

Hamayun to join IPP

LAHORE (INP): Former federal minister Hamayun Akhtar has decided to join the fledgling Istehkam-i-Pakistan Party. Matters regarding joining the IPP have been settled between the former PTI commerce minister and the leadership of the Istehkam-i-Pakistan Party. Hamayun Akhtar will announce his decision in a presser to be held later today at 3 pm in the presence of IPP founder Jehangir Tareen and party President Abdul Aleem Khan.

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PESHAWAR EDITION

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No peace sans Kashmir's resolution

UN chief, Gen Munir stresses 'two-state solution' as key to ending Gaza crisis

F.P. Report

RAWALPINI: During ongoing visit to USA, General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), COAS called on Mr Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General at UN Headquarters, New York.

UNSG warmly welcomed the visit by the COAS and appreciated the contributions made by Pakistan Army and contingents of the Law Enforcement Agencies who have remained committed to the peace and stability of the world. COAS reaffirmed Pakistan's continuous support to the United Nations in all its earnest efforts.

The COAS during his interaction particularly highlighted about the ongoing Kashmir and Gaza issues. COAS said that peace in South Asia will remain elusive until a peaceful solution to the longstanding Kashmir Dispute is found in accordance with UNSC resolutions and the aspirations of Kashmiri people.



COAS also condemned unilateral and illegal Indian efforts to change the status of Jammu & Kashmir as it is in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions. COAS reiterated Pakistan's stance on the Palestine issue and urged the UNSG to mobilize the international community for immediate cessation of hostilities in Gaza to prevent the unfolding human tragedy and high-

lighted that enduring solution to the issue lies in Two State Solution.

COAS particularly shared deep concerns over the plight of the innocent civilians who are being brutally targeted and are not being provided with sufficient humanitarian relief. The UNSG acknowledged the concerns and thanked General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M) for the visit to the UN Headquarters.

PPP heads into polls with 'no hate' motto: Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) said Saturday it was burying "old ways of politics" and heading into the general elections, set to take place on February 8, 2024, with a "no hate" motto.

"PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has made it clear: PPP will run its campaign on positivity, not negativity; we will have to bury the old ways of politics — demeaning one another and taking revenge," the party's senior leader, Sharjeel Memon, told a press conference in Karachi.

Memon, a former provincial minister, was speaking to journalists after the party's "important" board meeting — held under Bilawal's leadership

— in which the PPP's top brass discussed the plan of action for elections.

The politicians informed the media that PPP had already started the public communication campaign and after the announcement of the election schedule, the party chief reviewed the country's political situation. "Some political leaders are still demanding revenge, while the ones who wanted to take action against their rivals are sitting in jail themselves," Memon said, as other leaders at the presser quipped, as they targeted Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif.

Memon added that the PPP chief has made it clear that the country's problem isn't taking revenge from one's opponents, but the redressal of the nation's

issues — skyrocketing inflation and unemployment. "PPP is talking about bringing people together, while other political parties are spreading negativity. The need of the hour is for Pakistanis to unite; this will lead to the country's development," he said.

The ex-minister said that Bilawal will lead PPP's election campaign by holding rallies all over the country. Taking a jibe at the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Memon said that "some parties" submitted petitions in the courts to find an escape from the elections. Speaking on the occasion, Senator Sherry Rehman reiterated PPP's long-held demand for a level playing field for the party and the conduct of elections on the designated date without any delay.



PESHAWAR: Relatives of APS Shuhada lighting candles in memory of their martyred loved ones.

Court grants Imran's judicial remand

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court in Islamabad has granted judicial remand of former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf founder Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case. Accountability Court Judge Muhammad Bashir heard the Toshakhana case against PTI founder Imran Khan in Adiala Jail on Saturday.

Imran Khan was presented in the court after completing his two-day physical remand. During the hearing, NAB prosecutor Irfan Bhola requested the

court to extend Imran Khan's physical remand for another three days. But the court rejected NAB's request for physical remand and sent Imran Khan on a 14-day judicial remand.

Talking to the media outside Adiala Jail Rawalpindi, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan said that we do not want any delay in the election, but our request was there should be a free and transparent election. He said that no PTI lawyer appeared in the Supreme Court yesterday. He said that the PTI petitioned that the Returning Officers should

be taken from the judiciary.

Gohar said that only the Supreme Court could tell how it reckoned that we wanted to derail the democracy. "We sit in the Supreme Court to save the democracy from getting derailed. God willing, we will save the democracy," he added. Condemning Imran Khan's jail trial, he said that attempts are being made to take physical remand of the PTI founder through bogus cases. "This is a political victimization, there cannot be a jail trial. Such trials are a violation of basic human rights," he added.

Justice Sardar Tariq takes oath as acting CJP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The senior most judge of the Supreme Court Justice Sardar Tariq Masood on Saturday took oath as Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan. Senior Judge Justice Ijaz Ahsan administered oath to Acting Chief Justice Sardar Tariq Masood. Judges of the apex and high courts attended the ceremony.

A day earlier, President Dr Arif Alvi had accorded approval for appointment of Justice Sardar Tariq Masood as acting chief justice of Pakistan. Ministry of Law and Justice had also issued a notification to this effect. Earlier, Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Qazi Faez Isa left Pakistan for abroad during winter holidays of the apex court. Justice Sardar Tariq Masood will act as chief justice of Pakistan during his absence.

NAB arrests Fawad on corruption

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Fawad Chaudhry was arrested on corruption charges Saturday from the Adiala jail where he is being housed after his detention in a case involving cheating and threatening a citizen. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Saturday obtained the court permission to interrogate former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry in connection with a case relating to corruption and assets beyond means.

The court hearing was conducted by Judicial Magistrate Yasir Mahmood and was attended by NAB officials and investigation officer. It is relevant to mention here that the NAB chairman had already issued warrants to arrest Fawad Chaudhry under Section 24-A. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) officials informed the court that Fawad Chaudhry is in custody under judicial remand. The court allowed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to execute the orders of serving arrest warrants to Fawad Chaudhry and also directed the Adiala Jail superintendent to cooperate in this regard.

It was a legal requirement to get court permission as the accused is already in judicial custody in the previous case and the judicial magistrate accepted the plea, directing the Adiala jail superintendent to ensure that the warrants were executed. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had already launched inquiry into the affairs related to the construction of Jhelum-Pind Dadan Khan dual carriage — a road project connecting the two towns.

It has been alleged that Fawad used his political clout in the approval and execution of the project that also involves financial irregularities in land acquisition. He was earlier summoned on Nov 13 for an interview at the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) office in Rawalpindi. Fawad is known for changing political loyalties. Previously, he remained a staunch supporter of military dictator Pervez Musharraf and later joined the PML-Q. His next stop was the PPP where he was appointed as a media adviser to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari — the party chairman.

However, he then decided to board the PTI's ship where he became a close aide to the party chairman while delivering aggressive statements and speeches. With the passage of time, the May 9 fall-out meant that he opted to be a part of the newly-launched Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) — a relationship that is yet to be defined clearly. At point, Fawad was among the aspirants eyeing the chief minister's slot in Punjab during and after the Usman Buzdar episode, but he hadn't been able to fulfil his ambitions.



ISLAMABAD: Justice Sardar Masood, Senior Puisne Judge Supreme Court, taking oath as Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan.

PM pays tribute to APS Shuhada

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Saturday paid tribute to the sacrifices of Shuhada of Army Public School (APS) Peshawar and said that such precedents of sacrifices were rare in human history.

In a message on the 9th anniversary of APS tragedy, he said that on that tragic day, terrorists had launched a cowardly attack on APS leading to a tragic incident which had grieved the entire world. The unfortunate incident had strengthened the nation's resolve against terrorism, the prime minister said, giving a clear message to terrorists and enemies of peace that the Pakistani nation was united.

Expressing his grief, the prime minister said that recollection of the incident brought tears to his eyes. Nine years back, the enemy had tried vainly to deter the resolve of the nation in the fight against terrorism by attacking their flowers like children, PM Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying. The caretaker prime minister further said that he along with the entire nation still remembered the great sacrifices of the stu-

dents and paid tribute to them.

Principal APS Shaheed Tahira Qazi and other teachers stood against terrorists like a formidable wall and laid down their lives while saving the students, he added. The caretaker prime minister said that the Pakistani nation had won the fight against terrorism and had foiled all the enemies' nefarious designs of sowing anarchy and disorder.

The timid terrorists could not succeed in their designs as the nation had fearless people like Shaheed Tahira Qazi and Shaheed Aitzaz Ahsan in its ranks who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the protection of their people, he added. He said though the entire nation was grieving over the tragic incident of APS but it had made it stronger against the specter of terrorism.

The prime minister said that the Pakistani nation was standing shoulder to shoulder with its security forces to send all terrorists to hell who had been trying to disrupt peace of the country. He said the nation also paid tribute to the personnel of police force, rangers, army and other law enforcement agencies for

eliminating the terrorists and their hideouts one by one after the occurrence of the APS tragedy.

Meanwhile, the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar expressed his deep grief over the death of Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah.

In a message posted on X, the prime minister prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul and said that Pakistan stood in solidarity with the Kuwaiti Royal Family and the people of Kuwait at this moment of grief. He further said that the late Amir would always be remembered for his sterling contribution to strengthening Pak-Kuwait relations.

According to foreign media, the Kuwaiti Royal Court said that Sheikh Nawaf died at the age of 86 after a prolonged illness. The State of Kuwait has declared an official mourning over the death of the Amir. Sheikh Nawaf was sworn in as Amir following the death of his predecessor, the late Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah in 2020. He was born in 1937 and was the fifth son of Kuwait's late ruler from 1921 to 1950, Sheikh Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah.

