/2020 Block-B	Granite	172.52 acres Near village Banda Kili District Dir Lower	Rs. 800,000/-	Rs. 80,000/-
12	RFA/DR/PL-Granite (1)/2020 Block-C	Granite	140.49 acres Near village Banda Kili District Dir Lower	Rs. 800,000/-	Rs. 80,000/-
13	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (0981)/2023	Granite	200 acres Near village sangipara Maskini District Dir Lower	Rs. 1000,000/-	Rs. 100,000/-
14	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (0978)/2023	Granite	199.86 acres Near village Mia Banda mayar District Dir Lower	Rs. 1000,000/-	Rs. 100,000/-
15	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (0979)/2023	Granite	193.59 acres Near village Munda Qila District Dir Lower	Rs. 1500,000/-	Rs. 150,000/-
16	DGMM/DR/ML-Quartz (0980)/2023	Quartz	166.72 acres Near village Diyarun Khazana District Dir Lower	Rs. 400,000/-	Rs. 40,000/-
17	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite Schist (1048)/2023	Granite Schist	195.58 acres Near village Adenzai District Dir Lower	Rs. 900,000/-	Rs. 90,000/-
18	DGMM?DR/ML-Granite (1035)/2023	Granite	199.58 acres Near village mangram badwan District Dir Lower	Rs. 1200,000/-	Rs. 120,000/-
19	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite Schist (1043)/2023	Granite Schist	19.87 acres Near village Warbaza Chakdara District Dir Lower	Rs. 1200,000/-	Rs. 120,000/-
20	DGMM/DR/ML-Feldspar (1045)/2023	Feldspar	135.67 acres Near village Jabagai Tehsil Adenzai District Dir Lower	Rs. 300,000/-	Rs. 30,000/-
21	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1029)/2023	Granite	199.99 acres Near village Ramial Kandao District Dir Lower	Rs. 1300,000/-	Rs. 130,000/-
22	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1047)/2023	Granite	199.60 acres near village Degan District Dir Lower	Rs. 1500,000/-	Rs. 150,000/-
23	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1031)/2023	Granite	199.73 acres Near village Barchanai Sar District Dir Lower	Rs. 1400,000/-	Rs. 140,000/-
24	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1032)/2023	Granite	199.32 acres Near village Tangi Brangola District Dir Lower	Rs. 1500,000/-	Rs. 150,000/-
25	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1034)/2023	Granite	199.43 acres Near village Bar Chanai Sar, Brangola, District Dir Lower	Rs. 1300,000/-	Rs. 130,000/-
26	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1187)/2023	Granite	200 acres Near village Kharkai, Maskini Dir Lower	Rs. 500,000/-	Rs. 50,000/-
27	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1186)/2023	Granite	82 acres Near village Banai Miskini District Dir Lower	Rs. 600,000/-	Rs. 60,000/-
28	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1184)/2023	Granite	40.32 acres Near village Janmai Mayar District Dir Lower	Rs. 200,000/-	Rs. 20,000/-
29	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1185)/2023	Granite	199.63 Near village Banai Maskini District Dir Lower	Rs. 500,000/-	Rs. 50,000/-
30	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1261)/2023	Granite	119.77 acres Near village Dherai, Shatai District Dir Lower	Rs. 500,000/-	Rs. 50,000/-
31	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1285)/2023	Granite	198.67 acres Near village Novay Kandao, Koheri Malakand, Tehsil Balambat, District Dir Lower	Rs. 800,000/-	Rs. 80,000/-
32	DGMM/DR/ML-Granite (1262)/2023	Granite	142.00 acres Near village Tabbo, Sherkhani Dir Lower	Rs. 300,000/-	Rs. 30,000/-
33	DGMM/DR/ML - Marble (1588)/2023	Marble	81.71 acres Near village Kalo Marai, District Dir Lower	Rs. 400,000/-	Rs. 40,000/-
34	RFA/MKD/ML-Chromite (1144)/2020	Chromite	483.078 Near village Chambi Kandao, District Malakand	Rs. 800,000/-	Rs. 80,000/-
35	RFA/MKD/ML-Chromite (1143)/2020 (Block-C)	Chromite	292.155 acres Near village Urghar, District Malakand	Rs. 800,000/-	Rs. 80,000/-
36	RFA/MKD/ML-Chromite (1135)/2020 (Block-B)	Chromite	309.631 acres Near village Banghakhi, District Malakand	Rs. 800,000/-	Rs. 80,000/-
37	RFA/MKD/ML-Chromite (1140)/2020 (Block-A)	Chromite	368.685 acres near village Urghar District Malakand	Rs. 800,000/-	Rs. 80,000/-
38	RFA/MKD/ML- Chromite (1142)/2020 (Block-A)	Chromite	304.15 acres near village Shkakot District Malakand	Rs. 800,000/-	Rs. 80,000/-
39	DGMM/BNR/ML(SS)-Limestone (Construction) (1725)/2023	Limestone	99.60 Acres near village Ghazikhana tehsil Gadezi District Buner	Rs. 1000,000/-	Rs. 100,000/-
40	DGMM/BNR/ML(SS)-Feldspar (1640)/2023 Block A	Feldspar	109.23 Acres near village Bahi Tehsil Daggar District Buner	Rs. 700,000/-	Rs. 70,000/-
41	DGMM/HNR/ML(SS)-Feldspar (1641)/2023 Block B	Feldspar	137.62 Acres near village Bahi Tehsil Daggar District Buner	Rs. 700,000/-	Rs. 70,000/-
SOUTH DIVISION					
42	MDW-KT-ML-Coal (122)-2007	Coal	88.28 acres Near village Jangal Tehsil & District Kohat	Rs. 2200,000/-	Rs. 220,000/-
HAZARA DIVISION					
43	MDW/AD/ML-Dolomite (08)/2007	Dolomite	58.890 acres near village Salhad District Abbottabad	Rs. 1000,000/-	Rs. 100,000/-
44	MDW-KN-ML-Copper Ore (01)-2012	Copper	141.915 acres Near village Kolai District Kolai / Palas Kohistan	Rs. 2000,000/-	Rs. 200,000/-

Terms & Conditions:

- Interested person / firm / company shall submit application on the form as provided in scheduled-II of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mineral Auction Rules 2022 accompanied with application fee **Rs. 10,000/- (non-refundable)** in proper hand of account (0066-2008208215) in any branch of Bank of Khyber along with requisite documents i.e NTN, CNIC and Bank Statement not older by 02 months having closing balance of 5 million (Five Million) Rupees, call deposit at the rate of (10%) ten percent of the reserved price at least five days before the date of auction in hard form to this Directorate.
- The Call Deposit in favor of Director General Mines and Minerals, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa must be deposited in any branch of Bank of Khyber OR the amount of call deposit must be deposited in the account **No. 00662008140092 Bank of Khyber** Warsak Road Branch Peshawar.
- The applicants who have deposited application fees and call deposit in response to Advertisement vide INF(P):2786/2023 Auction Notice No. 38 shall be considered for this Auction, however they will submit NTN, Bank Statement not older by 02 months having closing balance of 5 Million (Five million) and application form provide in schedule-II of the Rules ibid, while fresh applicants will complete all required formalities including application fee and call deposit.
- Eligible applicants shall participate in auction in person or through their representative duly authorized in writing by the applicant.
- The minimum number of eligible applicants for the first auction shall be three. If the first auction fails, the minimum number of eligible applicants for the second auction shall be two and if the second auction also fails, the minimum number of eligible applicants for the third auction shall be one. The auction proceedings shall be conducted if the minimum number for any of the above mentioned auctions is complete.
- In case of more than one bidder, the highest bidder shall be announced on completion of the auction.
- On completion of the auction proceedings the Auction Committee shall submit its recommendations regarding the highest bidder or as the case may be the single bidder to the Licensing Authority for approval.
- The Licensing Authority may accept the recommendations of the Auction Committee or reject the same on grounds to be recorded in writing.
- If the Licensing Authority approves the recommendations of the Auction Committee in favor of the highest bidder or the single bidder as the case may be "offer letter" shall be to him and in case of rejection of the same rejection letter shall be issued accordingly.
- On issuance of the offer letter the successful bidder shall be required to deposit 10% of the bid amount as security and 25% of the bid amount as down payment, deposit annual rent, withholding tax, professional tax, KPRA tax, demarcation fee, mining lease application fee and other government taxes/fees within fortnight.
- After compliance of the offer letter, the successful bidder shall execute mineral agreement with the Licensing Authority or its authorized officer within fortnight.
- If the successful bidder fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the offer letter as provided in sub-rule (3) within specified time limit, his call deposit shall also be forfeited in favor of Government and the second highest bidder shall be considered as per provision to sub-rule (2) of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mineral Auction Rules-2022.
- If the second successful bidder also fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the offer letter within specified time limit as provided in sub-rule (3), his call deposit shall be forfeited in favor of Government.
- After compliance of S.No. 11, allotment letter shall be issued to the successful bidder and the lessee shall deposit the remaining bid amount, in case the bid amount is up to fifty million rupees, the same shall be deposited in four quarterly installments in one year. In case the bid amount is above fifty million but not more than two hundred million rupees, the same shall be deposited in eight equal quarterly installments in two year. In case the bid amount is more than two hundred million rupees, the same shall be deposited in twelve equal quarterly installments in three years from the date of issuance of allotment letter failing which the lease shall be processed for cancellation subject to issuance of 30- days' notice. The security, installment(s) and other government dues so deposited shall be forfeited.
- In case the lessee fails to pay the bid amount as specified in S.No. 12 above, a fine at the rate of one percent (1%) of the due amount per month shall be imposed until all outstanding dues are cleared.
- The lessee shall deposit the installments of auction money as per payment schedule mentioned in the allotment letter, failing which the mining lease shall be processed for cancellation subject to thirty days prior notice.
- The security amount so deposited shall be refunded to the lessee after clearance of all Government dues including bid amount and the lessee shall deposit the normal security amount as notified for mining lease.
- In case it is found that the area or part thereof was not free and has been advertised and subsequently granted to any one inadvertently. The party will release the same unconditionally.
- The application form and treasury Challan can be obtained from the Directorate General Mines and Minerals and can also be downloaded from the website of the Department.
- Before applying for participating in Auction proceeding, all interested parties are advised to visit the area of interest and check for mineral potentials of the advertised areas.
- All the auction plans/ sketches can be downloaded from the department official website: www.kpminerals.gov.pk.
- Application form complete in all respect shall be submitted in the office of Director General Mines & Minerals on or before **04-01-2024** before the closing hours.
- Separate application along with the requisite formalities shall be submitted for each block/area.
- The areas will be auctioned on "**as is where is**" basis.
- No black listed/defaulters person, firm or company shall be allowed to participate in the auction.
- The successful bidder shall also submit Application for mining lease on the prescribed form along-with the requisite formalities.
- All the forest areas have already been declined. However, if any forest land/area is found overlapped with the auction area, the same portion shall be declined.
- The lessee shall abide with the provisions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines & Minerals Act, 2017 & amendment Act, 2019 and rules as well as directions issued by the Licensing Authority or its authorized officer from time to time.
- The interested parties may visit the Directorate General Mines and Minerals for further information on any working day before the closing date and may also contact on 091-9210244.

Assistant Director (Coordination)
For Additional Director General Mines & Minerals, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

INF(P):
3018/2023



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Arshad Hussain Shah chairing a meeting regarding issues of TMA and elected representatives of local bodies.

NCRC initiates consultative process



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As part of efforts to improve prohibition of child domestic labour Bill 2024, the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC) has initiated the consultative process from provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with key stakeholders.

The first of the series of the consultations at the provincial level was aimed to fostering collaboration with key stakeholders, including government representatives, civil society organizations, and experts in child rights. The consultation addressed concerns and gathered insights, to improve the prohibition of child domestic labour bill 2024 and bring about transformative change by strengthening legal measures against those involved in engaging children in domestic labour.

This bill aims to amend the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, to criminalize child domestic labour and eradicate this pervasive menace, said

a press release issued here, adding that the proposed bill titled the Criminal Amendment (Prohibition of Child Domestic Labor) Bill, 2024, signifies a commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of children throughout Pakistan.

The bill proposes the insertion of a new section, 374A, into the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, specifically addressing child domestic labor. This section criminalizes the employment, recruitment, harboring, transportation, or provision of a child below the age of eighteen years for domestic labor. The punishment includes imprisonment ranging from two to seven years and a fine not less than five hundred thousand rupees. The offenses related to child domestic labour are categorized as non-bailable, non-compoundable, and cognizable.

Commenting on the consultative process, Nadia Bibi, Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, NCRC, stated that by making child domestic labour (CDL) a non-compoundable, non-bailable and cognizable offence, the NCRC

aims to send a clear message that the rights and well-being of children is its top priority. The NCRC recognizes the importance of collective input and expertise in shaping effective legislation.

She said, "This bill reflects our firm commitment to ending the scourge of child domestic labor. By making CDL a non-compoundable and non-bailable offence, we are sending a powerful message that the exploitation of children will not be tolerated. We urge all stakeholders to join hands with us in this critical mission to safeguard the rights and dignity of every child." Farrah Ilyas, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF, stated "On behalf of UNICEF, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the NCRC - our partner - to have prioritized this issue and for organizing this important consultation. This is truly an important step towards the realization of the right of a child to be protected from domestic labour and putting an end to this abuse and torture that children are being subjected to".

BRT to launch new route of ER-16

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Bus Rapid transit BRT will Launched a new Express Route (ER 16) stretching from Gulbahar Chowk to Nawab Market Phase 6 Hayatabad. The introduction of this new route is a significant step towards optimizing commuting experiences for the residents of Peshawar.

The express route encompasses a total of 15 stops, seamlessly connecting key locations within the city. Commencing its journey at Gulbahar Chowk, the route will traverse along the main BRT corridor, stopping at Malik Saad Shaheed, Sadar Bazaar, Tehkal Bala, Abdara, University of Peshawar, Board Bazaar, and concluding at the Mall of Hayatabad.

Upon reaching the Mall of Hayatabad, the route will transition to mixed traffic roads, catering to additional stops on the feeder route including Zarghoni Mosque, Malik Saad Market, Haji Camp, Madrassa, Phase 7 Terminal, Gol Chowk, and Nawab Market. This new route is expected to alleviate passenger congestion on existing routes and provide a more streamlined travel experience.

The service will initially operate with a total of 16 buses dedicated to this specific route, ensuring prompt and efficient transportation for commuters. The BRT Peshawar system, boasting a fleet of 244 buses, operates on a comprehensive network of 17 routes. With all buses actively engaged in operations, the BRT system serves approximately 300,000 passengers daily, further solidifying its position as a vital component of the city's public transportation infrastructure.

Saddaf Khami, Trans Peshawar Spokesperson, told media, "BRT Peshawar has become the backbone of the social and economic structure of the City of Peshawar. We are currently operating the system with a total of 244 buses on 17 routes providing service to about 300,000 passengers per day. Every single bus of our fleet is actively engaged in operations. She added, "We believe that this expansion will not only enhance the overall commuter experience but also contribute to the decongestion of existing routes."

21 nanbais sent to jail

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Food Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa officials have sent 21 nanbais (bread sellers) behind the bars for selling less-weighted bread at an exorbitant price.

Rashan Controller Peshawar, Jamshed Afridi told media on Friday that following complaints lodged by the locals, Assistant Food controllers, Tasbi Ullah and Kamal Ahmad inspected weight and prices of the bread at various markets of the city.

During inspection 21 nanbais were found guilty of selling the bread with less weight and at an exorbitant price. The 21 nanbais were charged under the food act and sent to jail. He said the government has fix the price of a 120gm roti at Rs 20 and no one would be allowed to breach these criteria. He said action against profiteers was underway in the district and stern legal action would be initiated against the violators.

Governor assured to resolve problems of textile association

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textile Mills Association here Friday called on KP Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali and informed him about their problems and issues.

The delegation that was led by Muhammad Kamran Shah informed governor about their reservations relating to increase in gas prices and urged him to raise the issue with federal authorities. Delegation said that they would be forced to stop production if their concerns were not addressed timely and added that our province deserve adequate

gas supply according to its production ratio of gas.

Governor assured to take up the matter with caretaker prime minister and said that price increase is a matter of concern for the province as it may affect production of industries. He said that necessary steps would be taken for the relief of textile industry and to remove their concerns.

Meanwhile, a twenty-member delegation of Islamic Doctors Forum called on governor and discussed problems relating to doctors and hospitals. Governor listened to their problems and assured them his cooperation. A thirty-

member delegation of Government Degree

College Ogi Manshera met with KP Governor and discussed problems including transport facility, college boundary wall and other needed amenities in the college.

They said that college is at security risk due to damaged boundary wall that was collapsed in earthquake. Governor said that their problems would be conveyed to caretaker minister for necessary action. He also assured cooperation to delegation and said that their problems would be solved at the earliest.

Body setup to resolve auction of riverbed sand and gravel

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The elders of Nasradin Khel and Osakhel tribes led by former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan held a meeting at Malikabad for taking up the issue of auctioning sand and gravel on the riverbed in parts of the district. The tribes' elders and members of the Dir Qaumi Jirga from different areas attended the meeting. The participants informed the meeting about their suggestions.

Later a delegation of elders led by Sahibzada Yaqub Khan and chief of the Dir Qaumi Pasoon malik Jehan Alam Yousafzai met the newly posted deputy commissioner Lower Dir Waseel Khan at his office here on Friday to resolve the issue of auctioning sand and gravel on the riverbed. The delegation also included chief of the Dir Qaumi Pasoon Malik Jehan Alam, former provincial minister Malik Jehan Zeb Khan, former MPA Malik Behram Khan, brigadier retired Saeedullah, advocate Javed Iqbal, Malik Aslam Pervez, Malik Muhammad Ayub and advocate Salim Khan.

The elders informed the DC about the reservations of land owners regarding opening bids for sale of

sand and gravel on the bed of Panjkora River. They said that flash floods had washed away their fertile agricultural lands on both sides of the river thus widening the riverbed. They said the National Engineering Services Pakistan (Nespa) had been tasked to initiate a survey for demarcation of the riverbed but it had failed to determine the limits of the river and other streams in the district.

The tribal elders said the land owners wanted the district administration to resolve the matter peacefully. After listening to elders, the deputy commissioner Waseel Khan constituted a committee headed by the additional deputy commissioner Abdul Wali Khan and tasked it to look into the matter. Representatives of the land owners and officials of the minerals department would be members of the committee. The DC also assured that an FIR against a land owner Sher Shah registered by the minerals department would be reversed. He said the matter would be resolved however; no one would be allowed to take law into his hands.

Power outage: The tehsil chairman Lal Qila

maidan Ashraf Salar on Friday demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and high ups of the Pesco to take notice of the over 15 hours power outage in Maidan. Talking to local journalists he complained that the duration of the unscheduled power outage had exceeded over 15 hours a day. He said that the majority of the water supply schemes were dysfunctional due to power outages. He said the residents would have no option but to come onto the roads if the prolonged power outage was not stopped.

Power disconnection: The executive engineer Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) Timergara division Jabrail Khan on Friday told local journalists at his office that the company had disconnected 432 illegal connection during the last month and registered cases against 91 consumers for using illegal electricity in the area. He said that Rs 22.4 million were recovered as fine. The XEN said that the company had formed 12 special teams for this purpose. About the recovery he said that so far Rs 57.7 million had been recovered while a total of 3289 faulty power meters had been replaced.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali giving away shield to Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar Prof. Dr. Saleem.

Fostering democratic culture is beneficial for the country: Faiq

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Opposing the monarchy-style and personality-based politics in the country, Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party emphasized that fostering of democratic culture was in the best interest of the country. Shah while talking to different delegations during his visit to Punjab on Friday made it clear Pakistan's future attached with fostering of democratic system.

However, he said here operates only monarch style politics and governments and they are completely different to Quaid's thinking and ideology of Pakistan. The party leader went on to say that the world's democracy revolved around public benefit but our democracy caught up in the personal net. He said people will also free democracy and will get their own authorities, vowing that ATP will support them at every juncture.

Faiq stressed democracy should be the people instead of personalities, meaning there must be public desire,

public representative government and people's choice. Here, public rights were usurping and robbed by sitting in palaces, drawing rooms and properties/assets, he added. The ATP chief continued to say that vote, public and elections, all of them have become meaningless.

He said people have been trapped under heavyweight politicians and personalities. ATP mission/journey is 'Takmeel e Pakistan' where in people will ensure public authority and the oppressive segment would gain justice, Mr Shah said. The party leader noted a deep fog prevails over politics, economy and justice.

He added political parties and personalities want only their own selection whereas election has only been considered as a trailer and then burying democracy for giving importance to personalities. Is the founder of Pakistan Quaid e Azam not given the ideology of parliamentary democracy and public authority? By carrying forward the mission of Quaid E Azam, ATP wants

to bring real democracy and public authority in the country, and never accept any kind of monarchy-style government, Shah said, asserting vote should be given to ideology, manifesto and roadmap instead of personalities.

Two die of asphyxia

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Two watchmen from a local hotel died, apparently due to asphyxia while sleeping in a room with coal burning in the confined space in Nathia Gali Hotel, police informed on Friday.

The unfortunate incident came to light when dead bodies of the watchmen were found in a hotel room. Initial investigations by rescue teams indicated that the cause of death might be linked to the presence of poisonous gas, likely a result of coal burning in the confined space of the room.

Women University role recognized

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Women University Mardan has been recognized as a frontrunner in the region and has earned on-stage acknowledgement for its unwavering commitment to excellence.

A press statement issued by the relevant officials of Women University Mardan stated that the University's management, in collaboration with Focal person from the Higher Education Statistics (HES) initiative, had been selected for this prestigious honor. The Higher Education Data Repository Division (HEDR) has played a pivotal role in advancing the landscape of higher education data management.