Kuwait Emir passes away



KUWAIT CITY: Oil-rich Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad Al-Sabah passed away Saturday at the age of 86 after leading the Gulf nation for three years, the royal court announced.

"With great sadness and sorrow, we mourn... the death of Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait," the court said in a statement aired on a Kuwaiti news channel, which had cut its regular programming and switched to a broadcast of a recitation of the Holy Quran before the announcement.

According to the official KUNA news agency, Sheikh Nawaf was admitted to the hospital in November "due to an emergency health problem". The news agency did not elaborate on his illness but he was later declared in stable condition. His health has commonly been a concern during his term because of his age.

Sheikh Nawaf was named crown prince in 2006 by his half-brother Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and took over as emir when Sheikh Sabah died in September 2020 at the age of 91. He had to steer the economy through a crisis caused by a fall in oil prices in 2020. The incumbent crown prince, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, another half-brother of the late emir, is 83 and much attention will now be focused on whether a ruler from the younger generation is brought in by the family.

Kuwait, a conservative country with a powerful parliament, faces challenges due to standoffs between elected lawmakers and cabinet ministers, which have stifled development efforts and frightened investors, despite the country's strong Al Sabah family's control. However, repeated standoffs between elected lawmakers and cabinet ministers installed by the ruling family have stymied development efforts and scared off investors.

Following a succession of resigning governments and dissolved parliaments, Kuwait's current cabinet is its fifth in a year. The political deadlock has delayed necessary reforms and blocked development projects, leaving infrastructure and education in disrepair and much of the population disgruntled. Sheikh Nawaf, born in 1937, was the fifth son of Kuwait's late ruler from 1921 to 1950 Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He started his political career at the age of 25 as governor of Hawalli province, where he remained until 1978 when he started a decade as interior minister. — Arab News

Dec 16 always to be remembered: Solangi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi Saturday said that the day of December 16 would always be remembered for the great sacrifices of the martyrs of Army Public School.

In a message on the 9th anniversary of APS martyrs, he said, "Nine years have passed since the tragedy of APS, but the grief of those who lost their lives was still fresh today." The minister said that cowardly miscreants attacked the future of the nation, the young children and martyred them. Murtaza Solangi said adding no one could hold back their tears remembering that tragic day.

Paying tributes to the martyrs of APS tragedy, he said they united the nation against terrorism. After this incident, he said all the political parties and organizations united against terrorism, a twenty-point national action plan was adopted and the terrorists were defeated.

Unfortunately, without taking the opinion of parliament and public institutions, a government of the recent past allowed the terrorists to return, due to which the nation facing a new wave of terrorism today. "Terrorism has never ended due to the appeasement of terrorists around the world", he maintained. The people of

Pakistan will defeat this new wave of terrorism with the strength of their state institutions and this was the message of today.

"Our resolve is firm and our passion is true, our war against terrorism will continue", Murtaza Solangi remarked. Solangi stated that Pakistan had come a long way to defeat terrorism as all state institutions, including civil and military leadership, were on the same page to protect homeland and national security. "Pakistan is moving towards lasting peace and development," he added. He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed souls of the martyrs of Army Public School in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved families to bear the tragic loss with fortitude. The minister also paid tributes to the martyrs of Pakistan Armed forces who sacrificed their lives for peace in the country.

52nd anniversary of 'Fall of Dhaka' observed: The 46th anniversary of Fall of Dhaka was observed Saturday with a note of melancholy and an urge to self-accountability to weed out the causes of disintegration and dissension which had led to that debacle.

Various political, social, cultural and educational institutions will organize public meetings, seminars and symposium to observe the tragic day.

On December 16, 1971, Indian Army in collaboration with Mukti Bahini, an armed wing of the Bengali separatists occupied Dhaka after a long resistance. The surrender of Pakistani military led to the disintegration of East and West Pakistan and the establishment of Bangladesh. It's difficult to forget this day when the biggest country of Islamic world faced a ruthless division.

December 16, 1971 is termed as the darkest day in the history of Pakistan. The local population of Eastern Pakistan stood with the enemies against their own Muslim brothers. At least 90,000 of our soldiers were detained and had to spend a long term in India's imprisonment. In the history of nations, 24 years does not hold a significant importance but the division of a country in this span arises numerous questions.

Undoubtedly, East Pakistan could not be separated without India's intervention but one of the questions is that why the Bengalis who thoroughly struggled for the creation of Pakistan in 1947 were inclined to split from Pakistan after mere 24 years? The tragic aspect is that the ruling class of Western Pakistan had forgotten the separation of East Pakistan in such a way as if it was not the division of a state but of some unimportant object.



CM orders removal of all bottlenecks for smooth traffic flow, illegal parkings

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar while presiding over a meeting regarding traffic issues has directed the Commissioner and Karachi police to start a vigorous crackdown against the illegal parking areas in the city and prosecute the culprits involved in the racket and onward no agency would designate parking slot without consultation with the Traffic police.

The CM said that there were different agencies involved in creating traffic problems in the city, therefore he has called a joint meeting of Karachi police, Traffic Police, traffic engineering bureau, SEPA.

The meeting was attended by Caretaker Minister Home Brig (r) Haris Nawaz, Minister Tourism and Environment Arshad Wali Mohammad, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Home Secretary Iqbal Memon, IG Police Riffat Mukhtar, Additional IG Karachi Khadim Rind, Commissioner Karachi Saleem Rajput, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, DIG Traffic Iqbal Dara, DIG Driving Licenses Irfan Baloch, DG SEPA Waris Gabol, Director Traffic Engineering Tariq Raffi and other con-

cerned. DIG Traffic Iqbal Dara briefed the chief minister on the overall traffic police strength, and the issues involved in traffic congestion in the city.

The traffic police have a total strength of 9077 against which 6699 are working which shows a shortfall of 26.1 per cent or 2378 policemen. The CM was told that the city has a network of 9500 km where around 6.5 million vehicles, including 4,054,546 motorcycles are plying. Approximately 350,000 new vehicles are registered every year in the city and around 65,000 Extra seat Rickshaws are running in the city on illegal routes. During 2023 around 1.62 million tickets were issued for violation of traffic laws against which Rs836.12 million fine was recovered.

It was pointed out that with the induction of more Mass Transit systems like Green and Orange lines, the traffic issues would be resolved. The issue of traffic jams at and around University Road is the result of prolonged delays in the completion of the ongoing redline corridor.

The CM was told that movement of heavy traffic was restricted in the city area during daytime from 0600-

2300 hours. However, there was a dire need to promulgate Section 144 Cr.P.C on the movement of heavy traffic in the city during day hours except the vehicles carrying essential commodities. It was pointed out that the solution to the traffic challenge may lie in the initiation of the projects like Mauripur Expressway and the redesigning of the Lyari Expressway for the movement of heavy transport.

At this, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab said that Lyari Expressway was designed and built for heavy traffic which has been endorsed by its consultant in writing. Only NHA was raising this point, otherwise, it has been resolved and heavy traffic be allowed on the Lyari Expressway.

The CM constituted a committee under Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab with DIG Traffic, DG KDA and others concerned to sit together and resolve the issues so that Lyari Expressway could be open for heavy traffic. The bottlenecks identified by the DIG traffic in the smooth flow of the traffic include S. M. Taufeeq Road, the Upward ramp of Liaquatabad Flyover towards Karimabad in front of Al-Karam Square which needed to be widened.

Committee meets to review rules of judicial commission

ISLAMABAD (APP): A meeting of the committee constituted by the Chief Justice of Pakistan/ Chairman Judicial Commission of Pakistan to review Judicial Commission of Pakistan Rules 2010 convened here on Saturday. The committee met under the co-chairmanship of Mr. Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice (Retired) Manzoor Ahmed Malik, according to a press release.

The members of the Committee/Judicial Commission of Pakistan including Justice Nadeem Akhtar, Senior Puisne Judge, High Court of Sindh (HCS), Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar, Senior Puisne Judge, High Court of

Balochistan (HCB), Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, Senior Puisne Judge Peshawar High Court (PHC), Justice Shehzad Ahmed Khan, Senior Puisne Judge Lahore High Court Lahore (LHC), Mansoor Usman Awan, Attorney General of Pakistan, Akhtar Hussain Senior Advocate, Zia Ul Hassan Lanjar Advocate, representative of Sindh Bar Council (SBC), Rahib Khan Buledi Advocate, Ahmed Farooq Khattak Advocate, representative of KPK Bar Council, Qazi Rafeuddin Babar Advocate.

The Committee discussed its mandate, that is, to propose such rules of procedure for the Commission which comply with the collegial and inclusive

decision-making process enshrined in Article 175A of the Constitution.

The Committee deliberated on the process of calling nominations and meeting of the Commission, the procedure for initiating nomination for Supreme Court Judges, High Court Judges, and Federal Shariat Court Judges, representation of Advocates and Judicial Officers in High Court appointments, diversity in High Court appointments, criteria for determining merit, procedure and criteria for confirmation of Additional Judges and establishing a secretariat of the Commission. The Committee also resolved to finalize the draft Rules on 29th December 2023.



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice (Retired) Manzoor Ahmed Malik chairing the meeting of committee to review Judicial Commission of Pakistan Rules 2010 Supreme Court

CM pays tribute to APS martyrs

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, in his message on the anniversary of the martyrs of Army Public School Peshawar, affirmed that the significance of December 16 will forever evoke the memory of the profound sacrifices made by the martyrs.

The Chief Minister emphasized that the nation would remain eternally indebted to the sacrifices of the children and teachers of Army Public School.

He acknowledged that these young souls inscribed the history of a secure Pakistan with their precious blood, laying the foundation

for a peaceful nation.

Highlighting the poignant contribution of the little children who offered their lives for a noble cause, Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi underscored that the martyrs of APS played a pivotal role in uniting the Pakistani nation against terrorism. He credited the great sacrifices for inspiring unprecedented unity and consensus throughout the nation's fight against terrorism.

The Chief Minister expressed that the unparalleled courage and determination drawn from the sacrifices of the martyred children led

to the defeat of the brutal enemy, transforming Pakistan into a cradle of peace. He hailed the martyred children and teachers as heroes of the entire nation, extending heartfelt salutes to their families.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi expressed solidarity with the families of the APS martyrs, emphasizing that there is no room for terrorism and extremism in Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Pakistan. He concluded by noting that the entire nation pays homage to the eternal sacrifices of the great martyrs of Army Public School Peshawar.

Ambassador welcomes Tessori

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan in Tehran Mudassar Tipu Saturday welcomed Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori who had arrived Iran on four-day visit.

The Governor Sindh has arrived in Mashhad on December 13 on the first flight of recently inaugurated airline between Karachi and Mashhad, said a press release received here.

Ambassador Mudassar also hosted a reception in the honour of the Governor Sindh and his delegation.

Separately, on X, Pakistan ambassador posted that he received Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori at airport in Tehran. The governor is visiting Iran to inaugurate recent air flight between Karachi and Mashhad and to promote trade and cultural ties between the two brotherly countries.

Students join hands with ANF

KARACHI (APP): To create awareness among the general public against drug abuse, Regional Directorate Commander Anti Narcotics Force Sindh Brigadier Umar Farooq and Joint Director ANF Sindh Colonel Shakir participated in an anti-drug awareness walk organized by the Graceful Grammar Higher Secondary School on Saturday.

To promote the culture of healthy activities, students of the school participated in various games and exercises. The participants were unanimous in their call against drug abuse and urged all stakeholders to play their role in the fight against drug abuse.

At the conclusion of the event, Brigadier Umar Farooq appreciated the efforts of participants and urged all stakeholders of the society to play their role in the fight against drug abuse. Later, he distributed prizes among the students and was presented with a memento by the organizers.

Man kills wife

KARACHI (INP): A shocking and gruesome incident was reported from Karachi, where a man killed his wife before committing suicide inside his home in Malir.

According to the nearby people, the citizen stood on his house's balcony and asked the individuals – gathered outside his house – to call the media or he'd commit suicide. After getting the report, the police officials reached the spot and tried to calm down the person, however, after a while closed the door and opened fire, killing his wife and himself. The police later forcefully entered the house and found the lifeless bodies of the couple.

Sindh govt dismisses officers for forgery in public service exam

KARACHI (INP): Two Sindh government officers, Hadi Bakhsh Kalhoro and Mushtaq Ajan, have been dismissed from their jobs after being found guilty of forgery in the 2020 Sindh Public Service Examination (SPSE).

The Chief Secretary of Sindh issued an order for their dismissal with the Chief Minister's approval.

The order alleges that Kalhoro and Ajan, who were Controller and Deputy Controller of the SPSE respectively, manipulated the examination results to favor certain candidates over those who

qualified on merit.

An investigation committee, formed on orders of the Sindh High Court, unearthed the irregularities. The committee, composed of two Grade-21 officers, found evidence that unqualified candidates were passed through "transactions," bypassing deserving candidates.

According to documents, Kalhoro faced specific allegations in two inquiries but failed to provide a satisfactory response even after a final show-cause notice. The authorities concluded that the allegations were true and dis-

missed him after granting him a personal hearing.

Similarly, Ajan was also given a chance to defend himself but could not clear his name. The authorities, therefore, deemed him complicit in the SPSE 2020 corruption and decided to terminate his employment. However, Ajan opted to resign before the official dismissal.

This scandal has cast a shadow on the integrity of the SPSE and the public sector recruitment process in Sindh. The dismissals serve as a warning to other officials who might engage in similar malpractice.

IGP discusses election security strategy with Election Commissioner

KARACHI (APP): The Inspector General of Police (IGP) for Sindh, Riffat Mukhtar Raja, held discussions with Election Commissioner Sharifullah at the Central Police Office (CPO) Karachi on Saturday.

They deliberated on security strategies and plans

for the imminent general elections, focusing on constituency details, polling stations, staffing, and necessary security arrangements, according to a spokesman for Sindh Police.

Emphasizing the police's dedication, the IGP assured a comprehensive security

cover throughout the electoral process, ensuring the safety of ballot boxes.

He highlighted the importance of stakeholder consultation and the implementation of an effective security plan as key priorities for the Sindh Police ahead of the elections.



PAKISTAN ENGINEERING COUNCIL

SITUATIONS VACANT

● Applications are invited for the following posts in Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) from the candidates who fulfill the educational qualification, experience and age limit criteria as mentioned below. The applications must submit ONLINE on the link given below within 15 days of publication of this advertisement i.e. by **December 31, 2023 (1700 hours)**.

Sr. #	Name of Post	No. of Post(s)	Age Limit (Maximum)	Qualification	Experience
1	Senior Director Finance (PEC-20, Regular)	01	50 years	Chartered Accountant (CA), ACMA, Master's Degree in Finance, MBA (Finance/Accounting) or minimum of 16 years of relevant qualification in the field of Accounting / Finance recognized by HEC. Only one 2nd division in academic career will be acceptable; however, the final/terminal degree must be obtained in 1st division. Preference will be given to the candidate possessing CA/ACMA qualification.	Minimum 17 years' post qualification experience in relevant positions (BPS-17 or equivalent) with minimum of 05 years of experience in managerial/ Director level position equivalent to BPS-19 (in case of public sector) or senior level relevant position in private sector organization of repute. Experience required may be relaxed for CA/ACMA qualification as per Government rules/policy/practice. The person shall have experience in the areas of financial management, policies & procedures, good exposure to planning and accounting processes. Demonstrated experience and knowledge of dealing internal/external audits, compliance requirements, relevant Accounting Standards (IAS), tax & commercial laws, cash management & financial control, operating Financial Information Systems (FIS), procurement / tender processes, quality reporting and analysis is required. Proficiency in operations of an ERP system, MS Office and Technical/ Management trainings will be an added advantage.
2	Assistant Registrar (PEC-17, Regular)	03	35 years	B.Sc. Engineering from HEC/PEC recognized HEIs, with required computer literacy.	Valid Registration with PEC is mandatory. Experience of 01 to 02 years is preferable. Knowledge of PEC Act & Bye-Laws will be considered as additional knowledge.
3	Public Relation Officer (PEC-17, Regular)	01	33 years	Masters in Journalism or equivalent (16 years of education)	01 to 02 years of relevant experience desirable reputed Government/ public/private organization in the field of public relation. Should have excellent communication and presentation skills.

● Applications are to be submitted ONLINE through PEC Job Portal on jobs.pec.org.pk. All requisite documents should be uploaded correctly. In case of missing/irrelevant/incorrect uploading of documents, the application will not be accepted.

● At the time of interview, the candidates will have to bring original educational certificates/degrees, experience letters, CNIC, domicile and NOC (if applicable) for verification.

● Age relaxation as per Government Rules will be admissible.

● Persons serving in Govt./Public/Autonomous organizations must obtain NOC from respective department. Applications without NOC shall not be entertained.

● Age limit shall be calculated as per closing date of application as given in advertisement.

● Only shortlisted candidates will be called for Interview. No TA/DA will be admissible for appearing in interview.

● The Competent Authority reserves the right to post the selected candidate anywhere in Pakistan, if required, and to increase or decrease the no of posts, reject any or all the applications or cancel the recruitment process at any stage without assigning any reason.

● Last date for submission of applications is **December 31, 2023 (1700 hours)**.

● For further details, please visit PEC website (www.pec.org.pk).

Director (Human Resource)

Pakistan Engineering Council

PID(I) 3686/23 Ataturk Avenue (East), G-5/2, Islamabad, Tel: 051-9219500, 9219036-38




4 hm³
3 hm³
2 hm³
0.9 hm³
0.6 hm³
0.3 hm³

بل کو پروٹیکٹڈ بنانے کا راز جانیں!

NOV

DEC

JAN

FEB

سردیوں کے 4 مہینے گیس کا ماہانہ استعمال 0.9 hm³ سے کم رکھیں

اور سال کے 12 مہینے گیس کا بل کم سے کم ادا کریں

گیس کا استعمال 0.9 hm³ تک کیسے رکھا جاسکتا ہے

- رات بھر کھانا پکانے سے گریز کریں
- واشنگ مین مشین کا استعمال کریں

- گیس کی کڑواہٹ کا استعمال پر نوکریں
- رات بھر کھانا پکانے سے گریز کریں

PID(I) 18899-D

Timber mafia: Secretary initiate crackdown

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: In a decisive move against illegal timber activities, Secretary Forest of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nazir Hussain Shah, has initiated a comprehensive crackdown on the Timber Mafia. Emphasizing a zero-tolerance approach, Secretary Forest Nazir Shah has asserted that stringent actions will be taken against any individual involved in the smuggling of timber.

Underlining the commitment to safeguarding the province's forests, Secretary Forest Nazir Hussain Shah personally orchestrated a covert operation based on credible information received. The operation successfully

thwarted an attempt to smuggle a significant quantity of illicit timber. Eleven trucks, having departed from Malakand Forest Division and crossed the Dargai Forest Checkpost, were intercepted by the DFO Patrol Squad led by Sajid. Subsequently, 10 trucks were apprehended in the Marathi area, while one was intercepted on the Sardaryab road.