HEDR has unveiled an online data collection portal for the submission of Higher Education Statistics across Pakistan. This portal, designed to streamline data submission processes by conducting extensive online and physical training sessions, benefiting 450 focal persons nationwide. These sessions have equipped participants with the essential skills needed to navigate the "Edustats" portal seamlessly, ensuring a smooth and efficient data submission process.

In line with these developments, the HEDR Division, in collaboration with Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), is set to acknowledge and celebrate the efforts of institutions that have timely submitted complete data for the Financial Year 2021-22 to the HEC on the "Edustats" online portal. This recognition was presented in the form of an "Award of Appreciation" ceremony, held at HEC Islamabad, specifically honoring universities that have demonstrated exemplary commitment by submitting complete data within the stipulated timeframe. This event underscores the collective dedication of higher education institutions towards data accuracy and timeliness, showcasing a commitment to transparency and accountability within the academic sector.

Power suspension on different feeders notified

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Friday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Jamrud grid station on 18th and 20th December from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Tajabad 2 feeders will face inconvenience.

It said that power supply will also remain suspended from Peshawar University Grid Station on 18th and 20th December from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumers of University Campus, Canal Town, Malakandher, Engineering, Regi, Taj Abad 2, Agriculture, Mera Achini, HMC, Ring Road, Danish Abad, Gharib Abad, Rahat Abad 1, CMB, Abdara, Achini 1, Hussain Zai, Sufaid Dheri, Old Bara Road, JAF, Academy Town, Sulcular Road, DHA, HBC, Aksari 6 and Commercial Balding, Abdul Razak, Porova feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, it said power supply will remain suspended from Nowshera City Grid Station on 17th December from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. resultantly consumers 132 KV Nowshera City, Marble City and 66 KV Khashgai grid connected feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from Mansehra Grid Station on 16th, 18th and 21st December from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. resultantly, consumers Murad Pur, Khaki, Shinkaryari, Balakot, Boi feeders will face inconvenience.

It further said that power supply will remain suspended from Mardan Grid Station on 21st and 28th December from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Mohabatabad, Shaikh Maltoon, Express, Industrial, SIDB, Janabad, Pakistan Chowk, Canal Road, New Charsadda Road, New Manga, Saleem Khan, Gujar Garhi, Town, Muslim Abad, New Saleem Khan, Bacha Khan, MED, Benazir Children Hospital, Muhabatabad Road, Nissata Road, Ahmat Abad, Misri Abad, PRC, Eid Ghah, Green Area, New Sheikh Maltoon feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will also remain suspended from Besham Grid Station on 16th, 19th and 21st December from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Besham 2 feeders and 33 KV Pattan and Thakot grid connected feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from Mingora Grid Station on 16th, 19th and 21st December from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. resultantly consumers of Malam Jaba, Express Saidu Hospital, Bandai, Mingora 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Kabal, Nawa Kali, Saidu Sharif, Barikot 2, Odigram, Kabal 4, Matra 2, Faiza Ghat, Kabal 2, Gulda, Marghazar, Saidu Hospital, Kabal 3, Gogdara, Takhta Band, Qambar, Singar, MES, Haji Baba, Shin, Saidu Baba, Bara Bandai, Shah Dara, Hospital Express feeders will face inconvenience.



PESHAWAR: Provincial leader of PPP Farzand Ali Wazir presenting gun to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.



In brief

Woman injured in rocket attack

JAFFARABAD (PPI): A woman sustained injuries after unidentified men fired rocket launchers at Goth Abdul Rasheed Jhokrani, a suburb area of district Jaffarabad in Balochistan province on Friday. According to reports, unidentified miscreants fired five rocket launchers at at Goth Abdul Rasheed Jhokrani, a suburb area of district, resultantly, a woman sustained injuries. The injured woman was rushed to Jaffarabad hospital. Miscreants managed to escape after firing rockets. Further investigation is being conducted by the concerned authorities.

Two killed in road mishaps

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Two people were killed and two others injured in separate road accidents in different localities of Sheikhupura, police said on Friday. According to details, the first accident took place on Lahore road outside a private housing society where an over speeding dumper knocked a motorcycle carrying two youth. As a result of accident, 22-year-old Ali Raza was killed on the spot while Ali Hamza 18, sustained critical wounds. Another reckless dumper ran over two people engaged in removing technical fault of a truck parked by roadside. Abbas 47, was killed on the spot while 46-year-old Tariq was critically injured. The bodies and injured of both accidents were shifted to different hospitals and police after registering separate cases at respective police stations started investigations.

Human skeleton found

FAISALABAD (INP): Human skeleton was found from sugarcane fields in Chak No 492 GB of Faisalabad on Friday. According to details, the labourers while cutting sugarcane found human skeleton after which they informed police which reached the scene and took the skeleton into custody. It was feared that it was skeleton of Salabat s/o Nasir Dalo hailing from Chak 489 GB who was missing for last few month. Heirs of the missing person alleged that accused Nasir s/o Yousaf Dalo had killed Salabat over personal enmity and threw his body in sugarcane fields. The police after registering a case into the incident have started an investigation.

Relief goods distributed

QUETTA (PPI): Abdul Majeed Sarbazi, Chairman, Al-Khidmat Foundation, has said that relief gears amounting to Rs250 million have been distributed amongst the flood affectees of Balochistan province. Addressing a press conference at Quetta Press Club here on Friday, he said 177 residential homes in different flood affected areas of the province had been constructed for flood affectees apart from setting up a Al-Khidmat Hospital. Announcing to extend pecuniary assistance to the orphans of lawyers and police officers and officials who had embraced martyrdom in terrorist attacks, he said that Al-Khidmat Foundation would also distribute wheel chairs amongst the police personnel disabled in terrorist related incidents. He said that Al-Khidmat Foundation had also distributed food bags amongst flood affectees of district Quetta. Meanwhile, total of 303 patients, including 129 male, 43 women and 131 children, were diagnosed in a free medical camp arranged under the auspices of Frontier Corps (North) in Khost area of district Harnai in Balochistan province on Friday.



ABBOTTABAD: Caretaker Minister for Local Government, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Aamir Abdullah addressing to participants at school.

Expansion of private educational institutions need of the time

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Caretaker Minister for Local Government, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Aamir Abdullah underscored the pivotal role of private educational institutions on the national scale.

He expressed these views while addressing the convention of a private school network at a local hotel here Friday. The minister lauded the educational standards and system implemented by Dar-e-Arqam Schools Pakistan and Al-Ghazali Trust, recognizing their contributions to the advancement of education throughout the country.

Dr. Aamir Abdullah proposed the establishment of similar schools in KP districts, particularly in marginalized regions. This proposition was made during discussions with the directors of Dar-e-Arqam Schools Pakistan, a nationwide network of private educational institutions, in conjunction with their national convention.

While addressing the convention KP minister Aamir Abdullah shared personal experiences and commended the institutions for their significant role in education and practical life. He particularly praised the methodology adopted by Dar-e-Arqam Schools System to enhance their educational institutions. He admired the

system of Dar-e-Arqam Schools and emphasized the need to expand it to the districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He stressed that these regions also deserve access to such facilities to ensure the provision of quality education. The minister assured full cooperation from the provincial government to support these institutions.

The Chief Executive Officer of Al-Ghazali Trust and Chairman of Dar-e-Arqam Schools System affirmed their commitment to extending their educational network to the districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In light of this commitment, they invited Minister Aamir Abdullah to visit their central headquarters in Lahore this week for further discussions and collaboration.

PPP become voice of all four provinces

F.P. Report

HUB: Senior leader of Pakistan Peoples Party and District Hub President, former President Asif Ali Zardari's spokesman for Balochistan, Mir Ali Hassan Zehri, while addressing the tribal elders and workers on the occasion of his visit to Sakran, said that the workers are preparing for the election.

Party has become the voice of all four provinces and the success of the upcoming elections will be PPP's. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that the conscious people of Hub and Lasbela will not listen to the hollow slogans and false claims of the magicians and vested interests who have been occupying their rights for decades. The people of Hub and Lasbela have recognized these self-interested elements that prioritized their personal interests over the collective interests of the people and usurped the rights of the poor people.

He further said that the country is currently facing serious problems and clean

and transparent elections are the need of the country. Only Pakistan Peoples Party has the ability to lead Pakistan on the path of prosperity and rapid development. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that under the prudent guidance of former President Asif Ali Zardari and the enthusiastic young leadership of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the Pakistan Peoples Party will achieve great success in all four provinces and form the government in the center as well, while the next prime minister will be Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

On this occasion, the tribal elders said that Mir Ali Hassan Zehri is a sincere and selfless personality who has always struggled to solve the problems of the Hub, lasbela and its surroundings and always supported the poor and the oppressed, for which the people of Hub and Sakran. The people are grateful to him from the bottom of their hearts and hope that in the future, Mir Ali Hassan Zehri will similarly use his energy for the welfare and

development of the people of the area and the network of development and prosperity projects in the area.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri thanked the elders and workers and said that Pakistan Peoples Party is the party of the poor people which has always worked for the poor people of the country and that is the reason why people join the PPP. He said that we have not left the people of Hub and Lasbela alone before and we have tried to help in every difficult time according to our standards and in the future we will also work for public welfare and sustainable development and prosperity and unemployment for our people. We will use all our energies for the elimination and we will continue to raise our voice for the right of our people in every forum. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri expressed hope that the intelligent people of Hub and Lasbela and surrounding areas will use their vote properly and give success to Pakistan Peoples Party with their valuable vote.

Seminar on 'drug abuse prevention among youth' held

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: District Youth Officer in collaboration with District Administration Dir lower under the "Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program" arranged an awareness seminar on "Drug Abuse Prevention among youth" on Friday here.

The main objective of the event was to educate students about the harmful effects of drug addiction on health as well as their personal and professional life. Guest speaker, Miss Ismat Shah (Clinical Psychologist at Abeer Saeed Memorial Hospital Chakdara) addressing the event warned the students that the menace of drug addiction is destroying our youth and affecting the whole society. She high-

lighted the gloomy reality of the rising trend of drug addiction among college and university students.

Drug addiction is increasing among Pakistani female populations as well, she further added. We need to engage our youth in healthy co-curricular and sports activities to prevent them from indulging into drug addiction. She stressed upon the students that if any of their family member is drug addict, he or she must be treated in the drug rehabilitation centers.

Mrs. Farrukh Naz (Principal Govt Degree College Adenzai), invited as Chief Guest said that parents should build strong and friendly bonding with their children to help them in their stressful situations, which is one of the common reasons for drug use

initiation. She further added that a safe academic institutions' environment and strong family system together can help in eliminating this menace from our society.

Asst. Prof. Abbieer Iqbal and Asst. Prof. Shazia Muhammad also addressed the students regarding the negative impact of drugs and narcotics. She emphasized that the drug addict persons must be encouraged so that they utilize their energies in social welfare and healthy activities rather than becoming drug addicts. At the end of the informative and beneficial session, Mrs. Farrukh Naz Principal Govt Girls Degree College Adenzai and Youth Officer Shahzad Tariq presented shields to the respected guests and key participants of the event.



QUETTA: Donkey cart holder on way during rain.

Concern shown over imposition of ban on supplying edible items

QUETTA (PPI): Anjuman-e-Tajiran, Chaman, has announced to join Anjuman-e-Tajiran Balochistan (Registered). This announcement was made by Haji Jamal Shah Achakzai, President, Anjuman Tajiran, Chaman while addressing a press conference with other office bearers of Anjuman-e-Tajiran, Chaman at Quetta Press Club here on Friday.

He said Anjuman-e-Tajiran, Chaman would soon arrange a historical seminar in Chaman, adding that besides Rahim Agha, President, Anjuman-e-Tajiran Balochistan (Registered), Commissioner Quetta Division, Deputy Commissioner, Chaman and other authorities would also be invited to attend the subject seminar.

Imposition of ban upon supplying sugar and other edible items from Quetta to Chaman resulted in the scarcity of sugar and other edible items in Chaman city of the province, he said. Announcing to part ways with Anjuman-e-Tajiran (Amardin Agha) group and to join Anjuman-e-Tajiran Balochistan (registered), he said that business community of Chaman was facing different problems and that was why Anjuman-e-Tajiran, Chaman decided to wage struggle under the banner of Anjuman-e-Tajiran Balochistan (Registered).

On the occasion, Rahim Agha, President, Anjuman-e-Tajiran, Senior Vice President, Anjuman-e-Tajiran, Chaman, Haji Abdul Shakoor Nurzai, Vice President-I, Gulbadin Nurzai, Aman Achakzai, Vice President-II, Habibullah Achakzai, Chairman, Abdul Jabbar Achakzai, General Secretary, Haji Abdul Wahid, City President, Haji Allah Nur, Secretary Finance, Bahadur Khan, Joint Secretary, Shair Muhammad Achakzai and others were also present.

Two killed in mishap

KHANEWAL (INP): Two people were killed and 10 others injured when a passenger bus crashed into a tree due to dense smog here on Friday.

According to details, a Sadiqabad bound passenger bus coming from Lahore skidded off road due to poor visibility caused by smog and hit a tree near Cinema Mor in tehsil Mian Channu of Khanewal.

As a result of accident, two people including Muhammad Aslam hailing from Kot Addu and Hamayun belonging to Multan were killed while women among 10 others sustained injuries.

Lakki Marwat police conducted mock exercise

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Lakki Marwat police conducted a mock exercise at the police lines in the district headquarters complex Tajazai to check cops' preparedness to counter terrorist attacks. Along with policemen, the commandos of Elite Force Rapid Response Force, bomb disposal squad experts and Rescue 1122 workers took part in the exercise.

An official said that the mock drill was conducted on the directives of district police officer Tariq Habib. "During the exercise, the cops led by DSP Riaz Khan exhibited their skills to neutralise terrorists and rescued the officials of the district police office", he maintained. He said that the staffers of Rescue 1122 also participated in the drill to show their excellence in providing quick relief and first aid to injured persons and their prompt shifting to hospitals.

On the occasion, the deputy superintendent of police appreciated the police and rescue personnel for their active participation in the mock exercise and said that the activity was aimed to test the performance of law enforcement personnel in terrorist attacks and emergency situations. "Such exercises are helpful to make law enforcers and other stakeholders familiar with their role and improve coordination among police, security forces, rescue services and other concerned organisations", he added. He reiterated that policemen were fully alert and prepared to maintain law and order and

avert any terror bid in the district.

Gang of gamblers arrested: Police on Friday claimed to have busted a gang of gamblers and attested over a dozen suspects during a raid in Mamakhel area of Naurang town. A police official said that the action was launched on the directives of Lakki Marwat DPO Tariq Habib who had received information about the illegal activity.

"When a party of Shaheed Asmatullah Khan Khattak police station reached a forest near the village, the suspects who were playing a bet on dogs and cocks' fight tried to escape the place", he maintained. He said that the cops overpowered 13 gamblers and shifted them to the police station.

The official said that the arrested suspects included Sadamullah, Tahirullah, Sibghatullah, Mazharullah, Zenatullah, Muhammad Umar, Umargul, Tahir Khan, Jalal Khan, Suleman Khan, Adil, Farman and Abidullah. He said that some arrested men belonged to Bannu, Karak and North Waziristan districts and police seized a dog and two roosters from them. "A case has been registered against the arrested men and further investigation is underway", he added.

In separate action, Lakki police arrested two bike thieves and recovered two stolen motorcycles from them. "The police official said that the arrested suspects identified as Attaur Rehman and Hamidullah were active members of a bike lifting gang and they

would steal motorcycles from the commercial areas in Lakki city. "During initial interrogation, the arrested men confessed their involvement in bike lifting incidents", he claimed.

Five day anti-polio drive inaugurated: Lakki Marwat deputy commissioner inaugurated a five day anti-polio drive by administering oral polio vaccine to several children on the premises of his office on Friday. Among others DHO Dr Abdugul, officials of partners' organisations were present on the occasion.

Earlier, at a meeting the deputy commissioner chaired a meeting at his office to review arrangements for the vaccination campaign commencing from Dec 18. Dr Gul briefed the meeting about the preparations, team deployment, establishment of fixed centres and engagement of teachers and religious scholars in the drive to achieve the immunisation of the targeted population against the crippling disease.

Mr Wazir asked the vaccinators to reach every child under the age of five and ensure their vaccination. He said that his administration with support of police had made fool-proof security arrangements for polio workers. The deputy commissioner said that besides monitoring the field activities of polio workers, his administration officials would help the health department to convince reluctant parents on immunisation of their kids and ensure coverage of refusal cases.

PTI hatching conspiracy to escape from election: JUI-F

F.P. Report

CHAGAI: Former Provincial Minister and leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl), Sakhi Mir Amanullah Notezai, has said that PTI was a short cut party that wanted to get power through short cut way.

In a statement issued here on Friday, he said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was hatching conspiracy to escape from election, adding that after vandalis-

ing state's institutions, PTI was hatching conspiracy to escape from election.

He said timely election was in the larger interest of the country and nation. Terming PTI as an enemy of the country, he demanded to announce date for conducting general election after imposing complete ban on PTI.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Saleem, Additional Secretary, Chief Minister's Inspection Team (CMIT), Balochistan, has been

transferred and posted as Director General (Implementation), Planning and Development Department vice Ghulam Mustafa.

Similarly, Ghulam Mustafa, Director General (Implementation), Planning and Development Department, has been transferred and posted as Additional Secretary, Chief Minister's Inspection Team (CMIT), Balochistan vice Muhammad Saleem, said a notification issued by the Government of Balochistan.



QUETTA: Caretaker Minister of Balochistan for Interior Capt (R) Zubair Jamali called on Governor Malik Abdul Wali Khan.

Various depts of DHQ Mardan inspected

F.P. Report

MARDAN: On public complaints, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao made a surprise visit to District Headquarters Hospital Mardan (DHQ) in the guise of an ordinary citizen and the facilities inquiring about the complaints of ordinary citizens checking various departments.

Instructions were given the hospital administration to provide all facilities to the citizens. According to the details, Deputy Commissioner of Mardan, Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, made a surprise visit to District Headquarters Hospital Mardan as a civilian without security on public complaints and reviewed the complaints of the citizens and the citizens in the hospital were asked about the facilities and complaints. On this occasion,

Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao while checking various departments of the hospital, issued instructions to the hospital administration regarding the provision of all amenities to the citizens and cleanliness.

Workshop organized: The three-day workshop organized by Education Board Mardan concluded in these workshops, more than 600 subject specialists from Mardan and Nowshera participated. While Principal of FG College Azra Kalsoom Guest of Honor Jamia Abdul Wali Khan Director Tariq Mehmood, Zulfiqar Ali, Redmarkers Asra Sameer and Hamza Nisar informed the workshop participants about SLO base exams and online screen system.

And answered the questions of the participants. Controller of Examinations Prof. Ishrat Ali highlighted the rules and regulations of

the new examination system while addressing the final workshop. Farid Ahmad Khattak said that the education board has introduced many new reforms for the first time in the province, the implementation of which will strengthen public trust in the board. Farid Ahmad Khattak said that women teachers are more efficient than men and that is the reason why the board is giving them ample opportunity to serve.

Equal opportunities have been provided. The chairman of the board said that paper markers will be of primary importance in the success of the new system. Farid Ahmad Khattak said that the board is moving towards introducing more new reforms and in the next phase science practical is being reviewed and important decisions are being made through consultation.



KYIV: An activist holding a sign reading 'exchange city council for drones' during a protest in Ukraine.

Zelenskyy hails 'victory' as EU agrees to open Ukraine talks

BRUSSELS: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has hailed a "victory" for Ukraine and Europe after European Union leaders agreed to open membership talks with Kyiv, but the mood was soured just hours later after Hungary carried through on threats to block plans to channel crucial financial aid to Ukraine.

European Council President Charles Michel, host of the summit in Brussels, announced agreement on membership talks in a social media post, calling it "a clear signal of hope for their people and for our continent". Zelenskyy welcomed the decision as "a victory for Ukraine. A victory for all of Europe. A victory that motivates, inspires, and strengthens," he said in a post on X.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said it was "a strategic decision and a day that will remain engraved in the history of our union". "These countries belong to the European family," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said. The EU also agreed to open talks with Moldova, and granted EU candidate status to Georgia. Michel said it would also advance an EU bid by another hopeful - Bosnia and Herzegovina - once it reaches "the necessary degree of compliance" with criteria.

But the mood was soured in after

Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orban, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, announced he had blocked plans for the EU to send 50 billion euros (\$54bn) in financial aid to Kyiv as it battles to remove Russian troops from its territory. For weeks, Orban had been promising to block the membership deal and the funding, which he claimed were not in the interests of Hungary or the EU. While Orban had agreed not to be in the room for the membership vote - allowing it to pass - they were unable to overcome his resistance to the budget proposal put forward by Michel. "We still have some time, Ukraine is not out of money in the next few weeks," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told reporters on leaving the talks. "I am fairly confident we can get a deal early next year, we are thinking of late January."