Upon the orders of Chief Minister KP Justice R Arshad Hussain, a province-wide crackdown against the Timber Mafia has been initiated. Chief Minister Arshad Hussain stressed the need to eradicate illegal timber trading and ensure strict adherence to legal protocols in the

forestry sector. Assessment of the illicit timber is currently underway, marking the preliminary stage of the investigation. Notably, it has been revealed that the apprehended trucks possessed permits; however, they were found to be transporting a much larger quantity than permitted by the issued documents.

This proactive stance by the Forest Department, spearheaded by Secretary Nazir Hussain Shah, exemplifies the dedication to preserving and protecting the vital natural assets entrusted to the government. As the assessment progresses, further details regarding the operation and the extent of the illicit timber trade will be disclosed.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Dr. Aamer Abdullah presiding over a meeting of land record settlement and digitization project in newly merged districts.

Recommendations in Health Sector: NAB hails Secretary for effective implementation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Peshawar hailed Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir for effective implementation of the NAB recommendations. In a press statement issued by NAB Peshawar who extended its appreciation to Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir for his outstanding efforts in implementing NAB recommendations and suggestions in the health sector.

In a commendatory letter addressed to the Chief Secretary, NAB Peshawar acknowledges Secretary

Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir's dedication to executing significant reforms in the health department. An Appreciation letter has also been sent to highlight his achievements. The letter from NAB Peshawar lauds Secretary Health's successful prevention of the wastage of machinery worth billions of rupees by acting upon NAB recommendations.

Mahmood Aslam Wazir, in a short span, has effectively operationalized previously non-functional medical machinery highlighted by NAB's Peshawar office. The commendatory letter emphasizes that Sec-

etary Health's swift action in redistributing unused medical machinery to other hospitals of the province has saved the provincial exchequer from losses.

According to the appreciation letter, Mahmood Aslam Wazir's proactive approach has led to the deployment of idle medical equipment to various hospitals across the province, benefiting hundreds of thousands of patients. The reforms initiated by Secretary Health have significantly improved the delivery of medical services in the province, as stated in the letter.

The letter also underscores that Secretary Health's reforms have positively impacted two hundred thousand patients monthly, demonstrating a notable enhancement in the provision of healthcare services across the province.

Excise Police conducts successful operation

PESHAWAR (APP): Another successful operation of Police Station Excise Peshawar Region with an attempt to smuggle ice worth millions of rupees failed, Excise Spokesman said here Saturday. According to details, 1048 grams of ice recovered during the operation at Haji Camp Adda stop, Spokesman Excise said. The accused Muhammad Amir, son of Sher Muhammad, a resident of Shaheen Town Peshawar, was trying to smuggle the ice worth millions of rupees, an Excise spokesman said. The accused was arrested on the spot and a case was registered in Excise Police Station Peshawar Region for further investigation, Excise Spokesman said.

Faisal successfully defended his Ph.D dissertation



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faisal Abrar successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation on 14th December 2023 under the supervision of Dr. Muhammad Sohail Khan, Assistant Professor in the Department of Computer Software Engineering, UET Peshawar (Mardan Campus). The title of his PhD thesis is "A Framework for Ensuring Information Credibility in The Digital Preservation

Process". Muhammad Faisal Abrar presented his research during a public seminar, followed by a Viva-Voce examination by the Examination Committee. Currently, Muhammad Faisal Abrar is serving as a lecturer in the Department of Computer Science, UET Mardan.

He has published multiple articles in well reputed journals of which Two W category publications have been derived from his PhD research.

The members of the Research Evaluation Committee (REC), including Prof. Dr. Sadaqat Jan; Dr. Muhammad Faisal Nadeem; Dr. Muzammil Khan, and Dr. Shams Ur Rahman were present on the occasion.

Chairman Department of Computer Software Engineering also attended the defense. They all extended their congratulations to Muhammad Faisal Abrar on his successful Ph.D. defense.

840 militants held, over 70 killed in 2023

PESHAWAR (INP): In a significant blow to terrorism in the province, Pakistani security forces have apprehended over 840 militants and neutralized more than 70 terrorists in 2023.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Anti-Terrorism Department's report highlights the ongoing commitment to eradicating terrorism from the region. The department confirmed that 840 militants were arrested throughout the year, disrupting recruitment networks and preventing further attacks. Additionally, over 70 terrorists were neutralized through targeted operations, further weakening their presence.

Caretaker Information Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah, commended the continuous efforts of security forces in maintaining peace and stability. He emphasized that operations against terrorism are ongoing and will continue until complete eradication is achieved.

Furthermore, the police department has identified over 200 high-risk extremists and issued reward lists with substantial sums for their information or apprehension. This proactive approach aims to disrupt potential attacks and dismantle networks before they can cause harm.

While acknowledging the progress made, officials remain vigilant against the evolving tactics of terrorist groups. The department is committed to adapting its strategies and strengthening intelligence gathering to anticipate and thwart future threats.

ANP recalls sacrifices of APS victims

PESHAWAR (INP): Central President Awami National Party (ANP), Asfandiyar Wali Khan has said that innocents who sacrificed their lives on the altar of terrorism in the Army Public School (APS) incident on December 16 will always be remembered and revered in our memories.

In a message issued in connection with the APS tragedy, he said that innocent children and teachers who were brutally killed by militants would always be remembered. He also recalled the sacrifices of ANP in the war against terror and said that "more than 1200 party workers who laid their lives for the country during the reign of militancy still live in our hearts and memories."

Asfandiyar Wali stressed implementing the National Action Plan (ANP) in its true spirit to control militancy adding that militants are regrouping and targeting law enforcers and innocents which is a matter of grave concern for all of us.

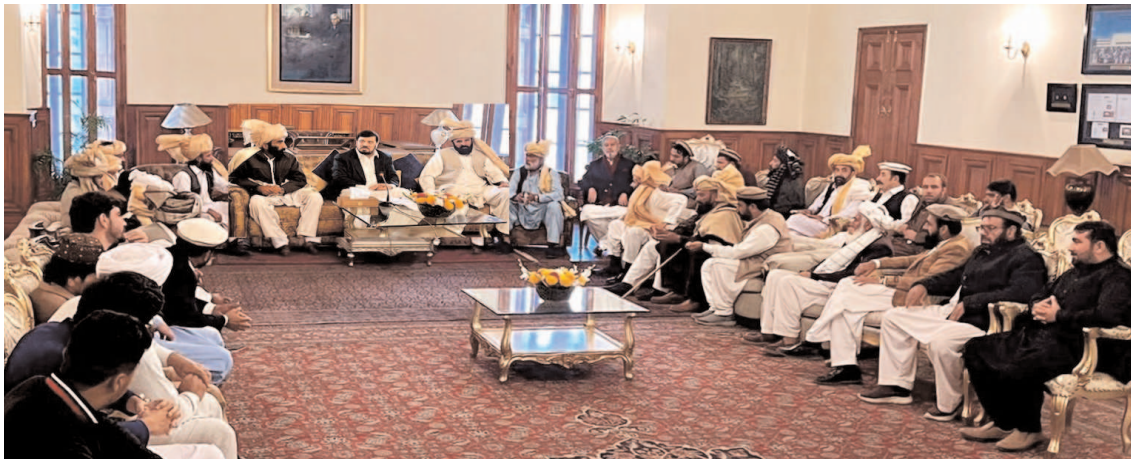
He suggested steps to eliminate militancy and those who are facilitating enemies of the country and maintained we should devise a plan to change the mindset of extremists and counter their narrative. He said that strict implementations of previous decisions are needed to wipe out militancy once and for all.

Air quality index rates increased

PESHAWAR (APP): Air quality index rates increased in the suburban areas of the KP and was recorded at 178, a report issued by the Environment Protection Department, said here Saturday.

According to the report, the air quality index rates have increased in suburban areas from October and there are various reasons for increasing air pollution in some places, an official of the EPA said. The official told the media men that the traffic fumes from marble factories and others increase air pollution in the area wherein schools buses, old wagons, rickshaws and old taxis, factories also started to cause pollution in the environment.

The minimum temperature in the provincial capital was recorded at 3 degrees Celsius and the air quality index rate increases in rural areas from October while the citizens should be made aware of air pollution to take precautionary measures, the official of the EPA said.



PESHAWAR: Tribal jirga member of Salman Khel South Waziristan meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor's House.

DG announces reduction in Pneumonia cases

PESHAWAR (APP): Director General Health Services, Dr. Shaukat Ali Saturday highlighted significant reduction in Pneumonia cases through enhanced integrated disease surveillance.

Talking to media men Dr. Shaukat Ali, Director General Health Services, has announced a notable decrease in pneumonia cases this year compared to the previous year, attributing it to the successful implementation of enhanced integrated disease surveillance and response system.

In a statement issued regarding the annual inci-

dence rate of pneumonia cases, Dr. Shaukat Ali emphasized the tangible reduction in pneumonia cases this year due to improved integrated disease surveillance and response systems.

He noted that the integrated disease surveillance and response system have been expanded to all districts of the province, resulting in substantial improvements in the management of outbreaks.

Dr. Shaukat Ali urged parents to be vigilant during the intensified cold weather, as the severity of winter often leads to an

increased risk of pneumonia among children.

He emphasized the importance of keeping children safe from the harsh cold to prevent the heightened vulnerability to pneumonia. According to him, efforts are underway to further enhance the preparedness and capacity of the system.

Last year, pneumonia was diagnosed in 127,000 children under the age of five, whereas this year, the number of affected children in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decreased to 93,000. In the previous year, the highest number of pneumonia

cases was reported with 14,900 cases.

Dr. Shaukat Ali disclosed that this year, Lower Dir has reported pneumonia cases in 12,000 children under the age of five, while Haripur reported 11,000 cases, Peshawar 9,000, and Swat 8,000. Furthermore, in the province, 7,000 children under the age of five were affected by pneumonia in Swabi, and 4,500 in Upper Dir. Dr. Shaukat Ali emphasized the need for continued efforts to mitigate the impact of pneumonia, especially among the vulnerable age group of children under five.