Zelenskyy has been rallying allies' support for his country amid concerns their backing might be waning. Earlier this week, he travelled to the United States, where he hoped to persuade Republican lawmakers to approve billions of dollars in new funding that they have blocked in Congress. US President Joe Biden has warned their refusal to back the new spending plays into Putin's hands. Ukraine launched its bid to become part of the EU after Moscow began its

full-scale invasion in February 2022 and was officially named a candidate to join in June that year. Fellow former Soviet republic and neighbour Moldova had applied at the same time as Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine has breathed new life into the EU's stalled push to take on new members as the bloc looks to keep Russian and Chinese influence at bay. In June 2022, the European Commission set Kyiv seven reform benchmarks to complete, including tackling corruption and curbing the power of its oligarchs, before talks should start. Ukrainian Prime Minister Denis Shmygal said the EU's decision showed that it "highly appreciated the reforms we have made in recent years and the implementation of all the recommendations of the European Commission". "A difficult path lies ahead. We are united and ready," he said. The talks themselves are likely to take years. EU treaties oblige members to help "by all means in their power" another EU country that is victim of armed aggression on its territory. If Ukraine becomes an EU member while the war with Russia is ongoing, EU countries would have to respect that. The EU would also acquire a long new border with Russia and Belarus with implications for security, migration and defence. — Aljazeera

Finland set to again shut its entire border with Russia

WARSAW: Finland will close its eastern border with Russia, the country's interior minister has said, just hours after the Nordic nation relaxed a two-week closure of all roads between the two countries. Helsinki has said a recent rise in asylum seekers arriving via Russia was an orchestrated move by Moscow in retaliation for the Nordic country's decision to increase defence cooperation with the United States, a charge the Kremlin has denied.

The arrivals stopped when Finland shut the border in late November, but resumed when two of the eight crossings were opened, with some 36 people seeking asylum, the Finnish Border Guard said. "The phenomenon has started again and we will close the whole border," Interior Minister Mari Rantanen told the country's

parliament. "This is a sign that the Russian authorities are continuing their hybrid operation against Finland. This is something that Finland will not tolerate," Rantanen said in a statement. Finland joined NATO in April after decades of military non-alignment and pragmatic friendly relations with Moscow. Its 1,340km (832-mile) border with Russia serves as the European Union's external border and makes up NATO's north-eastern flank.

Approximately 900 asylum seekers from nations such as Kenya, Morocco, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria and Yemen entered Finland from Russia in November, an increase from fewer than one per day previously, according to the Border Guard. In a letter published on Monday, the Council of Europe said it was "con-

cerned about the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants" following the temporary border closure, and asked Finland to ensure it remained possible to seek protection. Rantanen, who represents the anti-immigration Finns Party, on Monday told the news agency Reuters there was no cause for human rights concerns, however, as asylum could be sought at other entry points. "Undoubtedly Russia is instrumentalising migrants" as part of its "hybrid warfare" against Finland, Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen said last month. "At the EU border with Finland, Russian border guards have been letting people through without Schengen visas or EU residence permits. People who are being misled. People who are being used by Russia," said EU

Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson.

At the end of November, the European Union's border protection agency, Frontex, deployed 50 officers to Finland, and said it would send equipment such as patrol cars "to bolster Finland's border control activities". In 2021, 3,000 to 4,000 asylum seekers became stranded in a no-man's land on the border between Poland and Belarus as Warsaw deployed security forces to stop people from entering amid freezing winter temperatures. The EU and Warsaw said Minsk was deliberately enticing migrants and refugees to Belarus and then pushing them westwards with promises of easy entry into the bloc, and accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of masterminding the crisis. — Aljazeera

Hong Kong tycoon faces trial under 'unfair' national security law

HONG KONG: The national security trial of jailed Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai is due to begin on Monday, more than a year after it was originally scheduled to start, and three years since he was first imprisoned. The 76-year-old, who is also a British citizen, stands accused of conspiring to collude with foreign forces and publish seditious material.

The most prominent figure to be charged under the security law that Beijing imposed on the territory in June 2020, Lai faces spending the rest of his life in jail. He has pleaded not guilty on all counts. His son, Sebastian, who has been travelling the world to draw attention to his father's case, told Al Jazeera he was trying to maintain some optimism. "Obviously, this is a show trial," he said in an interview in September. "They're basically punishing [him] for standing up for the freedoms that the Hong Kong region has, and that were also promised during the handover. That's all it is, really, and they're using a national security law, and the national security law isn't retroac-

tive. So if we look at it even just on that very level, on their word, then none of these guys should be in jail." Earlier this week, Sebastian met recently-appointed United Kingdom Foreign Minister David Cameron, a former prime minister who once championed closer ties with Beijing. Cameron promised the UK would "continue to stand by Jimmy Lai and the people of HK," according to a post from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on the social media platform, X. Afterwards, Sebastian said he hoped the UK would soon "add its voice" to US and European Union calls for his father's immediate release.

Before Lai was arrested at his home in August 2020 - and taken by police on a raid of his newspaper offices that was livestreamed by its journalists - he was known as much for his entrepreneurial success as he was for his criticism of Beijing's Communist Party - a rarity among Hong Kong's wealthy. Born Lai Chee-ying in China in December 1947, he arrived in Hong

Kong, then a British colony, after stowing away in a fishing boat. He was just 12 years old. Finding work in a clothing factory, Lai gradually climbed the ranks, eventually setting up his own Giordano brand selling T-shirts, chinos and everyday basics in a Hong Kong version of US retailer Gap that became hugely popular across the region.

In the 1990s, as Britain prepared for 1997 and the handover of Hong Kong to China, Lai used the money he made from the sale of Giordano to focus on the media, founding Next Media, publisher of the popular tabloid Apple Daily and other Chinese-language outlets in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

In Hong Kong's then free-wheeling media landscape, the papers attracted hundreds of thousands of readers for their mix of critical reporting on China and tantalising gossip, making the most of the 'one country, two systems' framework that was supposed to ensure Hong Kong maintained the rights and freedoms it had long enjoyed but that were unheard of on the mainland. By 2008,

Forbes estimated his wealth at some \$1.2bn and said he was "thriving by promoting free speech and democracy". Lai and Apple Daily found themselves under fire in the wake of the mass demonstrations in 2019 that began over concerns about a planned extradition bill with mainland China and evolved into calls for greater democracy. The protests came amid growing unease at Beijing's gradual tightening of control over political life despite the promises made in 1997. Lai has been jailed since December 2020, first in pre-trial detention and later as a result of short prison sentences for a series of separate charges related to the management of Apple Daily and his involvement in a vigil to mark the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.

After 26 years, the final edition of the Apple Daily rolled off the presses in June 2021. After two police raids, with Lai and Next Media's top executives under arrest, and a freeze imposed on its bank accounts, the company said the decision reflected "employee safety and manpower considerations". — Aljazeera

Philippines 'wargaming' Chinese hostilities

ANILA (Reuters): The Philippines is contingency planning for an escalation of hostilities in the South China Sea, according to a senior military official, including a scenario where crew repel Chinese forces attempting to board Philippine vessels. Ties between the two countries have deteriorated this year after several collisions and repeated standoffs near disputed features of the South China Sea, with the Philippines accusing China of aggressive, deliberate and dangerous manoeuvres.

The Philippines has taken a tougher line with China this year, coinciding with its boosting of military ties with defence treaty ally the United States and increased security engagement with other Western powers. "Expect more coercive actions from China, short of armed attack," Alberto Carlos, chief of the Philippines' Western Command told CNN Philippines. "Next after the water cannon is probably ramming and also they will attempt to board our vessel, which is something that we will not allow them to do."

That scenario, Carlos said, was part of Philippines war games exercises and academic discussions on what other actions China might take. The Philippines summoned China's ambassador to protest "back-to-back harassments" at the weekend in different locations, including collisions and use of water cannon. Beijing has repeatedly accused Philippine vessels operating in Manila's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of trespassing in Chinese waters. The Philippines has grown increasingly wary of China's coastguard and the presence of hundreds of Chinese fishing boats that it considers to be militia forces. "We're brainstorming this, we are wargaming this and we are prepared for any contingency that will happen," said Carlos, whose remit includes defence of the Philippines' EEZ. China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion of annual ship-borne commerce. Those claims, which an arbitral tribunal has declared baseless, extend to the exclusive economic zones of the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei.

Protest held in Kyiv

KYIV (AP): Hundreds of protesters angered by what they view as wasteful spending by municipal officials gathered outside Kyiv City Hall and demanded that the money should go to Ukraine's war against Russia instead of local projects. The Money for the AFU (Armed Forces of Ukraine) civic group, which organized the protest, was formed in September by people concerned by what they term "unnecessary" and "poorly timed" spending by the Kyiv City Council.

The protesters, who appeared to be mostly in their 20s and 30s, gathered despite multiple air alerts and cold, damp weather. They dispersed in the afternoon when air defense systems burst into action to fend off a missile attack. Protestors chanted, "It's better to buy drones than build a new park" and, "The more money we spend on the army, the faster Ukraine will win this war." "At a time when our friends, parents and acquaintances are dying at the front, we have more pressing matters than rebuilding roads and beautifying parks," Kateryna Zaderay, one of the protesters, told The Associated Press.

Street protests in Ukraine were rare after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, which brought regular bombardment of the capital. Recently, though, demonstrations have gathered momentum, and protest was the largest so far over municipal spending. Municipal graft was regarded as a deep problem in Kyiv before the war. Corruption allegations have dogged Ukraine as it has received billions of dollars of Western support for its war effort.

US presses Israel on civilian deaths, move to 'lower intensity' war

WASHINGTON: The United States has ramped up pressure on Israel to minimise civilian deaths in Gaza as Washington presses its ally to shift to a "lower intensity" war against Hamas. Speaking to reporters as his top national security adviser visited Israel, US President Joe Biden urged Israel to take greater care to protect civilians.

"I want them to be focused on how to save civilian lives. Not stop going after Hamas, but be more careful," Biden told reporters when asked whether Israel should scale back its military campaign in Gaza. Biden's comments came as National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other members of the Israeli war cabinet to discuss conditions for transitioning to more targeted military operations in Gaza. Sullivan and Netanyahu discussed "objectives, phasing and setting conditions for shifts over time from high-intensity clearing operations to lower-intensity surgical operations against Hamas remnants", the White House said in a statement.

White House spokesman John Kirby

said later that Sullivan discussed a possible transition to "lower-intensity operations" in the near future, but the administration has not put a "timestamp" on the shift. Kirby said Washington wants to see the war end as soon as possible, but Hamas has the ultimate responsibility for ending the conflict. "They can end it right now by letting those people go, by ordering their fighters to lay down their arms, and by turning in everyone else responsible for the October 7th attacks," he said. "Jake also discussed the next phase of Israel's military campaign."

And he asked hard questions, as we have been doing, about what all that could look like." Sullivan's visit to Israel, which continues with meetings with top Israeli officials including President Isaac Herzog, comes amid signs of growing divisions between Biden and Netanyahu over the death toll in Gaza and the timeframe for ending the war. Biden delivered his strongest rebuke of Netanyahu's handling of the conflict yet, warning that Israel's "indiscriminate bombing" is costing it international support. Netanyahu said in a statement released after meet-

ing with Sullivan that the war would continue until Hamas is eradicated, after Foreign Minister Eli Cohen pledged a day earlier to keep fighting "with or without international support".

"I told our American friends: Our heroic soldiers have not fallen in vain," Netanyahu said. "Out of the deep pain of their having fallen, we are more determined than ever to continue fighting until Hamas is eliminated - until absolute victory." Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant told Sullivan in publicly broadcast remarks that the war will last "more than several months". At least 18,787 people, including more than 7,700 children, have been killed in Gaza since the start of the war, according to Palestinian officials. About 1,147 people, mostly civilians, were killed in Hamas's October 7 attacks on southern Israel, according to Israeli officials. The United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to adopt a nonbinding resolution calling for an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire" in Gaza. The resolution was supported by 153 countries, with 10 nations, including the US, voting against it. — Aljazeera

Hungary blocks \$54b EU financial aid for Ukraine

BRUSSELS: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has blocked 50 billion euros (\$54bn) in European Union aid for Ukraine, hours after the group agreed to formally open membership talks with Kyiv. Leaders meeting in Brussels said they would revisit the issue next month after Orban refused to back the additional funding for Ukraine's government as it battles to remove Russian forces from its territory.

"Summary of the night-shift: veto for the extra money to Ukraine," Orban, the closest ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin in the EU, wrote on social media. The EU's other leaders agreed to revisit the debate in January. "We still have some time, Ukraine is not out of money in the next few weeks," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told reporters as he left the talks. "We agreed with the 26 countries. Victor Orban, Hungary, were not yet able to do that. I am fairly confident we can get a deal early next year. We are thinking of late January."

Rutte said another sum-

mit would be convened to reach a deal. Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo stressed that the financial support was vital. "It is just as important that Ukraine has the means to continue the war and rebuild its country," he said. Orban had promised to block the membership talks and the funding for weeks, and the decision was a blow to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who failed this week to persuade Republican lawmakers in the United States to approve an additional \$61bn for Ukraine. Most EU leaders wanted this week's summit to send a clear sign of solidarity with Ukraine amid perceptions, eagerly seized upon and repeated by Moscow, that allies' support for Kyiv was waning. Critics have accused the Hungarian leader of holding Kyiv's survival hostage in a bid to force Brussels to release billions of euros in EU funds frozen amid concerns about Budapest's commitment to the rule of law.

In what some saw as a last-minute concession, the European Commission, the EU's executive, agreed to unblock 10 billion euros (\$11bn) of the money. A further 21 billion euros (\$23bn) remains out of Orban's grasp, but he denied that there was any link to Hungary's intransigence over Ukraine. "That's not our style," he said. The war in Ukraine has become bogged down on the front lines in the country's east, where Putin claimed his troops were making progress. The country currently has some 617,000 soldiers in Ukraine, he added, after launching its full-scale invasion in February 2022. Across Brussels, at NATO headquarters, the security alliance's Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg warned that the West must continue supporting Ukraine in order to protect the rest of Europe. "If Putin wins in Ukraine, there is real risk that his aggression will not end there. Our support is not charity - it is an investment in our security," Stoltenberg said. — Aljazeera

Court voids fine given to Russian activist

TALLINN, Estonia (AP): A court in Russia overturned a fine handed to a veteran human rights advocate for speaking out against the war in Ukraine and sent Oleg Orlov's case back to prosecutors, who have sought to imprison him for three years instead. Orlov, co-chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights group Memorial, was convicted of publicly "discrediting" the Russian military after he posted on Facebook an article he wrote that denounced the invasion of Ukraine. He has rejected the charge as politically motivated.

The Moscow City Court's voiding of the fine did not represent a decision in his favor but rather another step in a years-long, unrelenting crackdown on dissent in Russia that the Kremlin ratcheted up after sending troops into Ukraine in February 2022. In October, a lower court fined Orlov 150,000 rubles (about \$1,500 at the time), which is a significantly milder punishment compared to lengthy prison terms some other Russians have gotten for voicing their criticism of the war. Orlov and his defense team appealed the sentence about two weeks later and discovered that the prosecution had appealed it, too, demanding to sentence the 71-year-old activist to three years in prison.

At the court hearing, the prosecutor, however, asked

the judge to void the fine and send the case back to the prosecutors, saying that investigators failed to take into account Orlov's motive. The Moscow City Court sided with the prosecution and sent the case back to them for revision, overturning the earlier verdict and canceling the fine. Orlov denounced the state's appeal and said he was being prosecuted "for public criticism of the actions of the authorities." "In my view, the authorities are afraid. So afraid of the free will of the people that they destroyed the institution of elections, that they prohibited holding any kind of demonstrations for various bogus reasons, so much so that they imprison people over words," independent Russian news site Mediazona quoted him as saying in the courtroom. According to the outlet, Orlov brought a bag of personal belongings with him to court in case he was jailed immediately. He told reporters after the hearing that he doesn't plan on unpacking it as the authorities appear intent on putting him behind bars. Also, the trial of a hard-line nationalist who also publicly criticized the Kremlin and its conduct in Ukraine opened in another Moscow court. Unlike Orlov, who opposed the war, Igor Strelkov accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of weakness and indecision in Ukraine. Strelkov is a retired security

officer who led Moscow-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine in 2014 and was convicted of murder in the Netherlands for his role in the downing of a Malaysia Airlines passenger jet that year.

He has called Putin a "nonentity" and a person of "cowardly mediocrity." He was arrested in July on extremism charges and remained in custody since then. Strelkov faces up to five years in prison, if convicted. Strelkov's lawyer, Gadzhi Aliyev, told Russian state news agency Tass that his client "categorically disagreed with" the charges against him and refused to plead guilty. The trial is taking place behind closed doors, a usual practice when it comes to extremism charges. From behind bars, Strelkov earlier this year announced through his allies that he has ambitions to run for president in next year.

The 2024 election, which is scheduled for March 17, is widely expected to give Putin his fifth term in office. Strelkov is unlikely to get on the ballot, given the charges against him. In the meantime, allies of imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny have asked the UN Human Rights Committee to help them locate the politician, who hasn't been seen or heard from in nine days. Navalny, 47, is serving a 19-year prison term on extremism charges.

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Kashmir cause, calls for do more

CARETAKER Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar reached Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Kashmir and basecamp for the Kashmir freedom struggle, to reaffirm Pakistan's unwavering moral, political, and diplomatic support to the people of Kashmir. During his address to the special session of the AJ&K legislative Assembly, Premier categorically rejected the recent verdict of the Indian Supreme Court calling it a politically motivated decision and a tool to consolidate Indian illegal occupation of globally recognized disputed territory. Kakar called on the Modi regime to desist from consolidating its occupation, revoke the illegal unilateral actions of August 5, 2019, and not change the demography of the disputed territory. During his address to the topmost political forum of the Azad Kashmir, the Premier 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. Kakar announced that Pakistan would continue to stand alongside the people of Kashmir in their struggle and wished them to enjoy their due rights.

In the aftermath of the Supreme Court of India's shameful verdict on the status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), the Pakistani government moved in its peculiar traditional style. i.e. condemnation through media releases, repetition of old phrases, meetings, speeches, rallies, and leaders' hoe and cry that Pakistanis and Kashmiris witnessed after the blatant denial of Kashmiris' right to self-determination and fundamental status under the constitution of India through Article-370 and Section 35. Then the PTI government under former Prime Minister Imran Khan prophesied New Delhi's move, a domestic matter of India that did not jeopardize the legal status of occupied Jammu and Kashmir at the global level. After almost five years, the Modi regime has come up with another strategy that aims at complicating the Kashmir dispute and pushing it further away from the settlement in line with the UN resolutions and aspirations of the people of Kashmir. While Pakistani leaders rush to Muzaffarabad to resound their decades-old narrative without stepping up their efforts to reinvigorate the Kashmir dispute and challenge India's unlawful action at the global forums including the UN Security Council (UNSC), the UNGA, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and other relevant forums to undo and neutralized New Delhi's oppressive doctrine that is ruthlessly heading to dismantle the Kashmir dispute.

Although, Kashmir is Pakistan's jugular vein and the word 'Pakistan' is incomplete without Kashmir. Kashmir runs in our blood. Jammu and Kashmir remain an important facet of Pakistan's foreign policy, yet India's continued military siege and recurrent political, legal, and diplomatic aggression against innocent unarmed Kashmiris merits some result-oriented, time-bound practical measures other than cosmetic diplomatic campaigns that rendered Modi's Kashmir doctrine null and void. In fact, Kashmiris have suffered the utmost miseries and oppression at the hands of the Indian government and its brutal security forces over the past decades. Thousands of Kashmiris had been killed, thousands faced forced disappearances and sustained pellet gun injuries, and thousands of the women suffered molestation. Mass human rights abuses underway in Jammu and Kashmir that were also documented in the UN reports and global human rights organizations, but global conscious and morality remain asleep and the Modi regime introduced new legislation every other day that bars the fundamental rights of Kashmiri Muslims. It is high time that Pakistani leaders Shedd off their traditional slackness and fruitless strategies of baboos sitting in the Foreign Ministry by taking bold steps, putting Modi's regime in trouble. Otherwise, India's open war against Pakistan and its jugular vein (Kashmir) will not come to an end at any time in the future.

Myanmar crisis

MYANMAR, the military-ruled Southeast Asian Nation, is currently in the grip of ethnic and religious violence after the Army Generals seized power through an armed military coup in early 2021. The democratically elected government leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi and her cabinet is in military incarceration and facing politically motivated court trials and coercion. Meanwhile, the armed groups have launched a collective offensive against the military. 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.

The fresh wave of violence has caused mass exodus and more than 50,000 people took refuge from Northern province Shan to other parts of the country, because of fierce fighting between Northern Alliance and military thus the total number of IDPs exceeded 2 millions. According to the UN agencies, 363 civilians had been killed while over 450 sustained injuries during the fresh wave of violence. Currently, the areas along with Chinese and Indian borders are under rebel control and Myanmar military is on the backtrack. The political unrest and months-long armed clashes between ethnic groups and military has pushed the South Asian nation into grave economic and humanitarian crises.

Historically, the people of Myanmar successfully defeated decades long dictatorship under the brave leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi several years back but the democratically elected woman leader could not establish civilian supremacy in her nation and displayed criminal silence over the Military's campaign against Royangia Muslims. Later, the military General toppled Suu Kyi's rule and plunged that nation into a series of crises. Currently, Myanmar has become a battlefield for its neighbours who are blatantly supporting warring factions to establish their influence in that country. Historically, Generals are trained for the specific purpose of security and defense of a country's frontier, hence they are not well versed with the tact of statesmanship. Therefore, a majority of third world security states often face the dilemma of military coups and dictatorship as generals perceive politicians as traitors and thieves. Thus the public suffers miseries and battles of self-claimed patriots and nation saviours turn the multiple nations into rubles.

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‘The day after’ in Gaza, rest of Palestine

Sultan Barakat

AFTER a brief hiatus of seven days in late November, Israel has resumed its punishing campaign of indiscriminate bombing in Gaza. This time, the majority of the strikes are hitting the South of the besieged Strip, where about 1.8 million Palestinians are currently trapped, many of whom were forced to move from the North following Israeli evacuation orders.

As if from the depths of an Orwellian dystopia, Israel's war cabinet, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has created a map dividing Gaza into 620 separate plots, supposedly to be used by Palestinian civilians to avoid getting caught in "active war zones". Netanyahu has also designated, with complete disregard for international law, a plot of land smaller than London's Heathrow Airport as a "humanitarian area" and suggested Gaza's entire population of 2.3 million should eventually go there.

What does this tell us about Netanyahu's plans for the day after the war? The Egyptian authorities have publicly stated their fear that the aim of Netanyahu's war is not to "eradicate Hamas" but to make Gaza uninhabitable so that the Palestinians living there are forced to abandon their homes and leave for good - a second Nakba in the making. However, I believe Netanyahu's actual plan for post-war Gaza is different but equally sinister - he is gearing up to repeat a historical crime his country committed against the Palestinian people, but that crime is not necessarily the Nakba. After severing the link between Gaza and the West Bank, over the years Israel gradually divided the West Bank into smaller, disconnected plots. This made it much easier for Israel to continue stealing Palestinian territory with impunity. (In fact, since October 7, with the global community's attention firmly fixated on Gaza, Israel has sped up the expansion of its illegal settlement project in the West Bank, and began to openly arm fanatic settlers.)

If Netanyahu has his

way, what has happened to the West Bank will also happen to Gaza. Initially, the Strip will be split into three or more smaller entities with Israeli controlled "buffer zones" in between. Then the settlers will come in and start claiming more and more territory, leaving Palestinians divided and stuck in tiny, walled-in enclaves with no hope for the future. Of course, as he moves to mutilate Gaza in the same way Israel mutilated the West Bank over the past few decades, Netanyahu appears to be ignoring a crucial factor: the Palestinian will to survive and resist. This time, they will be fighting an existential fight, on the rubble of their destroyed homes and the graves of their killed kin, with nothing left to lose. They will not accept their fate quietly. An unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe is in the making. Israel's collective punishment of the besieged population of Gaza has already killed more than 18,200 people, including at least 7,700 children. Israel's apparent plans to carve Gaza into pieces will only bring on more suffering, and violence.

What should the international community do to put a stop to this disaster? One can only hope that the world will not remain a passive spectator to this unprecedented, unlawful and egregious attack on an oppressed population for much longer and will eventually be galvanised into action to stop this horrendous onslaught. The United States and its Western partners, who are allowing and aiding Netanyahu's genocide in Gaza while disingenuously calling for a two-state solution, cannot be trusted to resolve this crisis and ensure the safety and dignity of the Palestinian people. Despite overwhelming support for the humanitarian ceasefire proposal at the UN Security Council - following the unprecedented invoking of Article 99 by Antonio Guterres - the US vetoed it. A few days later, the US found itself further isolated, voting, along with just nine other nations, against a

similar UN General Assembly resolution. Accepting to focus on the mere provision of the most urgent humanitarian relief, such as food, water and medical aid, to Gaza while allowing Israel to continue with its devastating assault on the enclave will achieve little other than giving Netanyahu's plans for Palestine another international seal of approval.

Furthermore, if Israel does not stop the bombs and the tanks, and agrees to lift the siege soon, no amount of humanitarian aid could save the Palestinians in Gaza. As Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN's agency for Palestinian refugees, has recently warned, if it is not stopped soon, Israel's war on Gaza, combined with its relentless siege, will unleash a humanitarian "tsunami" of catastrophic proportions, with not only bombs and bullets but also a variety of communicable diseases killing starving and fatigued civilians in their thousands. Rather than entrusting the fate of Palestinians to Israel - and its Western benefactors - as has been the case since Oslo, the international community, led by the global majority, should take matters into its own hands and engineer a just solution involving important regional and global players. The only way to provide a sustainable solution to this deep-rooted conflict is to acknowledge that it does not involve two actors on equal footing, but is rather between an occupying force (Israel) and an occupied population (the Palestinian people, both in Gaza and the West Bank).

Any solution constructed and supported by the international community should also address the grievances of the millions of Palestinian refugees whose families have been in limbo since their forcible eviction from their homeland during the Nakba. A piecemeal and superficial approach, either ignoring the true nature of and the primary grievances underpinning this conflict, or attempting to address just one sub-section of it

(for example, providing a road map for Gaza alone), would be akin to responding to a raging forest fire by extinguishing the flames on the tree closest to us and calling it a day. Any post-war arrangements should pave the way for the creation of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state. This means the proposed arrangement should allow Palestinians to live in peace and security with dignity, have opportunities to study and travel freely, and enjoy the same rights as the rest of the global community. The experience from Kosovo's transition under the guidance of the UN in the aftermath of the 1998-99 Kosovo war could provide a tried and tested template. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which led Kosovar resistance against Serbia, despite being classified as a terrorist organisation by the US and others until 1998, was allowed after the end of the war to play a leading role in the political process that ultimately led to the creation of independent Kosovo.

Just like the KLA, Hamas is an armed resistance movement whose military ambitions exist only as far as the occupation exists and will cease the day Palestinians achieve their rights and can live with dignity and freedom. Finally, if the rules-based world order has any hopes of surviving in the aftermath of Israel's Western-sanctioned genocide in Gaza, the perpetrators of this crime against humanity cannot be allowed to walk away scot-free. The cost of reconstruction must be borne by Israel.

It would be an injustice for those countries who have financed the reconstruction of Gaza following past wars to have to foot the bill once again. Furthermore, if the global community is serious about achieving sustainable peace in Palestine, and finally putting an end to decades of bloodshed, it should stop Israel from expanding its illegal settlement enterprise into Gaza, and start taking meaningful steps to ensure the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state - now.

Risks involved in AI revolution can be overcome

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

ARTIFICIAL intelligence is undoubtedly revolutionizing the way we live and work. It has become one of the world's fastest-advancing technologies, as its applications in 2023 can be found in various industries, such as healthcare, finance, transport and entertainment. Nevertheless, this has raised several key questions and concerns, including: What are the social and technological implications of widespread AI adoption? What impact will AI have on the jobs market? And how can societies prepare workforces for the changes that AI brings?

In many sectors, tasks that typically require human intelligence in order to be performed are now being replaced by AI, which is built on algorithms and models that enable computer systems to analyze and interpret data, adapt to changing circumstances and improve their performance over time.

AI applications have evolved from performing simple tasks such as speech or image recognition to virtual assistants such as Siri and Alexa and now to performing complex systems that are utilized in healthcare, finance and autonomous vehicles. For example, in the healthcare system, AI algorithms can be instrumental in examining and analyzing medical images, such as X-rays, MRIs and CT scans, in order to identify patterns and abnormalities, assisting radiologists in making a diagnosis. This is why it is critical to encourage innovation in the medical field and invest in emerging technologies, including big data and AI.

Several countries in the Middle East have been investing significantly in this area. It is a step in the right direction that the Saudi Ministry of Health last month signed a memorandum of understanding with the medical technology giant Becton, Dickinson and Co. in order to advance its digital transformation through such novel technologies. There are several benefits when it comes to using AI. First of all, it increases efficiency and productivity. In other words, AI systems can automate repetitive tasks, allowing organizations to streamline processes. This also allows organizations to allocate human resources to more complex and creative endeavors. This efficiency boost is particularly evident in industries like manufacturing, customer service and data analysis.

Secondly, this can lead to an enhanced decision-making process and save a considerable amount of time due to the fact that AI algorithms can analyze vast amounts of data at incredible speeds, extracting valuable insights and patterns that may elude human analysis. This capability can assist decision-makers in making informed choices across various areas, from business strategies to healthcare diagnoses. The third benefit is related to improving personalized experiences. For example, in sectors like e-commerce, entertainment and marketing, AI algorithms can

examine and analyze user preferences, priorities and behavior to recommend products, services or content that are tailored to their individual preferences. This will, in return, enhance user satisfaction.

But in spite of its benefits, there are concerns and potential risks associated with the development and deployment of AI. One of the most common concerns that people have is related to the intersection between AI and job displacement. The problem is that, as AI and automation technologies advance, there are concerns that certain jobs may become automated. This could lead to unemployment or underemployment for some workers. For example, some jobs in manufacturing, customer service and transport are considered to be at a higher risk of automation than other roles. But it is also important to point out that new jobs may be created in AI-related fields.

Another important risk to consider is related to fairness: how fair will AI be in the future and what impact will it have on society? To answer this question, it is critical to note that AI operates only on the data and information it has been provided with by human beings. As a result, AI systems can inherit and perpetuate any biases that are present in the data they are trained on. So, if the input or training data contains biases and prejudices, the AI system built using this data may make biased decisions, reinforcing existing social inequalities. For instance, if a facial recognition system is trained primarily on the data of a specific demographic group, it may perform inefficiently on other demographic groups, which may lead to discriminatory outcomes.

Finally, we should pay attention to the issues of privacy and security. AI systems and technologies can be susceptible to cyberattacks and misuse, which could create significant security threats. In addition, the collection and analysis of vast amounts of personal data for AI applications raises concerns about privacy. For example, malicious actors could manipulate AI systems to make incorrect decisions, leading to significant financial or physical harm. In the context of privacy, concerns also arise when AI systems are used for surveillance or when personal information is mishandled. It is important to note that these risks can be addressed, but doing so will require a combination of technical solutions and ethical considerations, as well as thoughtful regulatory frameworks in order to ensure the responsible development and use of AI technologies.

In a nutshell, AI has the power to transform industries, revolutionize the way we work and live and shape the future of technology by automating mundane tasks, improving efficiency and providing innovative solutions in almost every sector. Ethical concerns and risks related to AI can be adequately tackled by responsible advancement and deployment, ensuring that the benefits are maximized and potential risks are minimized.

Rising conflict is disrupting global supply chains

Zaid M. Belbagi

THE onset of the holiday period has put supply chain disruption under the spotlight. A spate of attacks threatening the Suez Canal and a simultaneous drought affecting the Panama Canal will affect the availability of consumer goods this Christmas, highlighting the risks to supplies in today's interconnected and codependent world.

The network of people and processes involved in the production and distribution of commodities is typically and increasingly distributed globally. The countries of origin, processing and consumer markets are often thousands of miles apart, connected by shipping lanes that are far too often at the mercy of war, conflicts and adverse weather.

Current circumstances are highlighting this. Following the ruptures of the COVID-19 pandemic, an already-disjointed global

system has been put under increasing pressure.

The conflict in Ukraine has shown how severely the global supply chain network can be impacted by geopolitics. Russia and Ukraine account for a third of global wheat supply. Before the war, for example, 40 percent of wheat supply for the World Food Programme came from Ukraine alone. With the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022 and the resultant Western sanctions on trade with Moscow, wheat and grain supplies have suffered significant disruption. The conflict has had far-flung consequences, as the resulting surge in prices has crippled the Egyptian economy, for example. The short supply of edible oils, iron ore and corn that Ukraine exports, alongside Russian oil, petroleum products, gold and semi-finished iron, highlights how political disruption can negatively impact related industries

globally.

Though relatively less disruptive to global supply chain networks, the conflict between Hamas and Israel in Gaza, now in its 10th week, has created an environment of political and economic uncertainty in the Middle East. The impact on energy markets has been noticeable.

In the first week of the conflict, Israel temporarily paused operations at its offshore Tamar gas field, which is an essential source of natural gas supplies to Egypt, Jordan and Europe. Operations were resumed in November, but this episode showed how insecurity in Gaza and the Eastern Mediterranean can cause disquiet in the international energy market.

Though supply chains have remained largely unaffected, the recent seizure of an Israeli cargo ship in the Red Sea by Houthi militants

illustrated how the security implications of the war in Gaza also extend to the region's territorial waters, particularly the Red Sea and Suez Canal, which is one of the world's busiest shipping routes. In circumstances where rerouted ships from Panama already face five to six days of delays, shipping costs and insurance premiums have skyrocketed as the industry has faced the dual shocks of violent risk to vessels and drought on major international waterways. If shoppers in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries will have to forgo their new iPhones and iPads this Christmas, they may also have to go without their favored carbonated beverages. The ongoing conflict in Sudan between the country's army and the Rapid Support Forces militia is affecting the production of gum Arabic.

Sudan is the world's largest producer, accounting for about 70 percent of global supply. Used as a thickening agent, it is also a key component of fizzy drinks that is equally critical to PepsiCo and Coca-Cola. The product is reportedly Sudan's biggest source of foreign revenue. However, as clashes between the warring sides continue, the production and distribution of the gum is becoming increasingly insecure, risking further supply chain disruptions for international manufacturers, as well as an economic downturn in Sudan. Amid the growing vulnerability of international supply chains, the International Monetary Fund's October 2023 World Economic Outlook cautioned against the weaponization of basic commodities and called for the de-risking of the most vital products. The war in Ukraine has underlined how supply chain disruptions are

particularly challenging for low-income and resource-poor countries that are dependent on imports. Though reshoring or onshoring, whereby operations and manufacturing are relocated in order to reduce the potential for disruption, is to be welcomed, it is unhelpful in circumstances where large countries bound by large populations and the growing adverse effect of climate change are reliant upon the import of food-stuffs.

The current conflicts have yet to significantly affect the market for minerals such as copper, lithium or the rare earth elements that are essential to the green transition. Similarly, the trade in electronics, arms and semiconductors produced by Israel, though slowing, is yet to have an impact. However, as other conflicts have shown, should Israel persist with its military action, it will cause major destabilization.

Palestine’s and Turtle Island’s liberation are entwined

Mohamed Abdou

OVER the past two months, protest marches in solidarity with the Palestinian people have taken place all across the United States and Canada. They have attracted a diverse crowd of people, including many Indigenous nations and communities. Participants have denounced "US imperialism" for enabling Israeli aggression, ethnic cleansing and genocide while others have charged Israel itself with "settler colonialism".

However, many attendees - especially pro-Palestinian immigrants - have failed to comprehend their own relationship to settler colonialism. Many of us see the US and Canada as secular democracies that provide good economic opportunities and not as settler-colonial societies, serving as the blueprint for Israel. We have ignored our own complicity as settlers.

Muslims and South Asian, North African and Arab immigrant settlers must interrogate the legitimacy of America's and Canada's right to exist and the costly trade-off they make in taking on national identities in these countries that come at the expense of Indigenous peoples at "home" and imperialist adventurism abroad.

A significant number of migrant Muslims do not seem to comprehend that American societies are animated by white supremacist religious doctrines such as manifest destiny and doctrines of discovery and terra nullius, Protestant ethics, common law property rights, and Victorian notions of gender and sexuality. Rather, Muslim "arrivants" to the US should consider the history of settler colonialism in the Americas - a history that sees Islamophobia and anti-Indigenous narratives as well as anti-Blackness and anti-Jewishness inextricably bound.

In the late 15th century, Christopher Columbus's conquistador invasion of the Americas commenced as the European Crusading eviction, murder and forced conversion of Muslims and Jews in Andalusia was coming to an end.

There, Muslims and Jews were racially and religiously cast as "enemies", "savages" and "heathens", an othering that tinted the lens through which Columbus and his successors saw Indigenous peoples in the Americas, describing them as "blood drinkers", "cannibals" and "devils". As Alan Mikhel writes in his book God's Shadow, Columbus described the weapons used by the Indigenous Taíno people of the Caribbean as "alfanjes, the Spanish name for the scimitars used by Muslim soldiers", while Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés identified 400 Aztec temples in Mexico as "mosques", described "Aztec women" as "Moorish women" and referred to Montezuma, the Aztec leader, as a "sultan".

Later, in the 16th century, as the transatlantic slave trade got under way, Africans - 20 to 30 percent of whom were Muslims - would become the new "infidels" and "savages". These were not mere insults but Euro-American Christian religious and racial narratives of dehumanisation that eventually found their way into US religious doctrine, law and settler attitudes.

They were used to justify the expropriation of Indigenous land and resources as well as the enslavement and continued "after-life of slavery" projects targeting Black peoples. They also drove the Islamophobia that in recent years has resulted in Muslim bans, unmitigated US government support for Zionist settler colonialism as well as the death and destruction wrought as part of the "war on terror". Rather than question the US settler-colonial project root and branch, Muslim immigrants have taken it for granted and tried to entrench themselves as "good liberal settlers", eliding their own settler-colonial complicities, even when they have come from countries ravaged by the effects of imperialist US foreign policy.

This love for the delusional promise of the "American dream" runs counter to what the selectively quoted anti-American Muslim Malcolm X, referred to as an "American nightmare" and exists despite a surge in recent years of Indigenous activism as well as a vast body of scholarship in Indigenous, Palestinian and comparative settler-colonial studies. This activism and work help us understand that the US's imperial commitments abroad are informed by the violence it has wreaked against Black peoples and Indigenous peoples in North America - or what the latter refer to as Turtle Island.

As Eve Tuck, professor of critical race and Indigenous studies at the University of Toronto, and K Wayne Yang, professor of ethnic studies at the University of California, San Diego, wrote in a paper titled Decolonization is not a Metaphor: "Oil is the motor and motive for war and so was salt, so will be water. Settler sovereignty over the very pieces of earth, air, and water is what makes possible these imperialisms. ... 'Indian Country' was/is the term used in Viet Nam, Afghanistan, Iraq by the US military for 'enemy territory'." A case in point is the Iraq war. Critics and some US officials were adamant that the war - spearheaded by Vice President Dick Cheney, a former CEO of oil giant Halliburton - was intended to benefit big oil. However, it was missed that US fighter jets, cruise missiles and armoured vehicles could not have descended on Iraq in 2003 without the fuel derived from abundant oil

supplies tapped from Indigenous lands, which today makes the US the world's largest oil producer and, by far, the largest polluter.

Indigenous-led NoDAPL protests in 2016 against the Dakota Access Pipeline, which was set to run close to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation were a missed opportunity for Muslim and pro-Palestinian activists to centre and draw deeper connections between settler colonialism at home and abroad. Another blatant instance of the relationship between settler colonialism at home and abroad is at Cornell University, the Ivy League institution where I was a visiting scholar last year and which has also been a hub of pro-Palestinian activism in recent weeks.

Set among the bucolic countryside of upstate New York and flush with waterfalls, gorges and evergreens, Cornell is regarded as the largest university land grab in US history and the single largest beneficiary of the 1862 Morrill Act, which saw 10.7 million acres (4.3 million hectares) stolen from 250 different Indigenous peoples in 15 states and handed over to universities. In this, Cornell accrues benefits from the principal revenue and capital of the land as well as surface extraction rights involving minerals, resources, mining and water. Cornell University is also partnered with Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, founded in 1912, whose military research and development labs have pioneered the technologies of Palestinian dispossession.

Understanding our investment in settler colonialism should push us to oppose it in full. This goes further than pickets, teach-ins, Boycott-Divestment-Sanction (BDS) campaigns, blockading arms manufacturers premised on short-term crisis management, or the performative land acknowledgments that have become customary at land-grab universities like Cornell. It means transformational solidarity, a long-term process grounded in shared spiritual, ethical and political commitments that demand a transformation of all our relations, including to the local, historical and material geographies of the land we are situated on.

As Palestinian scholar Dana Olanw wrote in an article titled On Assumptive Solidarities in Comparative Settler Colonialisms, incidents in which "Indigenous activists are invited to provide opening ceremonies for pro-Palestinian events" are many and are often animated by the lack of a deeper interrogation and challenging of the "Canadian and United States settler coloniality and thus normalize the violence of such states". This type of transformational solidarity is not new. For example, it has been customary in Chile, a country with the

largest Palestinian population outside the Middle East, for Palestinians to march in solidarity with the Indigenous Mapuche people on the annual Indigenous People's Day parade and work on the land with them.

While these solidarity lines do take place in the US at the level of mobilisation, they are inconsistent at the level of organisation. Land acknowledgments are about intent, purpose and above all - action. As Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), the spiritual pan-African revolutionary, put it: "What mobilisation does is, it mobilises people around issues. [But] those of us who are revolutionaries are not concerned with issues. We are concerned with the system. ... Mobilisation usually leads to reform action, not to revolutionary action."

As I write in my book Islam and Anarchism: Relationships and Resonances, Muslim immigrant settlers bear a particular responsibility to act not only because of the geopolitical context of Islamophobia and Islam as a quintessential other relative to a Euro-American Christianity, but also arguably because of Islam's founding upon, and relationship to, social justice. Aligned appropriately and as a quintessential signifier in whose global Orientalist shadow others are cast - as with NoDAPL Indigenous water protectors, who were compared by US mercenary firms like TigerSwan to "jihadi movements", and Black Lives Matter activists, who were designated by the FBI as "Black identity extremists" - Islam and Muslims are ideally positioned to geopolitically demystify the intimate intersections between imperialism and "settler colonialism" in Palestine and Turtle Island.

By reneging on this responsibility, particularly those of us who identify as immigrant South Asian and North African Muslims, we become Zionists on stolen land while we simultaneously expose our hypocritical fantasies of freeing Palestine - and ourselves. That is why we immigrants in the US and Canada must seriously re-examine our ethical-political commitments when it comes to supporting Palestine, founding an abolitionist and decolonial Islam and forming alliances with Indigenous and Black peoples in their demands for Indigenous land rematriation as well as Black reparations. We need to move beyond reactionary paradigms of "survival" and "resistance" towards pro-active strategic movement objectives that centre our collective livingness, thriving and liberation. Palestine's freeing is simultaneously entwined with the freeing of Indigenous and Black people in Turtle Island. To end Palestinian occupation, the bewitched American/Canadian false dream must fall and be replaced by a genuinely decolonial enchanting else.

Sunak’s woes highlight Europe’s immigration dilemma

Andrew Hammond

Graham Stuart left the COP28 climate change conference in Dubai early so that he could fly to London to support the government. Although Sunak prevailed - after "pulling out all the stops," according to rebelling members of his own party - what is remarkable is how much of a mess his government found itself in over one of its flagship policies. No UK government has been defeated on a bill's second reading (a procedural step in the passage of legislation) since 1986. So, a defeat would have been incredible.

The danger for Sunak now is that he knows this could prove to be a Pyrrhic victory that merely kicks the can down the road. This is because his win on Tuesday came despite significant reservations about the legislation from a large minority of Conservative lawmakers, including about two dozen who abstained on Tuesday in anticipation of amendments in 2024.