PML-N Lawyer forum welcomes SCP decision

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial President PML-N Lawyers Forum, Kifayat Ullah Khan has said that Supreme Court order has foiled the conspiracy to derail the process of general election on February 8. He hailed Supreme Court timely intervention to set aside the judgment of Single bench of Lahore High Court and direction to Election Commission to go ahead with the election programme.

Addressing lawyers at Mardan Bar Association, he said that fair and transparent election will ensure stable and representative government which would be instrumental in serving the

masses.

PMLN Provincial General Secretary Akbar Yousaf, Secretary Information Salim Shah Hoti, Senior Vice President Haji Farhad Ali, Vice President Taimur Afridi, forum leaders Taj Ghani, Atif Nazee, Doulat Khan Mohmand, Shabir Khan, President PML N Peshawar Ashfaq Jhahra, President PMLN Mardan Asad Khan General Secretary Asif Iqbal were present on occasion. The PML-N Lawyers Forum has visited Mardan in connection with organization and mobilization drive.

Kifayatullah said that PML-N Lawyers Forum was a strong voice in bar and it had always worked

for the welfare of the legal fraternity. He lauded the efforts of former Federal Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar and President Peshawar High Court Bar Association Muhammad Tariq Afridi for the provision of funds for the bars throughout the province.

He said that all possible efforts would be carried out for the welfare, skill development and professional progression of lawyers. He said that the lawyers belonging different political shades were united for the cause of democracy, supremacy of Constitution and rule of law.

He asked lawyers to shun differences and work for this noble cause.

Certification distribution ceremony at KMU held



PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Medical University (KMU) organized a grand function to welcome the participants of Batch-II and a certificate distribution ceremony was also organized among the participants of Batch-I. According to details, Batch-I participants successfully completed a six-month certification program in Healthcare Quality and Risk Management.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq acknowledged the participants of the event for their determination to advance the quality of healthcare and distributed certificates to the participants. VC KMU highlighted the critical need to prioritize quality and patient safety in healthcare delivery and emphasized the critical role of healthcare providers in society.

During his address, VC KMU Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq

threw light on the importance of quality and patient safety, supported by relevant statistics on adverse events. He advocated for a proactive approach to mitigate such events, illustrating how emphasizing quality not only reduces morbidity but also leads to significant cost savings by averting excessive resource utilization.

Recognizing the dedication and contributions of the healthcare community, VC KMU engaged with Batch-I participants representing diverse roles within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa institutions, eliciting their invaluable feedback. Their enthusiastic testimonials, spanning consultants, junior doctors, nurses, paramedics, managers, chief executive officers, and Assistant professors, hailed the program as enriching and commendable.

The comprehensive certi-

fication program, crafted and executed by seasoned professionals with extensive experience from the UK Healthcare Commission and certifications from the Diplomat American Board in Healthcare Quality, mirrors KMU's unwavering pursuit of excellence. Dr. Abdul Jalil Khan Director, and Dr. Muhammad Hussam Khan, Course Coordinator, alongside Dr. Haseeb and other eminent figures in KP institutions, ensure rigorous standards in the program.

The ceremony concluded with the announcement of Batch-2 of the Healthcare Quality and Risk Management Program, set to commence on Dec 23, 2023. This initiative underscores KMU's steadfast commitment to equipping healthcare professionals with the requisite knowledge and skills to elevate patient care standards.

Peshawar Motorway MI closed

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Motorway MI temporarily closed due to heavy fog on Peshawar Motorway, an official of the Motorway Police told APP here on Saturday. Motorway is closed from Peshawar to Rishkai due to lack of limit and poor visibility as a result of heavy fog, Motorway officials added.

He said to avoid unnecessary travel during fog hours for the larger public interest and safety, Motorway officials said.

He also advised the people to use fog lights in vehicles, Motorway authorities officials said.

Winter sweaters distributed among girl students

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As many as 72 warm sweaters for winter were distributed among the deserving students of Government Girls Primary School Wazir Bagh No. 1.

On this occasion, Irfan Khan, president of the welfare organization, said that millions of people across the country are benefiting from this rainbow of service

every year.

He said that Al-Habib welfare organization has the distinction of being one of the prominent service organizations in Pakistan. Engaged in the sacred mission of humanitarian service, our organization has a proud history of its own, he mentioned.

He said that our biggest capital is our selfless volunteers who are always

busy in the service of helpless and needy people just for the sake of God's pleasure. Along with this, we also have the support of philanthropists who have pain in their hearts, he added.

Those who feel the suffering of their brothers and sisters and send relief materials and funds at the time of any calamity or need.

He said that the nations

that are adorned with the jewel of education are the ones who achieve new goals of development.

He said that stationery, school bags and uniforms are also being distributed to the poor and needy students. He said that the series of services will continue. It will continue, benefactors, go ahead and continue your cooperation with us.



In brief

Suspects arrested in operation F.P. Report

KOHAT: Police on Saturday arrested twenty two suspects including three proclaimed offenders during operations conducted in various areas of the city. Spokesman for Kohat police told that arms including one repeater, two pistols, dozens of cartridges and 150 grams of ice drug was also recovered from the possession of the arrested. Operations were conducted under the supervision of DSP Muzaffar Khan and SHO Gumbat Police Station Riaz Hussain. Heavy contingent of police and elite force participated in the search operation. The arrested suspects were transferred to Gumbat police station for investigation.

Two killed in Kasur mishap

KASUR (INP): Two people were killed when an over speeding dumper hit a motorcycle at Divalpur road of Kasur, rescue sources said on Saturday. According to details, the accident took place near Kot Sardar area where a reckless driven knocked down a motorcycle carrying two people. As a result of accident, both motorcycle riders including Sami and Rizwan were killed on the spot and dumper driver fled the scene.

Criminal under custody killed

VEHARI (INP): A notorious criminal under custody was killed after his accomplices ambushed the police here in the wee hours of Saturday. According to details, the police was taking an under custody criminal for recovery when his accomplices ambushed the police in attempt to free him. The under custody accused was killed and assailants fled the scene. The body was shifted to hospital.

Former UC councillor killed

MANSEHRA (INP): Former councillor of village council Ghanoid died after a jeep plunged into a deep ravine. According to details, the accident took place at Jammu Nakka area of Balakot where jeep carrying crush sand skidded off road and fell into a gorge. As a result of accident ex UC councillor Muhammad Javed Mughal was critically injured and shifted to THQ Hospital Balakot where he succumbed to his wounds during treatment.

Criminals held with weapons

SIALKOT (INP): Sialkot police claimed to have arrested six accused with illicit weapons, here on Saturday. According to police spokesperson, on the direction of District Police Officer (DPO) Sialkot Muhammad Hasan Iqbal, the police has launched a crackdown against the criminal. During the search, four Kalashnikovs, one 222-rifle, one 9mm pistol with several bullets and magazines, one Hilux Vigo and one car were recovered from the possessions of the accused. Police have arrested the accused namely as Chaudhry Bilal Hussain, Muhammad Ilyas, Waqas Ahmed, Muhammad Sajid, Muhammad Asim and Junaid..

Body found

GHAZI BAROTHA (INP): The Punjab police have recovered another dead body from the Ghazi Barotha Lake near Attock taking the number of bodies found in the water to four during the last few days. All the bodies could not be identified and they were packed in gunny bags and thrown into the lake.

Residents complain of electricity load shedding

Anees Takar

MARDAN: Residents of Parhoti and Sikandri are grappling with a relentless wave of unscheduled power outages, lasting up to seven hours each day. The unannounced blackouts occur daily, cutting electricity at 5 PM and resuming at 11:30 PM at night.

The impact of these clandestine power cuts is far-reaching, with households and mosques enduring prolonged periods without electricity. Complaints about water shortages due to extended power outages have also emerged.

30 years old, Uzair Ahmad said that the constant power cuts are affecting our daily lives. It's unbearable especially during

ing these challenging times when we rely on electricity for everything. "The situation is dire. Many of us are struggling to make ends meet, and these extended power outages only add to our difficulties. Something needs to be done urgently" said Uzair Ahmad.

The shopkeeper Javed Khan said that the unannounced load shedding effected badly our business we spent the whole time in darkness. This is the peak time of buying and selling, if immediate measures aren't taken to address the illegal and unannounced load shedding, business community and people will take to the streets. Our elected representatives must prioritize our basic needs over political agen-

das.

The trifecta of soaring inflation, rampant unemployment, and extensive load shedding has forced numerous impoverished urban dwellers into dire circumstances.

In response to the grievances of the citizens, local authorities are urged to expedite efforts to curtail the illicit load shedding, ensuring that the basic necessities of the population are met. Failure to rectify the situation may result in public protests against elected representatives who are perceived as neglecting the welfare of their constituents. The pressing need for a sustainable solution to the energy crisis looms large over the affected communities.

Six dialysis machines donated to hospital

SARGODHA (APP): Pakistani origin-American citizen Sultan Mahmood Warraich announced donating six dialysis machines to the dialysis centre and 20 stretchers and as many wheelchairs to Dr Faisal Masood Teaching Hospital, here on Saturday.

According to a spokesman for the hospital, Warraich visited the DHQ Teaching Hospital Sargodha and went around various departments, along with Medical Superintendent Mushtaq Bashir Aakif.

Dialysis Centre In-charge Muhammad Khan Malik briefed the visitor about patients under treatment at the dialysis centre, and the facilities being provided to them. Sultan Warraich announced donation of dialysis machines, stretchers and wheelchairs for the hospital and assured the MS that he would continue working for welfare of patients at the dialysis center and the DHQ hospital in future. The medical superintendent thanked the guest.