The Brexiters on the right of the party are concerned that the Conservatives could be outflanked by political maverick Nigel Farage, who has said that the Rwanda bill is "pathetic." The successor organization of Farage's UK Independence Party is the right-wing Reform UK, which advocates "net-zero immigration" and is now polling at just under 10 percent in many opinion surveys.

One reason this political balancing act is so difficult for Sunak is that any shift to the right to toughen the bill may well trigger a backlash among more moderate Conservatives in the "One Nation" group. So, the potential failure of the legislation could just have been delayed, rather than averted entirely, by Tuesday's vote.

Looking beyond the growing political challenges for Sunak in holding his party together before the next election, there is also an issue that many voters would argue is much more important: effective UK policy. There remain significant concerns about the Rwanda plan, even before a single asylum seeker has been sent to the African country. The

scheme is already forecast to cost some £400 million (\$506 million) by 2026.

The new legislation, opposed by all key opposition parties in the House of Commons, was introduced after the UK Supreme Court blocked Sunak's previous Rwanda plan. That policy, first announced in April 2022, is at the core of the new plan - that is, to try to deter people from crossing from continental Europe to the UK in small boats by sending some asylum seekers to Rwanda.

The Supreme Court struck it off over doubts as to whether Rwanda is a safe country for asylum seekers. So, the government's latest bill aims to try to guarantee the safety of asylum seekers, including a new treaty with the African nation. However, even if the Rwanda legislation ultimately becomes law, it is possible that not a single asylum seeker will be sent to Rwanda before the next general election, which is expected in 2024. Labour Leader Keir Starmer confirmed on Tuesday that he would repeal the bill, which he calls an expensive "gimmick," if his party comes to power.

Labour's alternative plan includes redirecting the money into better enforcement and bolstering security agreements with other countries. Starmer also wants more to be done to reduce the backlog of asylum claims by processing them faster, plus removing people to the country they came from should their claims be rejected. Critics of Sunak's bill continue to question the morality and legality of the Rwanda plan, including whether it is compatible with the European Court of Human Rights. They argue it does nothing to address the Supreme Court's concerns about Rwanda and sets a precedent about removing the jurisdiction of UK courts to consider the issue. The British example highlights the complexities facing European governments as they seek to tackle migration and asylum issues. With public confidence in the system falling, politicians must now prioritize effective and just schemes over political gambits that are costly and inefficient.

It’s not shocking to see Israeli children celebrate the Gaza genocide

Rifat Audeh

IN November, Israel's public broadcaster, Kan, uploaded on its official X page a video of Israeli children singing a song celebrating their country's ongoing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. The broadcaster deleted the video clip after a huge online backlash.

Even after the video was silently erased from social media, however, the song remained a subject of discussion and controversy. Many across the world were shocked to see children sing happily about "eliminating" an entire people "within one year". Yet a closer look at Israeli literature and curricula shows this open celebration of genocide was the only natural outcome of Israel's persistent indoctrination - or brainwashing to be more blunt - of its children to ensure that they do not view Palestinians as human and fully embrace apartheid and occupation.

There is myriad evidence of Israel's brainwashing of its citizens to erase the humanity of Palestinians spanning many decades. Israeli scholar Adir Cohen, for example, analysed for his book titled "An Ugly Face in the Mirror - National Stereotypes in Hebrew Children's Literature" some 1700 Hebrew-language children's books published in Israel between 1967 and 1985, and found that a whopping 520 of them contained humiliating, negative descriptions of the Palestinians.

He revealed that 66 percent of these 520 books refer to Arabs as violent; 52 percent as evil; 37 percent as liars; 31 percent as greedy; 28 percent as two-faced and 27 percent as traitors. Such persistent negative descriptions dehumanized Palestinians in the eyes of generations of Israelis, established them as dangerous "others", and paved the way for children to celebrate their genocide in a video produced by the state broadcaster in 2023.

Towering Palestinian academic and literary critic, Edward Said, also elaborated on the issue in his 1979 book The Question of Palestine, noting that Israeli children's literature "is made up of valiant Jews who always end up by killing low, treacherous Arabs, with names like Mastoul (crazy), Bandura (tomato), or Bukra (tomorrow). As a writer for Haaretz said on September 20, 1974, "children's books 'deal with our topic: the Arab who murders Jews out of pleasure, and the pure Jewish boy who defeats 'the coward swine!'" Israel has also used the

painful memory of the Holocaust to desensitize Israeli children to the suffering of Palestinians and support without question Israel's treatment of them.

In his 1999 book, One Nation Under Israel, historian Andrew Hurley explained how Israel weaponises the Holocaust education it provides to Israeli children against the Palestinians. "The mind of a child (or of anyone else for that matter) cannot absorb the horrors of the Holocaust without finding someone to hate," Hurley argued. "Since there are no Nazis around against whom vengeance can be sought, [Former Israeli Prime Ministers] [Menachem] Begin, [Yitzhak] Shamir and [Ariel] Sharon have solved this problem by calling the Arabs the Nazis of today and a proper target for retribution."

Israel's current Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, appears to be eagerly continuing with this tradition and has even claimed that it was a Palestinian who gave Adolf Hitler the idea for the Holocaust. Israeli professor Meytal Nasie strongly corroborates Hurley's view above on the ramifications of the way the Holocaust is taught. In her 2016 study, Young Children's Experiences and Learning in Intractable Conflicts, she found that 68 percent of Israeli children suggested "beating," "fighting," "killing," or "expelling" the Arabs as a solution. Nasie states that imparting these beliefs at such an early age, in a frequent and intense manner, leads to inculcation of these conflict-related narratives deep within the children's socio-psychological repertoires.

Of course, the Israeli state's brainwashing of its citizens against the Palestinians is not limited to ridiculous lies about history told by political leaders or to children's literature. This propaganda effort is highly systemic and at the very core of Israeli education. Just take a look at Israel's official textbooks.

For his 1998 research paper, The Rocky Road Toward Peace: Beliefs on Conflict in Israeli Textbooks, Israeli academic Daniel Bar-Tal analysed 124 Israeli textbooks on various subjects and for various age groups approved by the Israeli Ministry of Education to be used in religious and secular schools across the country. To map out the ideological content transmitted to Israeli children in the education

system, he looked at which "societal beliefs (society members' shared cognitions on topics and issues of special concern for their society)" received the most coverage in state-approved textbooks. He found that overall, the societal beliefs relating to (national) security received the most emphasis, followed by those concerning a positive self-image of Jews, and those that present Jews as the victims of the conflict. A majority of the analysed books were also found to include negative stereotypes about Arabs, portraying them as "cruel, immoral, unfair" and determined "to annihilate the State of Israel".

The widespread demonisation of the Palestinian "Other" in textbooks, coupled with the emphasis placed on the positive representations of Jews and the claim that they are the "victims" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and supported by overarching narratives about the importance of national security and survival, created the perfect conditions for generations of Israelis to leave the education system convinced that any and all aggression against Palestinians - including ethnic cleansing and genocide - are at least justifiable, if not necessary. This is because when children are thought that they belong to an inherently good "chosen people" and that they are being attacked and victimised by a demonic and inhuman "Other", they easily accept the oppression, displacement or mass killing of those who belong to this "Other" (ie, the Palestinians) without any moral qualm or hesitation.

Bar-Tal's study is from over 20 years ago, but more recent studies show that the situation is hardly any different today. For example, for her 2013 book, Palestine in Israeli School Books: Ideology and Propaganda in Education, Israeli scholar Nurit Peled-Elhanan analysed Israeli history, geography and civic studies textbooks for grades 8-12 and reached a conclusion rather similar to Bar-Tal's: That in Israeli school books, Palestinians are still represented as evil "Others", and Israelis as innocent victims of history and circumstance. But there was another, important dimension to Peled-Elhanan's study. Since all Israelis are drafted into compulsory military service at 18 years of age, she designed her study around the specific question of "How are Palestine and the Palestinians

against whom these young Israelis will potentially be required to use force, portrayed in school books?"

She found that the books commonly label Palestinians as "terrorists" and also "simplify history" to the benefit of Israelis. She concluded that Israeli textbooks prioritise "the creation of a usable past over accuracy and often harness the past and manipulate it for the justification of the present".

"The books - in defiance of actual evidence - still present the Palestinians as the 'thugs' and the Israelis as the victims" she wrote, and reflect the Zionist-Israeli opinion that "the Palestinians cannot be viewed but as an obstacle or a threat to be overcome or eliminated. Therefore their stories, their suffering, their truth or their human faces cannot be included in the narrative". In his book, One Nation Under Israel, Hurley explained the consequences of such indoctrination through the testimony of Israeli educator Shlomo Ariel, who had met with 10 groups, each made out of 50 Israelis about to enter the army, and discussed with them their perception of and attitudes towards Arabs.

"In each discussion group there were a few who proposed physically liquidating the Arabs, right down to the elderly, women and children," Hurley quoted Ariel as saying. "They received the comparison between Sabra and Shatila (massacres in Lebanon) and the Nazi destruction favourably and said with full candour that they would carry out such destruction with their own hands with no inhibitions or pangs of conscience. Not one expressed shock or reservations about these declarations...Many supported apartheid on the model of South Africa...In each group, there were not more than two to three holders of humanitarian, antiracist views."

Several decades have passed since Ariel had these discussions with young Israeli conscripts and learned that very few of them see Palestinians as human. Yet the ongoing brutal war on Gaza, and the many protests we see online by young Israelis - including many young conscripts - celebrating the carnage, applauding the military, and mocking Palestinian suffering, prove that little has changed since then. So no, no one should be shocked to see Israeli children singing happily about the genocide of the Palestinians. Israel has been brainwashing them to do so for many generations.

Could we see a Ukraine-Russia phony war?

Khaled Abou Zahr

NEWS coming from the battlefield in Ukraine has seen a shift in the descriptions of the military situation since the beginning of the war. If we remember, analysts were then describing what appeared to be the technological superiority of the Ukrainian armed forces thanks to the support of Western allies and NATO in particular.

Today, we look at the situation and the same analysts compare it to one of the most horrific aspects of the First World War: trench warfare. This is basically the cancellation of any technological superiority on either side and a return to hand-to-hand combat. It is a return to the time of cannon fodder, as it was described during the First World War.

Although it dates back to at least the 17th century, trench warfare is a symbol of the First World War. These trenches embody an incomprehensible reality of horror. They were narrow, muddy corridors, marked by biting cold, the incessant threat of artillery bombardment and omnipresent unburi corpses. This evokes a world of absolute violence and cruelty, which is what the front looks like in Ukraine today.

According to Francois Cochet of the Museum of the Great War in France, soldiers were immersed in a constant state of anxiety in the face of the possibility of sudden death from enemy shells, while coexisting with rats and lice. The deafening noise of explosions punctuated their daily lives. The trenches not only symbolize the brutality of war, but also the physical and mental exhaustion of the fighters, compelled to survive in dehumanizing conditions where the simple act of living takes on an unbearable dimension, turning every moment into a terrifying struggle for survival.

The current situation on the front in Ukraine, which also evokes a clear stalemate situation, raises many questions, especially on the role

of countries in the West in terms of supporting Ukraine and how to move forward. As President Volodymyr Zelensky continues to wait the capitals of the world urging military and financial support, this clearly outlines that the decision of whether to continue or stop the war lies in the hands of politicians in Washington and Europe.

On that matter, the domestic political landscape also resembles trench warfare. We can plainly see the divide among politicians between those supporting Ukraine and those who want an end to the war. This is particularly true in the US, where the divide has largely been between Democrats' continuous support and a majority of Republicans stating that this support, in a time of economic challenges, must stop.

As the US enters a presidential election year and the Ukrainian file is somewhat overshadowed by the situation in Gaza, it is without doubt a crucial time. As the conflict gets bogged down and with no achievements on the ground for Ukrainian troops, it is clear that Russia can bear this deathtrap status quo much better than Ukraine, which is now completely dependent on Western support. This forces politicians, who now realize that their promises of Moscow collapsing are becoming a distant mirage, to reposition their stances. As domestic files put pressure on the outcome of elections, there is a greater chance of Kyiv facing increasing pressure to sit at the negotiating table and find a deal. This would mean an end to the war via a long-lasting ceasefire and an acceptance by Ukraine of a direct loss, but without announcing it.

The other scenario would be to recalibrate the support to help Kyiv cope with this stalemate situation. This implies an economic revival of the country while control-

ling the intensity of the conflict on the front lines. This would be reminiscent of the Second World War's "phony war" - the state of watchful waiting and almost no confrontations between France and the UK's declaration of war on Nazi Germany on Sept. 3, 1939, and the German offensive on May 10, 1940. This would mean leaving the wound open while waiting for a decisive way to change the situation on the front line. Who would benefit the most? We could easily see how Moscow would be better capable of using this situation to its advantage. Yet, it would also save face for Western politicians.

Beyond these questions, one can start to see that, since the end of the Cold War and now with the renewed great power competition, Europe has been unable to develop a long-term unified strategy vis-a-vis Moscow. This is what is still lacking today. The great unity in support of Ukraine cannot be defined as a strategy in the context of geopolitical competition. Moreover, focusing solely on economic interests, like Germany did, does not work. There needs to be a more comprehensive approach.

The reality is that, if we look into Europe's domestic politics, we are back in the trenches. There is an entire spectrum that advocates opposing Russia in all shapes and forms and another that promotes the establishment of a full alignment of interests. Election cycles continue to move from one to the next and from one country to another and will continue weakening the European stance.

It is clear that, regardless of what happens, we are moving toward a shift in the support Ukraine receives from Western countries. The most probable outcome is to give Ukraine the possibility of getting out of the trenches. However, leaving this wound open would increase the risk of the war suddenly expanding to the rest of Europe.



Weekly inflation falls slightly by 0.06%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a slight decrease of 0.06 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on December 14, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 311.58 points as compared to 311.78 points during the past week, according to the PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the com-

bined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 43.16 percent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732, decreased by 0.19 percent and went down to 306.02 points from last week's 306.59 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517, Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 it decreased by 0.14 percent,

0.09 percent, 0.06 and 0.04 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 19 (37.26%) items increased, 10 (19.60%) items decreased and 22 (43.14%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW) included potatoes (12.18%), tomatoes (5.18%), tea lipton (2.57%), chicken (1.19%), rice basmati broken (0.52%), mustard oil (0.36%), garlic (0.33%) and vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.31%).

The items that recorded

an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW) basis, included sugar (6.02%), pulse gram (2.57%), eggs (2.33%), rice irri-6/9 (1.54%), pulse moong (1.23%), georgette (1.16%), onion (1.05%), cooked beef (0.76%), pulse masoor (0.69%), shirting (0.43%), long cloth (0.20%) and LPG (0.16%).

On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the items that witnessed decrease in prices included onions (25.11%), mustard oil (4.40%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (2.12%), bananas (1.05%) and vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.95%).

MoU signing ceremony between BOP & Sindh Enterprise Development Fund



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Bank of Punjab (BOP) and the Sindh Enterprise Development Fund (SEDF) officially entered into an Agreement today at BOP's Corporate office, Sky Tower, Clifton, Karachi.

The purpose of this collaboration is to jointly provide project-based credit facilities to the Priority Business Segments identified by SEDF in the Province of Sindh at subsidized rates. This shall not only leverage the collective strength and expertise, but shall also create conducive environment for the growth of SMEs,

attract investments and drive economic prosperity in the Sindh Region.

During the signing ceremony, Mr. Zafar Masud, President & CEO of BOP, and Mr. Khizer Pervaiz, CEO of SEDF, took into consideration the economic growth and acceleration opportunities that this partnership offers to the Sindh Province. Mr. Masud commended SEDF's initiative to grant Markup subsidies to the eligible borrowers in Sindh, emphasizing how it would support their growth in the midst of the challenging economic conditions.

Mr. Masud reiterated

BOP's commitment towards the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), highlighting the bank's recent recognitions at the Pakistan Banking Awards (PBA) in 2023 as well as in 2022 as "The Best Bank for Small & Medium Business." Additionally, BOP was recognized as "The Best Bank for SMEs in Pakistan" by Asia Money in 2023. Mr. Masud attributed these accolades to the bank's overarching strategy of promoting financial inclusion through the efficient use of modern tools and offering tailored solutions to SMEs, along with real-time digital banking solutions.

He appreciated SEDF's initiative to provide even additional amount of markup subsidy for Women Borrowers, a neglected segment. With this collaboration BOP shall not only capitalize on this market segment but shall also continue to foster its gender balancing agenda, where BOP has already taken an Initiative as the joint Lead Arranger for the launch of Pakistan's First Gender Bond.

Mr. Khizer Pervaiz, CEO of SEDF, expressed his appreciation for BOP's efforts in extending financial inclusion opportunities to SMEs. He emphasized the pivotal role SMEs play as the backbone of the country and said that the arrangement was a testament to their commitment to catalyze economic growth in Sindh. By partnering with The Bank of Punjab, they aim to unlock new opportunities and contribute towards sustainable development of SMEs in the region. He further highlighted that SEDF is dedicated to providing markup subsidy to SMEs as part of its effort to support and incentivize the growth of these vital contributors to local economy.

The senior management of both institutions congratulated their respective teams on achieving this significant milestone during the ceremony.



ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar presided over a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet.

'Banks must increase their outreach and penetration to agriculture sector'

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The annual meeting of Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee (ACAC) was held on December 14, 2023 in Lahore, under the chairmanship of the Governor, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Mr. Jameel Ahmad.

In his inaugural remarks, the Governor emphasized the need to strengthen and promote growth in the agriculture sector, which is pivotal for the socioeconomic development of the country. He urged the banks to ensure easy, timely and hassle free access of farmers to all financial services including credit, deposits, payments etc.

The Governor highlighted that despite various challenges including floods, the agriculture credit disbursements reached an impressive level of Rs1,776 billion during FY23, witnessing year-on-year growth of 25.2% and achieving 97.6% of the overall target of Rs1,819 billion. He commended the concerted efforts of banks, specialized banks, microfinance banks and microfinance institutions that led to these achievements, showcasing the sector's strength and adaptability in the face of challenges. The Governor also showed optimism about

the strong recovery in the agriculture sector, paving the way for a projected real GDP growth in the range of 2 - 3% in FY24.

He said that the disbursement target for FY24 was accordingly set at Rs2,250 billion, which was 26.7% higher than the disbursement made last year. The stellar growth of 30% during July-Oct 23 gives optimism that we are on track to comfortably achieve the disbursement target, he added. He urged the banks to intensify their efforts to not only meet but also surpass the target.

Acknowledging the challenges, particularly attrition of borrowers, the Governor informed the ACAC that SBP will engage with each bank individually to develop plans and strategies to achieve sustainable increase in agri borrowers continuously.

The Governor advised banks to not only develop their own agrifinance capacity but also develop partnerships with Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) to increase the outreach of agriculture and rural finance services.

He also emphasized the critical need for improving the productivity of farmers to make them a better risk for the banks. He urged banks to collaborate and partner with AgriTechs,

Agricultural Universities, Provincial Agricultural Departments and other agricultural stakeholders to improve the farmers' productivity through provision of quality inputs, better farming techniques and optimum use of agri-tech. The small farmers also need to be facilitated in sale of their produce to enable them to fetch market competitive price for their produce and the banks can connect them with large and reputed buyers.

The Governor SBP highlighted another significant area requiring immediate consideration - the promotion of developmental loans, specifically directed towards the mechanization of the agriculture sector. He also advised the banks to assess the feasibility of financing to agri-service providers, which provides agricultural machinery and equipment to farmers on rental basis.

While recognizing Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change, the Governor mentioned of SBP's green initiatives, including the Environmental & Social Risk Management Implementation Manual, Financing Scheme for Renewable Energy and Green Banking Guidelines. He called on the banking industry to proactively address climate change

through risk mitigation tools, insurance schemes and collaboration with international donor agencies to address challenges arising out of climate change.

Envisioning an end-to-end automated agricultural financing ecosystem, the Governor highlighted the transformative power of digital solutions in streamlining and enhancing the efficiency of processes, particularly in the agricultural lending domain. Recognizing the pivotal role of digitalization in achieving success, Governor State Bank, underscored the imperative for all banks to fully embrace the Punjab Land Records Authority's Land Record Management Information System (PLRA's LRMIS) for the processing of agricultural loans by end June 2024 and urged that other provinces/regions should also expedite the digitization of their land records to enable integration with banks for swift processing of loans.

The ACAC meeting, which is an annual affair of SBP since the 70's, witnessed participation by senior officials from federal and provincial governments, Presidents/CEOs of banks, members of provincial chambers of agriculture, representatives of regional farming communities and senior officials of SBP.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at the Port where five ships namely, APL Qingdao, OBE Dinarees, Agios Porfyrios, Ensemble and Ullswater scheduled to load/offload Container, Rice, Soya bean Seed, Chemicals and LPG, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Grain Terminal, Engro Terminal and Sui Southern Terminal respectively during last 24 hours.

Meanwhile five more ships, Maersk Nyassa, Big Breezy, Stellar Rioni, Sakizaya Star and Epic Burano also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during the same period to load/unload Container, Rice, Canola Seed and LPG respectively.

CDNS realizes Rs 750b targets in fresh bond

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has achieved a target of Rs 750 billion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to December 14.

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Friday.

He said this was Rs 200 billion additional annual targets than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22.

"The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the current financial year (2021-22) which will promote

savings culture in the country," he said.

In view of the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to further improve the savings culture, he said.

The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced.

"At this time Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS which will provide enough facilities to the users," he added.

Replying to a question, he said the CDNS had collected an investment of Rs 16 billion in the month of July 2023-24, through Islamic investment bonds.

The official added that the directorate had set a target of Rs 75 billion for the new financial year 2023-24 for Islamic finance bonds.

Replying to a question, he said the CDNS's aim was to introduce new dimensions in the Islamic finance sector.

He informed the directorate had reviewed and set a target of Rs 60 billion in the fiscal year (2022-23) for Islamic investment to introduce the new products in the market.

"Islamic finance has a very important role in the global financial sector at this time, and a large part of the economy of many major countries currently includes Islamic finance," he added.

FFC clinches first position amongst top 25 listed companies on PSX

F.P. Report

KARACHI: FFC has been declared as FIRST for 13th consecutive time amongst the TOP 25 Listed Companies for the Year 2022 in a ceremony held at Karachi.

Brig Irfan Khan (Retd), Company Secretary and Syed Imran Rizvi, Manager Corporate Affairs represented FFC at the occasion. The award was received by Brig Irfan Khan from H.E. Mr. Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, Honorable Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Brig Irfan Khan (Retd) stated that this award is the recognition of FFC's excellence in corporate and financial performance that speaks of highest standards of professionalism and dedication of our



all stakeholders and particularly the unwavering trust and confidence of our worthy shareholders in FFC's leadership and management.



PESHAWAR: A vendor preparing warm traditional soup for a customer along a street during winter season in the Provincial Capital.

Asian markets track Wall St to extend Fed-fuelled rally

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets built on the previous day's rally Friday as investors recalibrated their outlook for the new year after the Federal Reserve indicated it will cut interest rates.

The bank's more-dovish-than-expected pivot at this week's policy meeting has set up equities for a Santa rally, with a string of data suggesting inflation in the world's top economy was being tamed while avoiding recession. Now the debate turns to when the first cut will be and how many there will be, with some experts suggesting there will be more than the three envisaged in the Fed's "dot plot" - JPMorgan economists see five.

The prospect of borrowing conditions being easier next year helped push the Dow to a second straight record high Thursday, while the S&P 500 is just

shy of its own all-time peak. And Asia continued the strong momentum, with optimism boosted by news that China had injected more cash than expected into the financial system.

Hong Kong led the advances, surging more than three percent, while Shanghai was also on the rise. Tokyo rebounded from the previous day's loss as the yen's rally against the dollar faded, with Sydney, Seoul, Taipei and Manila also in the green.

Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management warned that while the outlook for stocks was good, the latest rally may see a slight pullback. "A temperature check is bound to occur with so many folks thinking the market has gotten too far over its skis on the pace of rate cuts," he wrote in a note. "That said, with \$6 trillion of dry powder sitting

in money market funds that might be champing at the bit to take the plunge into stocks, it should, at minimum, keep short sellers wary."

On currency markets, the dollar edged up against the yen after diving Wednesday in reaction to the Fed's plans to soften rates. Dealers are now keenly awaiting the Bank of Japan's policy decision next week after boss Kazuo Ueda suggested officials could soon move away from their ultra-loose policy. The yen soared on bets that Tokyo was about to tighten just as the Fed was going in the other direction, though officials later sought to dampen expectations.

Oil prices continued to rise after Thursday's rally of more than three percent as traders were swept up in the positive momentum.

The gains were also helped by figures showing

a dip in US stockpiles, though there is a concern that demand will fall short of supplies as the United States continues to pump and questions remain over OPEC's pledge to tighten the taps.

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP 1.2 percent at 33,080.37 (break)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: UP 3.2 percent at 16,920.70

Shanghai - Composite: UP 0.5 percent at 2,972.84

Dollar/yen: DOWN at 142.35 yen from 141.87 yen on Thursday

Euro/dollar: DOWN at \$1.0986 from \$1.0996

Pound/dollar: DOWN at \$1.2756 from \$1.2764

Euro/pound: DOWN at 86.10 pence from 86.12 pence

West Texas Intermediate: UP 0.2 percent at \$71.73 per barrel



In brief

Girls College wins tug-of-war contest

SARGODHA (APP): The Higher Education Commission organised a tug-of-war competition, which was won by the Government Girls College Chandni Chowk Sargodha on Friday. College Principal Prof Saeeda Jamshed congratulated the team on its success. She also congratulated college's Director Sports Madam Rehana and team coach Israr Lala. She said the college was ready to provide all kinds of assistance for promotion of sports.

Erling being assessed 'day by day'

MANCHESTER (BBC): Manchester City striker Erling Haaland is being assessed "day by day" as he attempts to recover from a foot injury for the Club World Cup next week. Haaland, 23, has missed City's last two games and is unavailable for Saturday's home meeting with Crystal Palace. City travel to Saudi Arabia after facing the Eagles and will face either Mexico's Club Leon or Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds in the semi-finals on Tuesday. "I'm not worried. It's not a fracture, just stress," Pep Guardiola said. "He arrived today, he will see the doctors and then we will see. The doctors say we have to take it day by day or week by week and see how he feels." "Hopefully, he can travel to Saudi, whether he can play the first game or the second, I don't know," Haaland is City's leading marksman with 19 goals across all competitions this season and he is the pace-setter in the Premier League scoring charts with 14 goals in 15 appearances. City are fourth in the Premier League, four points behind leaders Liverpool, after winning just one of their past five league fixtures. After winning the Treble last season, City have won every trophy available since Guardiola took charge in 2016 at least once.

Jenson to race for Jota Porsche

LONDON (BBC): Former Formula 1 world champion Jenson Button will return to top-level motorsport at the age of 44 in 2024. Button will drive the Jota Porsche 963 in the top hypercar class in the World Endurance Championship, which includes the famous 24 Hours of Le Mans race. The Englishman retired from Formula 1 in 2016 but is returning for a full season 15 years after winning his F1 title in 2009. "I'm thrilled to be racing in the 2024 World Endurance Championship," he said. "I'm already looking forward to the first race, but also know there's a lot of work to be done so that we arrive prepared." Button is 43 now but turns 44 on 19 January, before the season begins. A veteran competitor behind the wheel, he contested 306 F1 races across 18 years and has made several guest appearances across motorsport since 2016. Those have included a one-off at Le Mans this year, but this time he will compete in an eight-race season across Europe, Asia and America. His announcement comes as sportscar racing is experiencing a renaissance, with several major car manufacturers returning thanks to recent design rules allowing teams to experiment with performance philosophies, while other series impose strict limits. Following a period when Toyota were the only top manufacturer in WEC, the 2023 season saw Porsche, Ferrari and Cadillac join Peugeot in a reinvigorated championship, which saw Ferrari shock Le Mans by winning after a 50-year absence.

Pakistan dig in as Lyon edges closer to 500 Test wickets

PERTH (AFP/APP): Australian spinner Nathan Lyon moved to within three wickets of joining the elite 500 club Friday as Pakistan dug deep to stay in touch on day two of the opening Test in Perth.

At stumps, the visitors were 132-2, trailing by 355, with Imam-ul-Haq not out 38 and nightwatchman Khurram Shahzad on seven after they lost skipper Shan Masood late on.

But it was a slow grind with their runs coming off 53 overs after Aamer Jamal took 6-111 on debut to help dismiss the hosts for 487.

Mitchell Marsh starred with 90 after David Warner's defiant 164 on day one.

Abdullah Shafique was the first to fall in reply, getting a big inside edge from Lyon to Warner at leg slip after grinding to 42.

It was the veteran's 497th Test wicket as he closes in on 500 to join a group of just seven other players.

At the other end, Haq was stoic, weathering a fiery bowling blitz from Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins on a pitch that still had some zip.

It took him 85 deliveries

before his first boundary, guiding one fine off his hip.

Aggressive skipper Shan Masood made 30 before his stay ended 10 minutes before close, caught behind by Alex Carey off Starc on review.

Shan had earlier taken a nasty blow to the back when he turned to avoid a Haq drive, but was able to continue after treatment.

The visitors kept themselves in the hunt for a first Test win in the country since 1995 by dismissing Australia early in the second session, after the home side went to lunch at 476-7.

Marsh was bowled by paceman Shahzad for 90 on the first ball back and the tail collapsed with impressive speedster Jamal in the thick of the action.

Australia had resumed on 346-5 after dominating the opening day with Warner hitting 164 to silence his critics.

Marsh began on 16 and Carey 15 with Pakistan desperate for an early breakthrough.

But on another scorching day, the tourists struggled to make an impact with some pedestrian bowling before Jamal was introduced.

Hometown hero Marsh, Australia's T20 captain, smacked consecutive boundaries off the first over he faced from Shahzad to set the tone.

Preferred to Cameron Green as the team's all-rounder, he brought up a 66-ball 50 -- his fifth in 36 Tests -- with a classy pull to the ropes and looked destined to reach three figures.

But Shahzad shattered his hopes after lunch, knocking over his stumps as he attempted a big drive.

Jamal then quickly removed Cummins and Lyon, both caught by Agha Salman.

He earlier trapped wicketkeeper-batsman Carey, eager to make runs to cement his Test spot after losing his place in Australia's one-day team to Josh Inglis.

Carey survived a big lbw call from Shaheen Shah Afridi on the second ball of the day, but he had no answer to a lightning-quick Jamal delivery that rattled his off stump.

He departed for 34, ending a dangerous 90-run partnership with Marsh.

Starc also fell victim to Jamal, getting an edge to another pacy ball that removed the bails.

Rangers, Sindh Boxing Association organize boxing championship

KARACHI (APP): Under the supervision of Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Sindh Boxing Association, the Lyari Inter-Division Boxing Championship 2023 concluded at the Abu Bakar Trunk Wala Boxing Arena in the Lyari People's Football Stadium.

The championship, held from December 12th to 14th, witnessed participation from 105 players across 7 divisions of Sindh, according to spokesman for Rangers on Friday.

A total of 21 women and 84 male boxers competed in this championship, engaging in 90

matches across 15 different categories throughout the tournament.

The closing ceremony was graced by special guests, including the Area Sector Commander of Pakistan Rangers Sindh. Various dignitaries from different walks of life, social personalities, officials from the Sindh Boxing Association, local dignitaries, and senior officers of Rangers participated in the event.

In the finals of the Boxing Championship, the team from Lyari secured the first position overall, followed by Karachi in second place, and Hyderabad claiming the third position.

Special guests distributed prizes and trophies among the players who secured positions in the finals.

The fundamental aim behind organizing the Boxing Championship was to promote healthy activities and sports among the youth, discouraging them from substance abuse and other social vices, while also aiming at youth empowerment through sports.

The partners acknowledged and appreciated the role of Pakistan Rangers Sindh in overseeing and cooperating for the successful execution of the sports event.

New Zealand turn to fresh talent for Bangladesh series

WELLINGTON (AFP/APP): New Zealand will blood fresh talent in their home one-day series against Bangladesh starting on Sunday, giving several veteran stars a rest.

The teams will meet in Dunedin for the first of three ODIs, following a drawn Test series in Bangladesh last week.

Senior players including Kane Williamson and Tim Southee will be rested.

All-rounder Joshua Clarkson, 26, and seamer William O'Rourke, 22, are in the frame to make their international debuts.

India-born leg-spinner Adithya Ashok, 21, has also been called up to the squad after his Twenty20

debut in August.

New Zealand reached the semi-finals of the World Cup in November before losing to hosts India.

"With a few guys resting there are opportunities. We hope the new guys come in and show off their skills as best they can," captain Tom Latham said on Friday.

"It's a really exciting bowling attack," Latham added, with O'Rourke and fellow seamer Kyle Jamieson both known for their pace and bounce.

England-born O'Rourke has bolted into the New Zealand ODI side after shining for the Canterbury team since his domestic debut in early 2022.

Clarkson impressed on the New Zealand 'A' team's tour of Australia in August and September.

Bangladesh warmed up with a 26-run win over a New Zealand XI on Thursday with all-rounder Rishad Hossain taking three wickets and hitting 87 runs.

"We know most of the players," said Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto, sizing up the hosts.

"Some of them are very new, but we will have some footage."

The second ODI is in Nelson next Wednesday, then in Napier on December 23.

A three-game Twenty20 series follows.

Top Australian swimmers to skip Doha world championships

PERTH (AFP/APP): Australia's top swimmers have opted out of the world championships in Doha, with the squad announced Friday missing Arianne Titmus, Mollie O'Callaghan and Kyle Chalmers.

Kaylee McKeown and Emma McKeown will also give the February event a miss to focus on the Paris Olympics later in the year.

The 18-strong roster is headlined by reigning 50-metre freestyle world champion Cameron McEvoy and sprinter Shayna Jack, who has been part of four world record-breaking relay

teams.

The squad is half the size of the one that collected 25 medals at the worlds in Fukuoka this year, including 13 golds.

Elijah Winnington, the 2022 world champion, will attempt to top the podium again in the 400m freestyle while Jenna Forrester, Abbey Harkin and Brianna Throssell add experience.

Three rookies were selected including backstroke specialists Iona Anderson and Jaclyn Barclay, who shone at the world junior swimming championships in Israel this year.

Australia have a busy lead-up to the Olympics.

The national championships on the Gold Coast are in April and Olympic swimming trials at Brisbane on June 10-15.

Australia squad: Iona Anderson, Jaclyn Barclay, Jack Cartwright, Abbey Connor, Isaac Cooper, Jenna Forrester, Madeleine Gough, Abbey Harkin, Shayna Jack, Moesha Johnson, Cameron McEvoy, Kiah Melverton, Alexandria Perkins, Kai Taylor, Brianna Throssell, Samuel Williamson, Elijah Winnington, Bradley Woodward.



PERTH: David Warner, stationed at leg slip, pounced Abdullah Shafique.

Fatima Sana's all-round show in vain as New Zealand win a thriller

ISLAMABAD (APP): New Zealand defeated Pakistan in a thrilling contest by one wicket at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch on Friday, taking an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match ODI series, according to information made available here by Pakistan Cricket Board.

Chasing a target of 221 runs to win, New Zealand women's team, also known as White Ferns, lost two wickets for 13 runs due to brilliant bowling from captain Fatima Sana, leading her side for the first time in the absence of regular captain Nida Dar. Nida was ruled out from Friday's game after being hit on her face in the first ODI and experiencing symptoms of concussion.

At 13 for two in 2.4 overs, Suzie Bates and Maddy Green got together and added a 142-run partnership for the third wicket. Leg-spinner Ghulam Fatima, playing her second match on the tour, broke the partnership and went on to clinch three more wickets, putting White Ferns on the back foot. Ghulam Fatima ended up with match figures of four for 47 in 10 overs, increasing her tally of wickets in the ICC Women's Championship to 16.

White Ferns had lost seven wickets for 53 runs and were still 13 runs shy of the target when Lea Tahuhu (21 not out, 26b, 1x4) and Fran Jonas (five not out, nine balls) got together.

Both batters added an undefeated 13-run partnership for the final wicket, helping their side achieve the target in 48.5 overs.

Earlier, Pakistan was reeling at 35 for four in 12 overs after being put into bat first, with the last match centurion Sidra Amin getting out for 12 off 25 balls. Natalia Parvaiz and Fatima got together and knitted a 90-run partnership for the fifth wicket. After the departure of Natalia (39, 73b, 3x4s), wicketkeeper-batter Najiha Alvi joined Fatima in the middle, and the pair stitched a 65-run partnership for the sixth wicket. Right-handed batter Najiha scored a 38-ball 32, which included three fours. Twenty-two-year-old Fatima, who became the 10th ODI captain to lead the Pakistan women's team, led from the front and scored her second half-century in her 34th ODI. Fatima's unbeaten 90 off 104 – also her highest score in this format – included seven fours and a six. Her innings helped the touring side post 220 all out in 50 overs.

For White Ferns, captain Sophie Devine bagged three wickets for 25 runs and also completed her 100 ODI wickets. Molly Penfold and Jonas each took two wickets.

The ODIs are part of the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25. The third game of the series will be

played at the same venue on Monday, 18 December, with the first ball to be bowled at 2 pm local time.

Scores in brief:

New Zealand women beat Pakistan women by one wicket

Pakistan 220 all out, 50 overs (Fatima Sana 90 not out, Natalia Parvaiz 39, Najiha Alvi 32; Sophie Devine 3-25, Fran Jonas 2-36, Molly Penfold 2-43)

New Zealand 221-9, 48.5 overs (Maddy Green 83, Suzie Bates 74, Lea Tahuhu 21 not out; Ghulam Fatima 4-47, Fatima Sana 2-52)

Player of the match – Maddy Green (New Zealand)

Series schedule:

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

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

9 Dec – 3rd T20I, Queenstown (New Zealand women beat Pakistan women by six runs on DLS)

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

15 Dec – 2nd ODI, Christchurch (New Zealand women beat Pakistan women by one wicket)

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

HEC cricket team to participate in PCB Grade-I tournament

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) first time ever, has qualified for participation in the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Grade-I Cricket Tournament. For the first time, HEC student players team is taking part in the President Trophy (First Class) and President Cup One Day Cricket among the top eight domestic teams.

Previously, the HEC team played Grade-II Cricket, but has now been selected to play Grade-I Cricket, which is one of the premier domestic tournaments. PCB considered HEC to participate in the Grade-I Cricket owing to its performance in Grade-II tournament (Patron's Trophy) 2018-19 wherein HEC clinched 2nd position and promotion of cricket in universities by consistent arrangement of cricket tournaments among university students.

Sarah Mahboob, Amna Ali to clash in Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan Tennis C'ship final

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sarah Mahboob will face Amna Ali Qayum in the final of Ladies Singles of Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan National Ranking Tennis Championships 2023 on Saturday at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex Islamabad.

In the first semifinal on Friday, Sarah beat Amna Ali Qayum 6-4,6-2, while Sheeza Sajid overcame Esha Jawad 7-6(5),2-6,5-1(retd).

In Boys Singles 18 & under semifinals, Ahmed Nael outwitted Hamid Israr 6-0,6-0, while Hamza Roman thrashed Hamza Aasim 6-4,6-1.

In men's doubles semi-

finals, Yousaf Khalil and Barkatullah beat M. Abid and Waqas Malik in an exciting contest 7-6(3),7-6(4), whereas Shahzad Khan and Jalil Khan over-

powered Mudassar Murtaza and Abdullah Adnan 6-2,6-4.

Following are the results of all categories:

Mens Doubles

Semifinals: Yousaf Khalil / Barkatullah bt M.Abid / Waqas Malik 7-6(3),7-6(4);Shahzad Khan / Jalil Khan bt Mudassar Murtaza / Abdullah Adnan 6-2,6-4

In Boys Singles 18 & under semifinals, Ahmed Nael outwitted Hamid Israr 6-0,6-0, while Hamza Roman thrashed Hamza Aasim 6-4,6-1.

Boys Singles 18& under semifinals: Ahmed Nael Qureshi bt Hamid Israr 6-0,6-0; Hamza Roman bt Hamza Aasim 6-4,6-1

Boys Single 14& quarterfinals: Abdul Basit bt Syed Mahd shehzad 5-3,4-2; M. Hazik Aasim bt

Nabeel Ali Qayum 2-4,4-0;0; Haziq Areejo bt Razik Sultan 4-0,4-0; M. Hassan Usmani bt Muzammil Bhand 4-0,2-4,4-2

Boys / Girls Singles 12& under quarterfinals: Rashid Ali Bachani bt Ziad Zaman 5-4(4),5-4(4); Ahmed Hussain bt Zohaib Amjad 4-2,4-1; Shayan Afridi bt S. Shakeeb 4-1,4-2; Razik Sultan bt Ali Bacahani 4-1,4-1

Schedule for Saturday is as under:

Ladies Singles Final: 01:00 PM-Sarah Mahboob Khan vs Sheeza Sajid

Mens Singles Semifinals: 10:00 am -Muhammad Shoaib vs Mudassar Murtaza

11:15 am -Aqeel Khan vs Muhammad Abid

King's 82 powers West Indies to T20 victory over England

ST. GEORGE'S (AFP/APP): Brandon King scored an unbeaten 82 and skipper Rovman Powell blasted a quickfire 50 as West Indies defeated England by 10 runs to take a commanding 2-0 lead in their best-of-five Twenty20 international series in Grenada on Thursday.

West Indies opener King produced a superb knock which included eight fours and five sixes from 52 balls as the hosts recovered from a perilous 54-4 to finish on 176-7 at the National Stadium in St. George's.

England, who won the toss and opted to bowl first, were restricted to 166-7 in response after a disciplined bowling performance by the hosts.

Sam Curran top-scored for the tourists with 50 off 32 balls, but England were always struggling to reach the required run rate against the West Indies bowling.

Alzarri Joseph finished with figures of 3-39 off four overs, while spinner Gudakesh Motie frustrated England's batsmen with an economical 1-9 from four overs.

"I think it was important having lost so many early wickets that I stayed as deep as possible into the innings," man-of-the-match King said afterwards.

"It was very important for me to stay there and build partnerships. We're playing well and everyone's playing with confidence. They might not have got runs today but another day it will be another guy."

England captain Jos Buttler, meanwhile, was left to rue the explosive latter part of the West Indies innings after a positive start by the tourists bowlers.

"It was a few many runs more than we could have restricted them to," Buttler said. "They had a couple of big overs at the back end which pushed the score up, but only losing by 10 -- there's plenty of ways we can find those 10 runs."

Earlier, King's unbeaten knock received support from Powell, who caught the eye with a swashbuckling cameo that helped West Indies post a competitive total.

The West Indies captain's half century came off just 28 balls and included five sixes and three fours.

The highlight of Powell's knock came in the 16th over, with Powell mauling Curran for 30 runs which included four sixes.

Adil Rashid was the pick of the England bowlers with figures of 2-11 off four overs.

West Indies lead the five-match series 1-0 after beating England by four wickets in the opening T20 in Barbados on Tuesday.

The third match of the series takes place in Grenada on Saturday.