Sports Gala begins: The 10th sports gala of Khubaib Girls School and College (KGSC) was inaugurated by Vice Chancellor University of Sargodha Professor Dr. Qaiser Abbas

and Principal Khubaib Girls School and College Madam Sarwat Ansar, here on Saturday.

Senior Vice President Dry Port Dr. Atiqah Rehman Wains, renowned transporter Malik Rab Nawaz Kachela, president of International Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) Punjab and local welfare organisation Bardasht, Malik Abid Hussain Awan, Senior Vice President Bardasht Munazza Anwar Goindi, Chairman Star Foundation Baba Shafique Dogar, and notables of the area including Sheikh Asif, Amanat Bhatti, Wilson, Malik Manzoor Qadir, Shahzad Mughal and Malik Ashraf Barhan were also present.

Students presented a colorful programme at the sports gala, in which they presented the culture of all provinces of Pakistan. The taekwondo girls team demonstrated their art, while school students also presented special tableaux to pay tribute to the Kashmir and Palestine victims, and received a lot of applause from the audience.

Sargodha University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr. Qaiser Abbas said in his address that Khubaib Girls School and College was doing exemplary work in

terms of providing free education and other facilities to orphans, adding that those students who would get admission to the university on merit would be given scholarship from the university.

He said a healthy body had a healthy mind; therefore, along with education, sports was necessary for students. Khubaib Girls School and College is a welfare institution for orphan girls, which run with the help of philanthropists, the VC added. Principal Khubaib Girls School and College Sarwat Ansar said, "We have around 200 orphan girls, who are getting education, whose complete expenses are borne by the Khubaib Foundation." She thanked the local philanthropists, who were supporting these orphan girls.

Senior Vice President Dry Port Dr. Atiqah Rehman Wains said, "We are lucky that we are part of this institution." She said: "We should support such institutions that are doing welfare work for deserving people in society." At the sports gala, students participated in various games and the university vice chancellor, KGSC principal and other guests distributed prizes among the position holders.



HANGU: People holding a protest against un-announced electricity load shedding in their areas.

Secy Health KP visits to Category D Hospitals F.P. Report

KHAN PUR: Secretary Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mahmood Aslam Wazir, undertook a surprise visit to Category D Hospitals in Khan Pur and Havelian on Saturday. The primary objective of the visit was to assess and enhance the quality of healthcare facilities available to the residents of Khan Pur and Havelian.

He examined the available facilities, scrutinized the inventory of medicines, evaluated the overall cleanliness of the premises, wards, laboratory and monitored the attendance of the hospital staff.

Secretary Health emphasized the importance of maintaining high-quality healthcare standards and instructed relevant authorities to take immediate actions to ensure an optimal level of service delivery to the community of Khan Pur and Havelian. Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir reiterated the government's commitment to continuous improvement and affirmed that such surprise inspections will be conducted regularly to uphold the quality of healthcare services across the province.

Two drug peddlers held F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Dera police arrested two drug peddlers during the operations in the limits of Darazinda Police station, here Saturday.

According to the police spokesman, on the direction of District Police Officer (DPO) of Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, Police team of Darazinda Police station led by SHO Tayab Din arrested drug peddler Alias son of Sagheer Muhammad resident of Sherani and recovered 185 grams of ice from his possession.

Meanwhile, another drug peddler Khaliq noor son of Salik resident of Darazinda was arrested. Police also recovered 100 grams of ice from his possession. Police registered the separate cases against the arrested criminals and started further investigations.

Robbers loot gold F.P. Report

RAHIM YAR KHAN: As many as six individuals snatched a bag containing gold worth Rs 180 million from gold traders at School Bazar bridge near the city police station area of Rahim Yar Khan.

Six armed men opened fire and critically injured two businessmen for resisting the robbery bid near the city police station area. As per the gold trader, the robbers took the bag containing gold worth Rs 180 million and opened fire over resistance.

Meanwhile, the rescue team shifted the injured gold traders to the hospital for medical assistance. However, the police officials have cordoned off the area and initiated a search operation for the robbers. Last month, a robbery incident was reported from Karachi, where robbers took away gold worth millions from a flat located in the Napier Road area of the metropolis.

Snow blanket envelopes Quetta, Ziarat peaks

QUETTA (APP): Several parts of the northern Pakistan, particularly the Quetta region as well as the Ziarat hill station wore a white sheet after the season's first snowfall that plummeted the temperatures below the freezing point in several areas.

Areas of Balochistan including Quetta, Ziarat, Kalat, Qilla Saifullah, Zoab were reeling under biting cold. Temperature dropped further following first snowfall of the season, a report aired by a Private news channel reported. Land, trees and mountains were seen covered with about three inches to 1 foot of snow which was extremely bewitching for residents and tourists alike, a resident of area said.

Like the beauty of the lake, the hearts of local residents are also beautiful as

local people are very simple and hospitable, said a tourist. "People coming to enjoy the snow are advised to keep their tanks full," said a local while pointing to the long queue of stationary cars.

He further urged visitors to bring proper winter gear including warm clothes and shoes, adding, "Please don't wear heels or dress shoes with leather soles." The enthusiastic tourists built snowmen and threw snowballs at each other, said another tourist, adding, some were posing for photographs and others were busy in taking selfies.

To facilitate tourists, local police have also devised a comprehensive traffic plan, issued traffic advisories, and announced a helpline while constantly rescuing vehicles stuck in snow. He urged tourists to

cooperate with traffic police so that the traffic snowfall, particularly during snowfall, could be avoided. "This enchanting snowfall has not only painted the region in a picturesque hue but has also elevated the winter experience," said a tourist.

"The mesmerizing scenes of snow-covered mountains are attracting attention, making it an ideal destination for those seeking the magic of winter." A mother said that snowfall was the favorite time of our children and they were much excited for playing in snow, making snowman and taking selfies to share with their friends. On the other hand, people in Ziarat valley were disturbed after electricity shortage and problems in gas pressure, the only means to maintain room temperatures in winter.

Annual prize distribution ceremony held at FCPS

F.P. Report

WANA: The annual prize distribution ceremony was held in Frontier Corps Public School (FCPS) Wana, District South Waziristan, Lower (SWL). On this occasion, the Chief Guest, Major Zeeshan and Principal distributed prizes among the students who secured prominent positions in the examination.

Parents of students and people from different fields participated in the function organized by the school administration in large numbers. Meanwhile, Maheed Khan Afridi, principal of Frontier Corps Public School (FCPS) Wana, highlighted the history of this educational

institution and its services in Waziristan.

He said that Frontier Corps Public School Wana is the only educational institution in South Waziristan Lower since 1958. Who has been providing educational services in South Waziristan Lower since last 65 years, and thousands of students of Waziristan have benefited from this. He further said that both male and female students are getting quality education from Frontier Corps Public School Wana.

Along with this, the school administration is paying special attention to the training of children. The principal said that hundreds of students are studying in Frontier Corps Public

School, Wana. God willing, our efforts will be to improve the institution for the bright future of Waziristan.

The principal said that the students of Frontier Corps Public School Wana get prominent position in the tests of various educational institutions of the country.

Finally Principal Maheed Khan said that under my supervision, students are being given quality education as well as socialization of children is being done. Apart from this, programs are also being organized to instill confidence in children, such as speeches on various topics and to instill a sense of patriotism.

ECP appoints ROs for NA, PA seats

F.P. Report

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

He said that Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Sundas Irshad appointed as District Returning Officer, ADCR Imtiaz Ali Baig Returning Officer Constituency NA-67 while

General Assistant Revenue Saghir Ahmad Bajwa, AC Hafizabad Munawar Hussain and AC Pindi Bhattian Rashid Iqbal have been appointed as Returning Officers Constituencies PP-37, PP-38, PP-39 respectively.

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

Deputy Commissioner

said that this fertilizer will be provided to farmers at control rate on merit and transparently under the supervision of officers of district administration and agriculture department.

She said that another train loaded with fertilizers would be reached shortly so that provision of fertilizer to farmers could be sneered according to needs of farmers for sowing wheat crop in the district. She said that stocks of all fertilizer dealers was being monitoring and verified on daily basis to overcome complaints of farmers regarding shortage of fertilizer in the district.

Call for promotion of mother tongue to preserve cultural heritage

MULTAN (APP): The declining trend towards mother-tongue is matter of great concern and there was an urgent but collective need to create deep-seated love for mother tongue amongst youth.

This was stated by different speakers in an introductory ceremony on poetic work 'Soli Chraha Suri' by Raffat Waheed here at Multan Arts Council. The speakers including Sajjad Jehanian, Dr Riaz Hamdani, Shakir Hussain Shakir, Shazia Arbab,

Ashar Hassan among others.

The speakers highlighted the profound significance of preserving linguistic diversity, terming the decline a societal issue warranting serious attention. However, The speakers termed the poetic work of Riffat Waheed as master piece.

They stated that Riffat Waheed highlighted various aspects of practical life through medium of poetry. Riffat Waheed's achievement got immense appreci-

ation, with speakers noting her role in inspiring hope particularly among emerging poets especially women. At a time where linguistic identity faced challenges, the speakers hailed the work as an important addition to literature.

"Poetry is an excellent genre to express opinion and it is vital to safeguarding cultural heritage. Multan Arts Council will continue to promote such great literary work," the speakers vowed.



HYDERABAD: A Sufi artist performing at Sufi Mela.

Dinner hosted in honour of police officials

ATTOCK (APP): Prominent educationist Dr. Khalid Mahmood, Junaid Khalid and entrepreneur Malik Siddique Awan hosted a reception in honor of police officers who were promoted to the next ranks from ASI to Sub-Inspectors here last Friday.