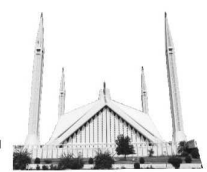
Brief scores

West Indies: 176-7 in 20 overs (B. King 82 not out, R. Powell 50, K. Mayers 17; A. Rashid 2-11, T. Mills 2-30)

England: 166-7 in 20 overs (S. Curran 50, P. Salt 25, W. Jacks 24; A. Joseph 3-39, A. Hosein 2-24)

Result: West Indies won by 10 runs

Series: West Indies lead best-of-five series 2-0



In brief

IRSA releases 85,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 85,400 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 37,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1481.31 feet and was 81.31 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,200 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1163.20 feet, which was 113.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 4,800 cusecs and 26,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 61,800, 38,500, 30,000 and 4,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,200 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police bust kidnappers' gang

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police managed to bust a kidnappers' gang and arrested its four members besides recovering a kidnapped Tiktok, who was abducted for ransom amount of Rs 250 million. According to a police spokesman, Rawalpindi police while conducting a raid managed to arrest four members of a kidnappers' gang and rescued the kidnapped Tiktok. Rawalpindi police registered a case and started an investigation, the spokesman said adding, Police safely recovered the abducted Tiktok and arrested four kidnappers identified as Irfan, Manzoor, Ali and Mubeen. He informed that City Police Officer, Syed Khalid Hamdani taking notice of the incident had constituted police teams under the supervision of Superintendent of Police, Saddar to arrest the kidnappers. He said that efforts were being made to net other accomplices and facilitators of the accused. The CPO, Syed Khalid Hamdani appreciated the performance of SP Saddar, ASP Saddar, SHO Rawat Police Station and police teams said that the safe recovery of the hostage kidnapped for ransom is a great success.

Police arrest four robbers

RAWALPINDI (APP): In an operation against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police have busted a gang and arrested four robbers and street criminals besides recovering over Rs 40,000 cash, weapons and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, New Town Police arrested four accused namely Kashan, Saddam, Astor Khan and Waseem Khan, who were allegedly involved in various robberies, and street crime cases. He informed that the police team constituted under the supervision of SHO New Town Police Station on the directives of SP Rawal, Faisal Saleem conducted a raid and managed to net the criminals who were record holders.

CDA removes encroachments

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority's (CDA) Anti-encroachment operation is on full swing in Islamabad and removed various encroachments from Bari Imam area. On the directions of Chairman CDA, the Enforcement Directorate with the support of Islamabad Police along with other departments and district administration conducted a mega anti encroachment operation against the illegal population established on the government land in Mohalla Thatti adjacent to Bari Imam.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control, Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti visiting the Anti-Narcotics Force Forensic Lab at ANF Academy.

Int'l moot on Modern trends in Arab Novel concluded at AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-day international conference on 'Modern Trends of the Arab Novel in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century' has been concluded at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU).

The conference resulted in 9 recommendations, which included the resumption of yearly international Arab conferences, collaboration between universities to promote the Arabic language, research on the Arab novel, analysis of Arabic literature, and exploring different aspects of Arabic language and literature.

Ambassador of Algeria in Pakistan, Dr Ibrahim Romani was the chief guest while Dean of Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Prof. Dr Shah Mohyuddin Hashmi presided over the concluding ceremony.

Dr Ibrahim Romani men-

tioned, "The participation of scholars from 15 Islamic countries is a testament to the dynamic and capable leadership of Vice Chancellor (VC) in AIOU Prof. Dr Nasir Mahmood and the Dean of the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies.

Dr Romani expressed the hope for academic collaboration between Algerian universities and AIOU, which would include joint Arabic language courses.

The Envoy also congratulated the VC and the entire team for organizing the successful International Conference. Dr Mohyuddin Hashmi provided a detailed overview of the promotions of Arabic language services offered by the Faculty of Arabic. He mentioned, "The university frequently hosts conferences, but this conference was a part of the

university's golden jubilee celebrations."

Caretaker Federal Minister of Education, Madad Ali Sindhi, participated in the opening session, recognizing the importance of this conference. Dr Wahab Ghazadi presented the conference proceedings, while Dr Mazhar Moin from Punjab University, Lahore praised the conference as a great initiative for the interpretation of the Arabic language.

The conference coordinator, Dr Haris Saleem, presented a summary of the topics included in the conference. Chairman, Department of Arabic, Dr Abdul Majeed Baghdadi, thanked the VC Prof. Dr Nasir Mahmood and the Dean, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Prof. Dr Mohiuddin Hashmi for providing patronage and support in organizing the conference.

ANF recovers 348 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover over 348 kg of drugs and arrested a drug trafficker, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that in an operation at Allama Iqbal International Airport, 36 ice-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a passenger. The accused was leaving for Doha by flight number QR-0621. In another operation, 312 kg of opium was recovered from a house in the Gali Mir Jan Zai area of Pishin. 26 kg hashish was recovered from the Zakhakel Khyber area while 7.2 kg hashish was recovered from Dera Ismail Khan.

Nilofar for enhanced media role in raising awareness on child marriage

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Chairperson Nilofar Bakhtiar on Friday stressed on strengthening the role of the media in raising awareness on issues related to child marriage and gender-based violence. She was speaking on the inaugural day of the Journalist Refresher Training Workshop on "Social Norms, Gender, Prevention and Health Consequences related to Child Marriage".

The workshop has been organized by the NCSW in collaboration with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Some 45 journalists from across Pakistan are being trained on different aspects and dimensions of the issue of child marriage.

They are part of the National Media Fellowship (NMF), a flagship project of NCSW, that sensitizes the media on responsible reporting for the prevention

and elimination of child marriage and gender-based violence (GBV).

So far, two cohorts of 40 journalists each have been trained in two fellowship programmes in 2022 and 2023. Under the first programme, held in 2022, 162 media stories and two documentaries were produced on GBV, child marriage and impact of climate change on women. These stories were published through leading media houses and digital platforms in the country. After the completion of second round of NMF, more than 180 stories focusing GBV, and girls' and women rights are expected to be produced in 2024.

The NCSW chairperson said the media had a vital role to play in the efforts to curb violence against women and to create awareness on the issue of child marriage. The dream of a society embracing equality, inclusivity and empowering women could be realized with active participation of the media, she added.

Police Introduce Digital License Management System

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad police have implemented the Digital License Management System (DLMS) which effectively consolidates information on suspects as well as e-challan defaulters and helps to apprehend offenders and ensure prompt fine payment by e-challan violators.

The Safe City Command and Control Center forwarded a list of 145 violators to Police Khidmat Center and traffic offices. Subsequently, 82 violators visited traffic offices to settle a total of 995 e-challans, while the licenses of the remaining 63 violators were

suspended. CPO Safe City/Traffic announced that the fully operational Digital License Management System was updated December 13, 2023.

Furthermore, individuals who neglect to settle their e-challans will face legal consequences, and police facilities may be withheld. The recently introduced Brief Cam alerts and cameras from Safe City are being utilized to track the vehicles of e-challan violators, ensuring compliance with legal requirements.

To check e-challans, citizens can visit the Islamabad Capital Police official web-

site www.islamabadpolice.gov.pk or use the provided link https://ict.islamabadpolice.gov.pk:8081/veri/verify_e_challan.php by entering their vehicle registration number.

Violators can conveniently pay their challans through the Jazz Cash mobile app or the JS Bank wallet.

Non-compliance with fine payments will result in stringent legal action against the violators. The Islamabad Capital Police emphasize that ensuring peace, security, and safeguarding the lives and property of citizens in Islamabad is among the top priorities.

Govt tightens belts to sail through winter gas shortage

ISLAMABAD (APP): As country's population continues to grow unhindered, the mounting number of households was exerting extra burden on the available gas resources with consumers often facing gas rationing.

Although the government has tightened belts to overcome the gas shortage, the issue needs a multi-pronged and long-term strategy to cope with this challenging situation.

The officials claim to tackle imminent energy scarcity head-on with an ambitious plan targeting a production and import goal of 1,958,820 tons of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as our hydrocarbon reserves deplete by roughly 10% annually amidst escalating gas consumption.

In line with multifaceted initiatives to meet the country's energy demand, Exploration and Production (E&P) companies aim to yield around 26 million barrels of crude oil, 1.3 trillion cubic feet of gas and 779,044 tons of LPG. Additionally, plans include an import of 1,179,776 tons of LPG and nine million tons of LNG during the current fiscal year.

Despite achieving slightly below targets during 2022-23, where production figures fell short marginally, the focus remains on augmenting hydrocarbon exploration activities nationwide. "The country is currently facing insufficient gas production to meet the demand, with local gas reserves depleting by approximately 10 percent annually. At the same time, consumption continues escalating with each passing day," stated Energy Minister Muhammad Ali.

"But, the government is actively working to improve infrastructure for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) supply across the country to meet the shortfall," he said.

The minister informed that the government had ordered two Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) cargoes for December and one for

January to meet domestic gas requirements. "Efforts are also on to revise LPG policy, with certain proposed changes and it would soon be presented to the cabinet for approval."

As irrational and imprudent policies of the previous PTI leadership landed the country in real trouble, the outgoing PML-N-led government and the present caretaker set-up had to bear the brunt of these policies.

However, the minister assured to acceleration of exploration activities to meet the requirements of domestic, commercial and industrial consumers. "We are coming up with an efficient gas policy as we are also focusing on increasing hydrocarbon exploration in potential areas," he informed. The country's potential in shale gas and oil, validated through a comprehensive 2015 study in collaboration with USAID, encompasses 10,159 trillion cubic feet of shale gas and 2,323 billion stock tank barrels of shale oil in lower and middle Indus Basin in Sindh and parts of Punjab and Balochistan. The successful extraction of shale resources holds the potential to provide Pakistan with a sustainable supply of natural gas and oil, crucial against the backdrop of estimated recoverable gas resources by the Energy Information Administration (EIA). In June this year, Pakistan and Turkmenistan signed a Joint Implementation Plan (JIP) to expedite work on Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) gas pipeline project and complete the feasibility of the project at the earliest.

The pipeline will transport up to 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) (average 3.2 BCFD) of natural gas annually for 30 years. The supply source is the Galkynsh gas field in the Eastern region of Turkmenistan and Pakistan's off-take in it will be 1.3 BCFD. The proposed route for the 1849-kilometre-long pipeline is through Heart, Kandahar, Chamman, Zhob, DG Khan, Multan and Fazilika. The TAPI project is hoped

to transform the energy sector and economy with low-cost gas supplies making our industrial sector competitive worldwide and generating employment opportunities for our youth. Pakistan has an extensive gas network, spanning transmission distribution and service pipelines, catering to the needs of millions of consumers. Investment by gas utility companies in transmission, distribution and other projects signifies a concerted effort to meet escalating energy demands. Importantly, the country's capacity for re-gasifying LNG seeks to bridge the gap between gas supply and demand, contributing to stabilizing consumption figures.

Presently, the capacity of two Floating Re-gasification Storage Units (FRSU) to re-gasify LNG is 1200 MMCFD while RLNG is being imported to bridge the demand and supply gap as the government is also actively pursuing the target of 1,958,820 tons LPG production or import. Gas utility companies have planned to invest Rs27,669 million on transmission projects, Rs77,484 million on distribution projects and Rs 8,746 million on other projects bringing the total investment of Rs113,899 million during the fiscal year 2022-23. Seeing through the previous years, it is evident that after the serious gas crisis during the PPPP government (2008-13) tenure, things improved during the PML-N-led government during 2013-18. But, afterwards, the reluctant and untimely decisions of the PTI-led government, like many other areas, also worsened the situation in the oil and gas sectors.

But, once again the caretaker set-up has initiated efforts like detailed analyses, technology assessments and infrastructure evaluations to deal with the situation and OGDCL and United Energy Petroleum Limited (UEPL) have initiated drilling activities for shale gas and oil extraction.

Railways ask officials to recover outstanding dues from federal, provincial depts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has asked its officials concerned to initiate the procedure to recover outstanding dues from the federal and provincial departments for using its land and services.

The Ministry of Railways has asked the federal and provincial departments to pay their outstanding dues worth billions of rupees on account of using its land and other services, within the least possible time as the department was facing economic issues, an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. About the amount payable against the different departments, the official said that over Rs 8,375 million (over 8 billion) are payable by different departments on account of using its land and various services. He said the federal departments had to pay an amount of Rs 709,084 million, provincial departments Rs1980,217 million and autonomous and private bodies Rs 5685,736 million.

To a question, he said Pakistan Railways has upgraded as many as 181 vulnerable un-manned level crossings to manned level crossings, out of 550 which are identified by the department over the entire railway network.

"The relevant provincial government provided the finances to Pakistan

Railways for the upgradation of un-manned level crossings in the country," he added. He said the department was taking several steps including the upgradation of unmanned and vulnerable railway level crossings across the country in collaboration with respective provincial governments. The official said there were two types of level crossings over the Pakistan Railways network, unmanned and manned level crossings, adding that the un-manned level crossings were without gate leaves. "There are a total of 1,565 unmanned level crossings over the entire railway network and as per railway policy in vogue, the upgradation of any unmanned or manned level crossing is the responsibility of road owning authority," he added. He said that a joint survey of Pakistan Railways and the Provincial Government was also conducted in 2013-14 to identify accident-prone/vulnerable un-manned level crossings across the country.

The official said that it also mentioned Section 12 of the Railway Act of 1890 that the district administration or road authority should bear the expenses for the upgrade of these unmanned level crossings.



ISLAMABAD: An aged man on his way with a handbarrow loaded with dry woods, collected for domestic use in the Federal Capital.

West, Saudi officials meets

KABUL (Pajhwok): State Department Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West has discussed US and Saudi Arabia shared security, human rights and humanitarian interests in Afghanistan. On his Twitter handle West wrote: "Thank you to our gracious Saudi hosts for productive and detailed discussions in Riyadh today. Met HE @W Elkhareiji , and HH Prince Dr. Abdullah bin Khaled bin Saud Al Kabeer at @KSAMOFA.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

JAMADI-US-SANNI 02, 1445 — Saturday, December 16, 2023

Import fuel via pipeline

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) plans to import petroleum products by pipeline and has asked importers to share their views and suggestions in this regard. Acting commerce and industry minister Nooruddin Azizi chaired a meeting attended by representatives of petroleum products importing companies and members of the Prices Control Commission regarding the import of petroleum products via pipeline.

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

Major rally held in Kabul in support for Palestine

KABUL (TOLONews): A major gathering was held in capital Kabul on Friday in support of the people of Palestine and to condemn the Israeli attack on Gaza. The participants of the rally called for an "immediate" halt to Israel's attack on Gaza and criticized the "silence of the Islamic countries" regarding the issue of Palestine. "The cruelty which is going on in [Palestine] on the defenseless people is unacceptable and we con-

demn this action in the strongest terms," said Mohammad Mohsin, a participant. "All of the Muslims have a role in one body," said Mohammad Yousuf, a participant. The participants read a resolution in which they stressed supporting the Palestinians, providing humanitarian assistance to them and practical action by the Islamic countries to alleviate the situation in Gaza. "The people of

Afghanistan are condemning the blockage of water, food, power and health facilities for the people of Palestine by Israel," said Mohammad Edris, a participant. The rally was attended by the children as well. "They have ignited a fire in Gaza. They have hurt the people in Gaza. Where are human rights, we should lend a hand together to rescue Gaza," said Mohammad Shayan, a protester.

"Whatever is going on in Gaza, is a crime. There is no water and the bombardments are continuing on the common people in Palestine. We consider this an international crime," said Sabrullah, a protester. It has been over 67 days since the war in Gaza. According to the reports, over 18,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 50,000 others wounded since the war began.



Uzbekistan Electricity contract extended for 2024: DABS

KABUL (TOLONews): The Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat said that the electricity contract with Uzbekistan was extended until the end of 2024.

According to DABS, Mohammad Hanif Hamza, CEO of this company, extended the agreement and asked to increase the amount of electricity exported to Afghanistan, reduce the electricity tariff and facilitate Uzbekistan visas for the technical employees of the company. In the meantime, the complaints of the residents over the electricity blackouts in Kabul have increased. Some of them asked the Islamic Emirate to invest in domestic electricity sources.

According to their accounts, the electricity blackouts have caused them to face several challenges. "How long shall we use the external electricity and give our money to others? My request is that the money which is paid to import electricity be spent on ... sources," said Wahidullah, a resident of Kabul.

"The electricity blackouts have increased and it's winter. People use electricity for heating the house, getting water, but the factories black out. Lack of electricity causes damages," said Nadeem, a resident of

Kabul. On the other hand, the Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines (ACIM) also said that the factories have been faced with challenges due to the electricity blackouts.

"One of the serious challenges of Kabul industry is continued electricity blackouts, which are currently dead for 9 hours, and if the current situation continues, half of working forces will become unemployed. Our production has also been delayed now. Looking forward to the basic solution of the Industrial Parks and the lack of Uzbekistan electricity issues will also return the situation to nor-

mal," said Sakhi Ahmad Paiman, the first deputy of the Chamber of Mines and Industries.

"DABS buys around 400 to 450 megawatts of electricity from Uzbekistan. In the winter, northern, central and eastern provinces use this electricity. The problem of the Uzbekistan electricity is that ... sometimes in winter the technical issues happen due to the cold," said Amanullah Ghalib, the former director of DABS.

This comes as Mohammad Hanif Hamza, CEO of Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, in a meeting with

the Minister of Energy of Uzbekistan, Jorabek Mirzamahmudov, asked to increase the amount of electricity exported to Afghanistan, reduce the electricity tariff and facilitate Uzbekistan visas for the technical employees of the company.

The Minister of Energy of Uzbekistan said that due to the technical issues in the electricity stations of this country, The export of the electricity to Afghanistan has been faced with challenges.

He added that as the issue recovers, the export of electricity will return to normal as agreed.



Pakistan extends Afghans stay awaiting third-country resettlement

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Pakistani government has announced that undocumented Afghans awaiting paperwork to resettle to a third country will be allowed to stay in Pakistan for two more months, according to a media report on Friday.

The extension of the deadline on Wednesday

from the end of this year to February 29 comes amid Pakistan's drive to expel more than one million foreigners living in the country without paperwork.

According to the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR), more than 450,000 people have returned to neighbouring Afghanistan since the

deportation campaign began in early October.

Ninety percent of them did so "voluntarily", according to the Pakistani government, but the UNHCR says they cited fear of arrest as the primary reason for their decision to leave. Announcing the extension, interim information minister Murtaza Solangi said any-

body overstaying the new deadline would be fined \$100 monthly, with a cap set at \$800.

"These measures were aimed at encouraging the Afghans residing illegally in Pakistan to obtain legal documents or finalise evacuation agreements as soon as possible in a third country," Solangi added.



UNSC renews mandate of team monitoring sanctions on Islamic Emirate



KABUL (TOLONews): The UN Security Council said in a statement it has extended for another year the mandate of the team monitoring sanctions on the "Taliban and associated individuals and entities, which threaten Afghanistan's peace, security and stability."

The 15-member body, the statement said, "unanimously adopted resolution 2716 (2023) (to be issued as document S/RES/2716(2023)), directing the Monitoring Team to support the Committee established by resolution 1988 (2011), designating sanctions on individuals, groups, undertakings and entities found to be part of and linked to the Taliban."

"Further to the text, the Monitoring Team is to gather information on instances of non-compliance with measures that include the freezing of funds and assets, prevention of travel and supply or transfer of arms and related equipment, established by resolution 2255 (2015)," UNSC said. "It is also to facilitate, upon request of Member States, assistance with capacity-building, and provide recommendations to the Committee for actions to respond to non-compliance."

The new mandate will expire in December 2024. According to the statement, the US ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, whose delegation was the penholder on Afghanistan sanctions issues, welcomed the mandate's renewal, saying the voting result is a "confirmation of the continuing importance of the 1988 sanctions regime" in supporting peace and security in Afghanistan.

The Team's reporting remains crucial to understanding both the impact of the sanctions and the events

on the ground in Afghanistan, she said, adding that "these insights enable Member States to track whether the Taliban follows through on its commitments," including on counter-terrorism, human rights for women and girls and unhindered humanitarian access. Geng Shuang, Chinese envoy at the UNSC, stressed the need to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a hub for terrorist organizations.

The international community must integrate the country into "the family of nations," he said, expressing appreciation for the provision encouraging the Monitoring Team to visit Afghanistan and communicate with all Afghan parties. He also urged the council to make timely adjustments to sanctions measures to avoid any negative impact on the Afghan people. The team's reports are a useful support for the

Committee, said Anna M. Evstigneeva, envoy of the Russian Federation.

She said they are pleased that the text of the adopted resolution notes the importance of the travel of the team to Afghanistan, which remains a key condition for the mandate's implementation. But the Islamic Emirate condemned the decision, saying that the imposition of sanctions does not benefit any side.

"It is better that the countries and organizations understand that the imposition of sanctions is not the solution. The failed experiences will not be beneficial," said Zabiullah Mujahid, the Islamic Emirate's spokesman. The Islamic Emirate's leaders within the past two years have repeatedly voiced criticism over sanctions imposed on them by the international community.

Deputy PM meets with UK's chatterston dickson

KABUL (TOLONews): The Prime Minister's office said in a press release that the Political Deputy Prime Minister Mawlawi Abdul Kabir met with Robert Chatterton Dickson, chargé d'affaires ad interim of the UK Mission to Afghanistan, and discussed many issues.

In the meeting, the Political Deputy Prime Minister emphasized the need to give the seat of Afghanistan to the representative of the Islamic Emirate in the United Nations and asked countries to send their representatives to Afghanistan.

"The Islamic Emirate has committed to having good relations with all countries but with conditions that the countries do not interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and let the Afghans continue improving and developing amid stability," said Zabiullah Mujahid, the Islamic Emirate's spokesman.



The meeting is the first between Mawlawi Abdul Kabir and a foreign official within the past three months as the deputy PM was absent from the office due to health issues.