Those who were promoted from 16th to 17th scale were included Iftikhar Ahmed, Khalil Ahmed, Hafiz Tanveer Ahmed, Waqar Khan, Amjad Ali, Muhammad Ilyas, Muhammad Waheed and Motorway Police Officer Inspector Sardar Farooq Khan. The event was attended by DSP Saddar Circle Sanaullah Khan, Chief Security Officer Attock Police Taimur Khan Ali Zai, PRO Attock Police Malik Muhammad Naeem, CSO to DPO Sami Khan, Reader to SP Investigation

Attock Nabeel Khan, OSI Malik Mehrab Khan, In-charge Special Branch Haji Azam Khan, SHO Police Station Rango Mohsin Shah, SHO Police Station Saddar Attock Safdar Khan, officers of Attock Police and local elites.

Congratulating the promoted police officials on the occasion, Dr. Khalid Mahmood, well known journalists Nisar Ali Khan and Junaid Khalid expressed the hope that the officials would perform their duties diligently to protect the lives and properties of the people.

Drug peddler sentenced to 14 years in prison: A special court for the Control of Narcotic Substances (CNS) sentenced 14 years imprisonment to an accused involved in a drug smuggling case.

According to the report, the accused Zaffar Shahzad a resident of Sargodha was arrested by Attock Khurd Police last year in the case registered under section 9-C of the Control of Narcotics Substance Act 1997 after recovery of hashish from his custody.

The additional Session Judge Attock after hearing the arguments of defense and prosecution counsels announced the verdict as the convicted was found guilty of having drugs, subsequently awarded 14-year imprisonment and a fine worth Rs 1.9 lakhs. During the proceedings, the public prosecutor for the state argued that the accused was caught red-handed while smuggling the contraband and the evidence on record fully connected him with the commission of the offence.



Trump’s ex-lawyer told to pay \$148m for defaming election workers

WASHINGTON: Rudy Giuliani, the former New York mayor who served as Donald Trump’s personal lawyer, has been ordered to pay \$148m in damages to two former election workers he defamed with false claims about the 2020 presidential election.

An eight-person federal jury in Washington, DC, said that Giuliani should pay Ruby Freeman and her daughter Wandrea “Shaye” Moss \$75m in punitive damages, plus \$36m each for defamation and emotional distress, for falsely claiming that they tried to rig the election against Trump. The award comes after Freeman and Moss, two former poll workers in Fulton County, Georgia, testified that Giuliani’s false claims had made them the target of a flood of racist and sexist threats.

In court, Moss and Freeman, who are black, described fearing for their lives after being falsely accused of hiding ballots in suitcases, counting votes multiple times and interfering with voting machines. Freeman testified that she fled her home after the FBI told her she wasn’t safe,

and Moss told jurors she rarely leaves her home and suffers from panic attacks.

“Our greatest wish is that no one, no election worker, or voter or school board member or anyone else ever experiences anything like what we went through,” Moss told reporters after the verdict. “You all matter, and you are all important.” A federal judge had found Giuliani liable in August, leaving it to a jury to decide on the level of damages.

Giuliani, who had argued his election comments had no connection to the threats the women received, described the jury verdict as absurd. The “absurdity of the number merely underscores the absurdity of the entire proceeding”, he said. “It will be reversed so quickly it will make your head spin, and the absurd number that just came in will help that, actually.”

Giuliani also claimed that his remarks “were supportable and are supportable today”. Giuliani’s lawyer, Joseph Sibley, had acknowledged that his client had caused harm, but argued that the \$48m penal-

ty asked for by the two election workers would be “the end” for Giuliani and that he was a “good man”. The verdict adds to a growing list of legal and financial woes for Giuliani, who, before joining Trump’s inner circle, was known as “America’s Mayor” for leading New York through the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Giuliani, along with Trump and 17 others, has been charged with participating in an illegal plot to overturn the outcome of the 2020 presidential election in Georgia. In 2021, Giuliani had his licences to practise law in New York and Washington, DC, suspended over his false statements about the 2020 election. In September, the 79-year-old former prosecutor was sued by his former lawyer for allegedly only paying a fraction of \$1.6m outstanding legal fees. He is also being sued by Hunter Biden, President Joe Biden’s son, for alleged computer fraud and by a former employee over alleged wage theft and sexual harassment. — Aljazeera

Shipping companies pause Red Sea journeys

SANAA: Two shipping companies have announced they will pause all journeys through the Red Sea after a series of attacks on shipping by Yemen’s Houthi rebels. Danish shipping company Maersk said it was suspending its vessels’ passage through the key Bab al-Mandeb Strait, and the German container shipping line Hapag-Lloyd said it would pause journeys in the Red Sea until Monday.

The announcements come after attacks from Houthi-controlled Yemen hit two Liberian-flagged ships in the Bab al-Mandab Strait, a US defence official told the news agency Reuters. A projectile, believed to be a drone, struck one of the vessels, causing a fire but no injuries, the official said.

The ship was identified as the Liberia-flagged Al-Jasrah, a 370-metre (1,200-foot) container ship built in 2016. Private intelligence firm Ambrey said the vessel, owned by German transport company Hapag-Lloyd, “sustained physical damage from an aerial attack” north of the Yemeni coastal city of al-Makha (Mocha).

“The projectile reportedly hit the port side of the vessel and one container fell overboard due to the impact. The projectile caused a fire on deck” that was reported over radio, Ambrey said. Two ballistic missiles were fired in the second attack, one of which struck a vessel, causing a fire, which the crew was working to extinguish, the US official said.

The Associated Press news agency identified the vessel struck in the second attack as the Liberian-flagged MSC Palatium III. “Following the near-miss incident involving Maersk Gibraltar and yet another attack on a container vessel today, we have instructed all Maersk vessels in the area bound to pass through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait to pause their journey until further notice,” said a statement from Maersk, one of the world’s largest shipping companies.

German container shipping line Hapag-Lloyd has paused all its sailings through the Red Sea until December 18, a spokesperson said. “Then we will decide for the period thereafter,” the spokesperson added. The Houthis said in a statement that they had fired missiles at two ships – the MSC Alanya and MSC Palatium III. The statement did not mention Al Jasrah. — Aljazeera

‘War is stupid and I want it to end’: Injured Palestinian children speak



GAZA: Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children have been directly affected by Israel’s onslaught on the Gaza Strip, ranging from displacement to being wounded or killed. Since October 7, more than 10,000 children have been killed or are lost under rubble and presumed dead, according to a report by the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor. At least 24,000 children have lost one or both parents in Israeli attacks and about 18,000 have been injured with some in critical condition.

Nearly half of the Gaza Strip’s 2.3 million people – 47 percent – are under the age of 18. The majority of them have lived through at least four Israeli offensives during their short lives. Due to the blockade imposed by Israel on the coastal enclave, children are also facing the prospect of starvation, particularly in northern Gaza, where they eat on average one meal a day. Furthermore, the lack of clean drinking water, overcrowded conditions and lack of sanitation in United Nations-run schools, where many displaced people are seeking shelter, has led to an outbreak of infectious diseases, to which children are particularly vulnerable.

Over the past 68 days, more than 18,700 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli attacks, including more than 7,700 children, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza. This means that one Palestinian child is killed every 10 minutes, leading the World Health Organisation to describe the situation as “humanity’s darkest hour”. Nearly 8,000 people are missing and presumed dead under the rubble of their homes, and more than 50,000 have been wounded – the vast majority women and children.

Despite the UN general-secretary saying on October 31 that Gaza has turned into a “graveyard for children, a living hell for everyone else”, the Israeli offensive and ground invasion

has continued and shows no sign of slowing down. “The ongoing Israeli attacks have left over 18,000 Palestinian children injured with many in critical condition,” the Euro-Med monitor said. “Dozens more have suffered amputations, and hundreds more have suffered severe burns to various parts of their bodies.”

At Deir el-Balah’s Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, Al Jazeera spoke to several children who had survived Israeli bombardments either directly on their homes or in their neighbourhoods. I was playing in the street with my cousin outside the house in Maghazi refugee camp. The Israeli planes bombed the building opposite us. I suffered a fractured skull, stitches all around my head, a broken leg and a big wound that doctors said exposed my bone.

My favourite football players are Alaa Attiya and Omar Khamis from the Shujayea Football Club. They score a lot of goals. I’ll play when we go back to our homes, but I don’t have a football. I still want to be a football player when I grow up. I miss my school. My mother was making supper for us when our next-door neighbour’s house got targeted. The walls of our home fell on top of us, breaking my leg and my arm in two places. Our home is gone.

I like Cristiano Ronaldo, but I want to be a doctor, so I can help children get better. I hope my medical referral sends me to the United Arab Emirates not to Egypt because I don’t want to travel in a car to Egypt. I want to get on a plane and look out the window when I’m in the sky. I want to get better and come back to Gaza. War is stupid. I want it to end. I’ve saved 1,000 shekels [\$270]. My dad is keeping them safe for me. My favourite food is chicken wings, and I want to take my family out to a restaurant after this is over.

We left our home in Shati and went to stay with my grandpa in Nuseirat. My grandfather said we should go down to the yard and bake bread. A missile struck our home, and those inside like my Aunt Tagreed, Uncle Sameh, Uncle Mohammed and my cousin Rital were killed, 11 in total. My sister Sabah was also killed. She was so young, only two years old.

I was playing on the swing in the yard, and when I woke up, I found myself in the hospital. The doctors cut my long hair and I was so upset. They thought I was going to die, but my heart kept beating. They operated on me for four hours and said I have internal bleeding, a fractured skull, broken pelvis and two broken legs. I have stitches on my hand and stomach, and my legs have titanium parts. I want to be a teacher, and my favourite subject is English. We were at my grandfather’s house in Nuseirat eating moussaka when the Israelis bombed us. The sound was scary. My mother, grandad, Uncles Mustafa, Sameh and Taiseer, his wife and my cousins Hamoud and Uday were all killed.