"The deputy Prime Minister asked the Britain chargé d'affaires to give the

Afghanistan seat at the UN to the Islamic Emirate. I think this a useless wish. The Islamic Emirate should bring reforms inside the country," said Wahid Fagiri, international relations analyst.

"The meeting between the Deputy Prime Minister and chargé d'affaires is effective

for the improvement of the situation in Afghanistan," said Ahmad Khan Andar, political analyst. Returning to his office, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir on Wednesday met with many members of the cabinet, where he discussed the Afghan refugees deported by Pakistan.

Delegation from Uzbekistan arrives in Balkh to discuss economic issues

KABUL (Agenices): A delegation from Uzbekistan comprised of the country's special envoy for Afghanistan and governor of Surkhandarya of Uzbekistan arrived in Balkh on Thursday.

According to the meeting officials, the participants discussed economic and trade development as well as transit and challenges in the visa process. "All Afghan officials and traders want to have good relations with the neighboring countries. We want to have relations with Uzbekistan," said Mohammad Yousuf Wafa, provincial governor.

Meanwhile, the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said that efforts are underway to connect South Asia with Central Asia through Afghanistan's transit. "We are trying to make Afghanistan a hub between South Asia and Central Asia. The investment opportunities are a lot in Afghanistan," said Mohammad Younus Momand, deputy head of ACCI. Meanwhile, the economists



believe that there is a need for improvement of political relations in a bid to pave the way for the growth of economic relations.

"To extend and improve the economic relations, there is a need for the political relations to improve. Also, the projects which could benefit the country's economy should be

ensured," said Mir Shikib Mir, an economist. "These movements are mostly political... but continuing these negotiations is a positive step," said Seyar Qureshi, an economist.

Earlier, the Uzbekistani media reported that Afghanistan and Uzbekistan signed trade contracts worth \$1.2 billion.



OMAN: Officials of Oman Navy visiting Pakistan Navy Ship TUGHRIL at Salah Port.

KP CM directs resolution of LB problems

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The caretaker Chief Minister Justice Retired Arshad Hussain Shah here Friday directed resolutions of local bodies problems.

In order to address the issues of Local Bodies in the province on sustainable basis, the caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah has directed the quarters concerned to come up with a way-forward and realistic proposals within a week to this end. The caretaker provincial government will take all possible steps within its mandate to resolve the issues of local bodies on priority basis.

He was charging a meeting held here at Chief Minister's House on Friday to discuss the issues of local bodies. Besides, caretaker cabinet members Ahmed Rasool Bangash, Engineer Aamir Nadeem Durrani, Dr. Syed Sarfaraz Ali Shah, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and administrative secretaries of concerned departments attended the meeting. The meeting discussed at length the issues being faced by the local bodies.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said that the issue of establishing offices for village and neighborhood councils in newly merged districts would be addressed on priority. The chief minister said that, he will personally meet the representatives of local government next week and listen to their issues. He directed the quarters concerned to complete the homework to this end.

Election delay will lead to anarchy: Siraj

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami chief Sirajul Haq has asked the caretaker government and the election commission of Pakistan to ensure general elections on Feb 8 as its delay would lead the country toward anarchy and chaos. He was addressing a party workers' convention as chief guest at Khazana Kotkay here on Friday. The JI workers from all parts of the Jandol sub division attended the event. The JI Youth wing district president Ateequr Rehman, JI tehsil chief Humayun Khan, Shuiab Ahmad and others also spoke on the occasion.

The JI chief said that neither democracy nor martial law existed in Pakistan and a remote-controlled democracy in the country would never resolve problems faced by the nation. He said that holding free and transparent general elections on time was the only solution to end terrorism, unemployment and price hike. He said that the leadership of all the ruling parties were involved in corruption and looting of public money.

The JI chief condemned the caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar for accepting a two-states solution to the problem of Palestine and said the PM had no mandate to accept a solution which was not acceptable to the Palestinians. He said the silence of Muslim rulers on the Gaza situation was condemnable. He said the JI fully supported the Palestinians and Kashmiri cause.

About the deteriorating law and order situation he said that hundreds of civilians and personnel of the armed forces were martyred during the last year 1600 bomb blasts and terrorist acts. He said that so far 80 thousand Pakistanis had lost lives in anti-terrorism fight.

Siraj said the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank had mortgaged the country through its loans. He said the PML-N, PPP and PTI all were responsible for the current economic crisis. He said that millions of youths lacked job opportunities. He said the green passport of Pakistan had no value abroad.

He said the rulers had destroyed the country and they wanted the nation to elect them again. The JI chief asked youths to vote for his party. He said the ending of corruption would be his party's top priority. He said that youths would be provided with suitable jobs and national resources would be distributed with justice.

Three officers of Pak Navy promoted



F.P. Report



ISLAMABAD: Three Commodores of Pakistan Navy including Mazhar Mahmood Malik, Shahzad Hamid and Azhar Mahmood were promoted on Friday to the rank of Rear Admiral with immediate effect.

Rear Admiral Mazhar Mahmood Malik was commissioned in Marine Engineering Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1992. The Flag Officer is a graduate of Pakistan Navy War College Lahore, National Defence University Islamabad and qualified Masters of Science in Mechanical Engineering from National University of Science and Technology (NUST).

During his illustrious naval career, the Admiral has served on various key appointments. His prominent appointments include Fleet Marine Engineering Officer at Fleet Headquarters, Deputy MD Pakistan Navy Dockyard and Chief Staff Officer to Commander Logistics. Currently, Rear Admiral Mazhar Mahmood is

appointed as Managing Director Pakistan Navy Dockyard, Karachi. The Admiral is a recipient of Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military).

Rear Admiral Shahzad Hamid was commissioned in Operations Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1993. He is a Naval Aircraft Pilot by profession. The Flag Officer is a graduate of Pakistan Navy War College Lahore and National Defence University Islamabad. The Admiral has a vast experience of Command and Staff appointments which include Command of P-3C aircraft Squadron and Commander Naval Aviation. He also served as Chief Staff Officer to Commander North as well as Naval Attaché of Pakistan in United States. Rear Admiral Shahzad Hamid is appointed as Director General Naval Intelligence in his new rank. The Admiral is a recipient of Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) and Tamgha-i-Basalat.

Rear Admiral Azhar Mahmood was commissioned in Operations

Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1993. The Flag Officer is a graduate of Pakistan Navy War College Lahore, Defence Services Command and Staff College Bangladesh and National Defence University, Islamabad. The Admiral has an illustrious naval career covering vast experience of various Command and Staff appointments.

His command appointments include commands of PMSS BARKAT, PMSS KASHMIR, PNS TARIQ, Commander 9th Auxiliary and Mine Warfare Squadron and Commander 25th Destroyer Squadron. He also served as Chief of Staff to Commander Combined Task Force-150 at HQ NAVCENT Bahrain, Director Studies at National Defence University Islamabad and Director Military Collaboration at NHQ. Rear Admiral Azhar Mahmood has been appointed as Commandant PN War College at Lahore in his new rank. The Admiral is a recipient of Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military).

SC serves notices to Faiz, others

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Friday issued notice to former ISI chief Lt.General (r) Faiz Hameed on ex-Islamabad High Court (IHC) judge Shaukat Azizi Siddiqui's petition challenging his removal.

The notices were also issued to former IHC chief justice Anwar Khan Kasi, former registrar of the Supreme Court Arbab Muhammad Arif and retired brigadier Irfan Ramay. A five-member bench led by CJP Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Irfan Saadat Khan conducted proceedings on the plea of Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui against his removal as ICH judge.

Today's proceedings were also broadcast live on the apex court's website as well as on its YouTube channel. CJP Qazi Faez Isa remarked if the allegations made by Siddiqui were true, then "these army generals were facilitating someone else." He asked ex-Islamabad High Court (IHC) judge Shaukat Azizi Siddiqui's counsel if there was any officer who wanted to become Pakistan's prime minister in 2018.

Addressing the petitioner's lawyer, the CJP remarked, "You did not make them party against whom you leveled allegations." The bench had asked what Siddiqui's lawyer and his client wanted if there is a problem with the pension we can say it to the Attorney General of Pakistan Mansoor Awan.

You know we cannot reinstate your client, but if the provision of pension is the only problem, we can say to the government why are bothering everyone?, the top judge asked Hamid Khan, Siddiqui's lawyer. CJP observed that Shaukat Siddiqui named former DG ISI Faiz Hameed in the case. "Are you saying whatever happened was done on General (r) Bajwa's orders."

Bajwa asked Faiz Hameed to talk to Judge Sahab, about what he wanted. Hameed Khan was quoted as saying to CJP's query. Hamid Khan alleged that Fiaz Hameed wanted to keep the former prime minister in jail till the general elections in 2018 to 'benefit another political party,' Khan added. Later, the hearing was adjourned until January 10.

IHC issues notice ECP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC), in a recent hearing on Friday, issued a notice to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) seeking clarification on the controversial delimitation of NA-122 Lahore constituency.

The petition, filed by a concerned citizen, challenged the fairness and transparency of the delimitation process, raising concerns about potential electoral manipulation. Chief Justice Amir Farooq, presiding over the hearing, expressed skepticism about the timing of the delimitation exercise. He remarked that with no immediate election schedule in sight, the timing of the constituency redrawing raises questions about its necessity and purpose. He further stated that the ECP must provide a detailed explanation to address these concerns and ensure public confidence in the electoral process. The petitioner's counsel argued that the delimitation notification was issued with retrospective effect, potentially impacting the fairness of future elections in NA-122.

Israel presses Gaza assault as top US official visits

GAZA STRIP, Palestinian Territories: Israel pressed its offensive in Gaza on Friday despite mounting international calls for restraint, with key backer the United States saying the war to crush Hamas must not lead to a long-term Israeli occupation of the territory.

The war began after Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel on October 7 that Israeli officials say killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians. Vowing to destroy Hamas and bring home an estimated 250 hostages taken by militants into Gaza, Israel launched a massive military offensive that has left much of the besieged territory in ruins.

The health ministry in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip says the war has killed more than 18,700 people, mostly women and children. Late Thursday in the southern city of Rafah near the Egyptian border, crowds of Palestinians used flashlights to search under the rubble of buildings for survivors following an Israeli strike. "This is a residential neighborhood, women and children live here, as you can see," said resident Abu Omar. "Three missiles on a residential neighborhood that has nothing to do with any militant activities."

Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said troops were engaged in fighting with militants in two districts of Gaza City late Thursday. "There will be more tough battles in the days to come," he said. The Israeli army said Friday that 117 troops had died in Gaza since the start of the ground offensive. It said the body of a French-Israeli hostage kidnapped on October 7, Elia Toledano, was recovered and returned to Israel.

"We are working together with security agencies, and with all intelligence and operational means in order to return all of the hostages home," the army said. The United States, which provides billions of dollars in military aid to Israel, has strongly backed its response to Hamas's attacks, but has voiced increasing concern over civilian casualties and the long-term plan for Gaza. "We do not believe that it makes sense for Israel, or is right for Israel, to...reoccupy Gaza over the long term," US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said Friday after meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant in Tel Aviv.

Gallant warned that Israel's fight with Hamas "will require a period of time — it

will last more than several months, but we will win and we will destroy them." In Washington, US President Joe Biden urged Israel to take more care to protect civilians in Gaza. "I want them to be focused on how to save civilian lives — not stop going after Hamas, but be more careful," said Biden.

But Netanyahu vowed to carry on "until victory," and Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said the war would continue "with or without international support." Sullivan headed to the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Friday for talks with its Palestinian Authority (PA) leaders, who have lost even more public support since the war in Gaza. The West Bank, where the PA exercises limited control, has seen a surge in violence since October 7.

There, the Palestinian health ministry said 11 people had been killed since the Israeli military launched a raid in the city of Jenin and its refugee camp earlier this week. The war in Gaza has led to increased popular support for Hamas in the West Bank, further weakening the internationally recognized PA. This week, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly supported a non-binding resolution for a cease-fire in Gaza, with Washington voting against it.

The UN estimates 1.9 million of Gaza's 2.4 million people have been displaced, and the head of its agency for Palestinian refugees, Philippe Lazzarini, warned of a "breakdown of civil order." "Everywhere you go, people are desperate, hungry and terrified," said Lazzarini, who recently returned from Gaza.

The UN humanitarian agency OCHA says more than a third of households have reported severe hunger, while more than 90 percent are "going to bed hungry." Adding to the desperation, mobile and Internet communications were cut Thursday and yet to return the following day, with operator Paltel blaming "the cut off of main fiber routes from the Israeli side." "Gaza is... blacked out again," PalTel said, with global network monitor Netblocks confirming the blackout.

Hamas's media office described it as a "premeditated crime that deepens the humanitarian crisis" by making it harder for rescuers to reach injured people. Aid distribution has largely stopped in most of Gaza, except on a limited basis in the Rafah area, according to the UN. — Arab News

No one can dare cast

(Continued from Page 1)

Kakar reiterated that only the illegal foreigners were being repatriated as they had been posing security challenge for the country. About the brain drain, he reiterated his earlier position of not discouraging it as the diaspora would become an asset in the form of remittances and projecting Pakistan's image. However, he called for improving education quality and fill the gaps to enhance the number of graduates to fulfill domestic and global supply needs.

Regarding the increasing interest rate, the prime minister said the State Bank, being an autonomous body, determined the interest rate as well as the monetary policy with no government control. However, he said the government remained in contact with the central bank and expressed the hope that the situation would improve with the improvement of economic indicators.

About different education-related issues, including frequent changes of syllabi, quota in educational scholarship and other schemes, salary structure of new doctors and physiotherapists, he assured to take up the matter with the AJK government and relevant departments and playing his role wherever required.

Indian unilateral, illegal acts to further stimulate Kashmir freedom movement: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, calling the recent verdict of the Indian Supreme Court as a tool to consolidate Indian illegal occupation, said such unilateral and illegal decisions would further stimulate the Kashmir freedom movement.

He said despite world powers' silence over the issue, India could not succeed in its nefarious designs of diminishing the freedom movement and it was trying to resolve the Kashmir issue

according to its own agenda. "The movement is not diminishing and this is the biggest problem for India and it was again and again trying to bury it through various tactics," the prime minister said while addressing a press conference here.

He said more than 90,000 Kashmiris had been killed, over 1500 faced forced disappearances and pellet gun injuries, and thousands of the women suffered rape, while the human rights abuses were also documented in two of the UN reports. "Such painful memories can't be forgotten for centuries," he remarked. To a question, the prime minister expressing the government of Pakistan's resolve to support the Kashmiris in their just cause of freedom, said that this movement would continue with new strength, and remain consistent.

The prime minister said during his two-day visit, he held useful and constructive interactions with the Hurriyat leadership, members and cabinet of AJK legislative assembly, students, and journalists to inject new vigour and energy into the Kashmir freedom movement. During the meetings, input from various stakeholders including the Kashmiri leadership would be incorporated to reinvigorate the freedom movement, he said.

To another question, PM Kakar maintained that the unilateral and illegal decisions either by the Indian courts or assemblies would never be accepted and Pakistan rejected such decisions. He said Kashmir's final settlement must be ensured through a plebiscite in line with the UN resolutions. "Without it no other way is acceptable," he added. Responding to a query, the prime minister highlighted, "We are advocating for our people, we consider the Kashmiris as future residents of Pakistan".

On various ongoing and new development projects in AJK, the prime minister said a cabinet committee of the AJK government had been formed to look into these and his government would provide every possible support in this regard.

PM assures financial assistance to AJK government for completion of road network: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said the federal government would extend every possible financial assistance to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) for completion of development works in the area.

Chairing a special meeting Azad Jammu and Kashmir cabinet, he stressed that the road network between AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) was crucial to ensure connectivity. PM Kakar said the government would provide assistance on the construction of Shuntar Tunnel connecting AJK and GB, the Murree-Muzaffarabad Expressway, and the Mansehra-Muzaffarabad-Mangla-Mirpur Expressway.

He said the federal government would instruct its ministries to complete the projects relating to AJK on a priority basis. The prime minister also emphasized to benefit from the tourism potential of AJK. PM Kakar said his visit to AJK was aimed at reiterating the stance of the State of Pakistan about the internationally recognized disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir.

He said India could not escape from its oppressive designs of altering the status of the Valley. Prime Minister of AJK Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq and his cabinet thanked PM Kakar for visiting the AJK in solidarity with Kashmiris after the Indian Supreme Court validated the government's illegal decision of revoking the special status of J&K.

LHC issues notices to DC, police on Afzal's detention

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday issued notices to the Deputy Commissioner and police on a petition challenging the detention of PTI Senior Vice President Sher Afzal Marwat under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO).

Marwat was arrested from outside the LHC on Thursday, where he had arrived to join a protest. Footage of his arrest shared by the PTI on X (formerly Twitter) had shown policemen dragging him by the collar as several lawyers tried to stop them. He was later moved to an undisclosed location.

Police sources told that the arrest was made under the MPO. The law empowers the police to detain a person considered "prejudicial to public safety or the maintenance of public order". The arrest was strongly criticised by PTI leaders and lawyers' bodies. A statement shared on the party's official X account held the caretaker government responsible for "act-

ing as a facilitator" during the "unabated lawlessness".

On Friday Marwat's brother filed a petition in the LHC seeking the quashing of the PTI leader's detention orders. He urged the court to declare the arrest "illegal, maliciously motivated, ab initio void and non-est". Copy of which with, named Lahore deputy commissioner, superintendent central jail, Lahore inspector general of police, Lahore capital city police officer, DIG operations, DIG investigations, Civil Lines SP, district intelligence and the station house officer of the Mozang police station as respondents in the case.

The application stated that the government had detained Marwat as a "political vendetta". It also demanded that Marwat be released till the disposal of the petition. The petition was taken up by LHC's Justice Shehram Sarwar Chaudhary in the chamber. He issued notices to and sought responses from the deputy commissioner and other respondents in the case.

The hearing was subsequently adjourned. It must be noted that Marwat, one of the counsels for former prime minister Imran Khan, was catapulted into the spotlight over the past few weeks due to his fiery addresses at the PTI's public events. The lawyer, who was recently made a senior vice president of the party, has been at the forefront at a time when the majority of the party's core leadership is in hiding or has parted ways.

Last week, Marwat had accused the police of attempting to "abduct" him near the Gulabad area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Lower Dir district. Subsequently, the Peshawar High Court had ordered the KP government not to arrest Marwat until further orders in four cases recently registered against him after he attended his party's conventions in the province.

In October, a case was registered against Marwat in Dera Ismail Khan, on allegations of instigating the public against state institutions through social media.

SC suspends LHC order

(Continued from Page 1)

The petitioner, PTI, had also prayed to the LHC that the returning officers be appointed from the judiciary. "This section could have been challenged at any time, so why is it being challenged now? Did the LHC also suspend the Sindh, KP, and Balochistan ROs appointments?" Justice Shah wondered. Moving on, the CJP wondered what the PTI's lawyer wanted. The CJP asked how could the high court pass an order against its own verdict. He then reminded the people that the SC had passed the Feb 8 polls order on the plea of PTI — the same party whose plea in LHC led to this conundrum.

The CJP then asked whether Umair Niazi's LHC petition could stop the entire polling process across the country. "Umair Niazi's petition is in contempt of the Supreme Court's order. It is a bid to derail democracy," the CJP said and asked whether the SC should start a contempt proceeding. He added that it seems that Niazi does not want elections. The chief justice asked if judicial officers, election commission, and executive do not conduct elections, then who will? "Prima facie, it seems like a bid to postpone the polls."

The CJP asked the ECP counsel about who is responsible for holding the elections. At this, the lawyer said that ECP is responsible. At this, CJP Isa said: "Sorry we are very clear. Do you remember when your petition was underway in the apex court we said that we'll

not do your job but we'll ensure your job is done. There is a big difference in both things," "I'm very sorry that such orders are being passed by the judiciary," he said, lamenting about the LHC's order and the judiciary's refusal to provide staff. The hearing went on for several more minutes, following which CJP Isa announced the order to suspend the high court's order.

In conversation with media, PPP spokesperson Faisal Karim Kundi said his party had a clear stance when it comes to the staging of polls: "Elections should be held on February 8." "Asif Zardari has also stated that elections should take place," he said, noting that the LHC order has caused fears among stakeholders over the general polls. "We hope that the Supreme Court will take a decision today and revoke the LHC's stay," Kundi said, as he further hoped that the election schedule would be released "during the day".

The former federal minister said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf — which had filed the plea in the LHC — was trying to evade the elections. "We did not get a level playing field in the past as well. The PPP believes in the people's power," he added, a claim that the PTI and PPP have repeatedly maintained that they were not getting equal electioneering opportunities. Pakistan Muslim League-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb said it was crucial that elections take place on February 8, blaming the Gohar Khan-led PTI

for the uncertainty surrounding the elections.

"PML-N stance is that the polls be staged on February 8. We believe in transparent polls and we are already gearing up for elections," the party spokesperson noted. The spokesperson also noted that the ECP has the constitutional right to appoint ROs and DROs of its choice.

Slamming PTI founder Imran Khan, she said he was complaining about level playing as the buttons of the RTS were not in his hands anymore. PTI Senator Barrister Ali Zafar also said that his party wants elections on Feb 8, claiming that there were chances that the PTI might retract its plea in the LHC that started this entire conundrum. "We will try to do away with anything that comes in the way of elections. However, we are still demanding that the ROs and DROs be appointed from the judiciary," the PTI leader added.

Upon the advice of then-prime minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Alvi dissolved the 15th National Assembly three days before the completion of its 5-year term. The former government prematurely dissolved the lower house to ensure that the polls were scheduled 90 days later — in line with the Constitution. However, that did not seem to happen, as the commission had said that it could not follow up on the 90-day deadline as it had to work on fresh delimitation of constituencies after the Council of CCI approved the results of the 2023 digital census.