Mama was outside. I was injured in my legs. Both of them are broken. My Baba and Aunt May are taking care of me. I was sitting under the window and saw the missile falling. We thought it was heading behind our house. I remember a man rescued me from under the rocks. My legs were stuck. I want to be a dentist, so I can fix my dad’s teeth. I like drawing and playing with my dolls. I’m the first in my class. Our neighbour’s home in Nuseirat was bombed, and the walls of our house collapsed on us. We were under the rubble. My grandpa pulled me out. I had shrapnel in my stomach and couldn’t eat for 10 days. My legs have more than 50 stitches. My grandma and cousin were killed. I want to be a doctor, and my favourite subject in school is maths. — Aljazeera

Israel to reopen Karem Abu Salem crossing

GAZA: Israeli authorities have announced the temporary reopening of the Karem Abu Salem crossing with Gaza, called Kerem Shalom by Israel, acquiescing to US calls to allow more humanitarian aid into the strip as fighting grinds on.

In a statement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said that the country’s cabinet had approved the “temporary” measure, which US officials hailed as a positive step. “The cabinet’s decision determines that only humanitarian aid arriving from Egypt will be transferred into the Gaza Strip this way,” the statement said.

For the last two months, the Rafah crossing with Egypt has been the only point of entry into the strip, where a trickle of assistance has done little to address a humanitarian crisis driven by an Israeli assault that has killed more than 18,000 people and displaced 80 percent of all residents. As Israel’s campaign in Gaza has continued, the United Nations and other world bodies have warned of severe shortages of food, clean water and medicines.

UN agencies say that as the bombardment has continued, it has become impossible to distribute aid outside Rafah, where the population has been

swollen to approximately one million with hundreds of thousands of displaced people coming from areas further north. The decision comes one day after White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan met Israeli officials to discuss the timeframe and style of Israel’s military operations in Gaza, as Israel and its US ally come under growing international pressure to bring the fighting to an end.

“It’s a significant concession, the Israelis would say, because right at the outset of this war Israel said there’ll be no further contact, no further links between Gaza and Israel, while they’re now having to open up that Kerem Shalom crossing for goods under US pressure so that Israel can meet its agreement of [letting in] 200 trucks of aid a day,” Al Jazeera’s Bernard Smith reported from Tel Aviv. “And as an indication, before the war started, there were 500 trucks a day going into Gaza, when there was much less need for emergency aid.”

“President [Joe] Biden raised this issue in recent phone calls with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and it was an important topic of discussion during my visit to Israel over the past two days,” Sullivan said in a statement, calling the opening a “significant step”. Sullivan also met President

Mahmoud Abbas, who leads the Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank, to discuss the future of the PA and increasing violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that Abbas told Sullivan that the US must “intervene to force Israel to stop its aggression against our people in the West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem”. The US has suggested that the PA could take control of the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of the Israel-Hamas war, but Abbas and the PA are highly unpopular among the Palestinian population due to the policy of security coordination with Israel.

Many Palestinians see the policy as a form of complicity in Israel’s occupation. Reporting from the city of Jenin in the occupied West Bank, Al Jazeera correspondent Charles Stratford also noted that many Palestinians have little trust in the words of US officials. “You speak to any Palestinian on the ground here and there is absolutely zero trust in any kind of rhetoric, any kind of statement, that is coming out from the US administration, whether it be Jake Sullivan or Joe Biden. There is deep, deep, distrust,” said Stratford. — Aljazeera

Kishida removes ministers

TOKYO (Bloomberg): The premier replaced four ministers who are among lawmakers accused of concealing income from fundraising events, including Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno and trade minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, who has been a key player in Japan’s efforts to revive its semiconductor industry.

Former Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi will replace Matsuno, while former agriculture minister Ken Saito will take over the trade portfolio, the two told reporters.

Tetsushi Sakamoto was appointed as agriculture minister. Takeaki Matsumoto was named as internal affairs minister, Kyodo News reported and a representative from his office confirmed.

The move comes as reports from the Yomiuri newspaper and other media say prosecutors are preparing to raid the offices of lawmakers under suspicion, who are members of the largest faction within the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party. The slush fund from the group once led by the late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe may have amounted to about ¥1 billion (\$7 million), the Yomiuri reported this week.

It’s unclear whether the reshuffle will help shore up support for Kishida’s government, the most unpopular in more than a decade according to a series of polls. Failure to steady the ship could force him to resign. One ruling party lawmaker has already suggested Kishida could do so in the spring, ahead of the end of his term as party leader in September.

Indigenous advocates reject Chile’s new draft constitution ahead of vote

CHILE: For more than a decade, architect Julio Nanco Antilef has campaigned to rewrite Chile’s constitution, a relic from when General Augusto Pinochet ruled the country as a military dictator.

But now, as Chile prepares to vote on a new draft, Nanco Antilef finds himself in a paradoxical position: hoping to keep the old version in place. “It’s not that we are defending Pinochet’s constitution. It’s just that this proposal is worse,” he told Al Jazeera in a recent interview. A member of the Democratic Revolution party, Nanco Antilef was one of the few left-wing representatives to participate in the Constitutional Council that drafted the new version, which is set to go before voters on Sunday.

Rather, it was Chile’s far-right Republican Party that led the drafting process, holding 22 of the council’s 50 seats. The result, critics say, is a draft that favours right-wing priorities at the expense of historically marginalised groups, including Chile’s Indigenous peoples. “It is tied to a business model and favours individual interests rather than collective ones,” said Nanco Antilef, himself of Indigenous Mapuche descent.

Now, he and other Indigenous Chileans are pushing for voters to reject the draft constitution, even if that means the country will be stuck with the Pinochet-era version for the foreseeable future. “We are 13 percent of the population,” said Alihuén Antileo Navarrete, a Mapuche lawyer elected to represent Chile’s Indigenous peoples on the council. He argues the draft constitution deliberately “excludes” Indigenous voices from government.

“The text does not ensure that we have institutional representation, neither in Congress nor in the Senate, and it ignores our historical demands to respect our ancestral territories,” Antileo said. Referendum will be the second time in as many years that Chileans have gone to the ballot box to weigh a new version of the country’s constitution. President Gabriel Boric indicated it would also be the last opportunity to swap out the Pinochet-era constitution for the

remainder of his four-year term.

“Whatever the result that the people choose, that process will come to an end,” Boric said at a summit of world leaders last month. The history of the current constitution stretches back to 1980, when Pinochet — a ruler who oversaw the mass abduction and execution of his left-wing critics — appointed a government commission to draft a legal framework to formalise his authority. Nanco Antilef grew up during the dictatorship in the 1980s. “There was a strong repression. We didn’t even go out on the patio of our house because police would throw tear gas. It was a situation of fear. I remember they shot a neighbour dead. These are the memories I have of that time.”

Living in a low-income neighbourhood on the periphery of the capital Santiago, Nanco Antilef also witnessed inequality that he now credits to Pinochet’s right-wing model of governance. “It allowed people who had resources to maintain their privileges, and for the people who didn’t, it was difficult to obtain a higher quality of life. I was only able to go to higher education because I won grants and got help from others,” he said, adding: “Pinochet’s constitution generated a very individualistic society.”

The 1980 constitution has been criticised not only for its undemocratic origins but also for enshrining Pinochet’s rigidly conservative values in Chilean law. Opponents say that, despite numerous amendments, the constitution still curtails social welfare programmes in favour of protecting free-market values. It also fails to acknowledge Chile’s Indigenous groups, which comprise an estimated 2.2 million people.

Concerns over social welfare ultimately simmered into widespread anti-government protests in 2019. Millions of Chileans flooded the streets, voicing a spectrum of demands, including calls for better public healthcare, fairer access to education, abortion rights and pension reform. Many protesters singled out Pinochet’s constitution as the root cause of the discontent. That prompt-

ed Chile’s government to hold a referendum in 2020 to decide whether to ditch the old charter and write a new one.

The voters came back with an overwhelming response: 78 percent approved of the proposal, and a plan to reimagine the constitution was hatched. But the first attempt floundered. Written by a Constitutional Council comprised mostly of left-wing leaders and independents with no political experience, the 2022 draft was seen as lengthy, confusing and overly progressive. It failed at the ballot box, with 62 percent of voters rejecting it.

In May, another election was held to determine who would write the second draft. This time, voters turned to the conservative right. “After [the] progressive movement, there was a regression and fear of change,” Claudia Heiss, the head of political science at the University of Chile, said of the swing rightward.

She believes the draft on Sunday’s ballot enshrines values and ideas that “don’t belong in a constitution”, by recognising “patriotic symbols” and protecting “the patriarchal conception of society and traditional gender roles”. Among the most controversial additions is an article that appears to acknowledge the rights of “life of those who have yet to be born” — language that could tighten Chile’s already restrictive abortion laws.

But Indigenous rights supporters also see Sunday’s draft as a step backwards, after the promise of the first rewrite attempt. The first draft envisioned Chile as a “plurinational” country, “composed of various nations” that recognised Indigenous rights to autonomy and self-governance.

The second version, however, defines Indigenous groups as “part of the Chilean nation, which is one and undivided”. The number of Indigenous representatives on the second Constitutional Council was also curtailed. Indigenous candidates had to receive at least 1.5 percent of the total vote to have a seat on the council. Only one, Antileo, qualified. — Aljazeera

How are people around the world defying Israel?

JAKARTA: From Jakarta to San Francisco, hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets over the past two months to protest Israel’s ongoing assault on Gaza, which has killed more than 18,700 people, including more than 7,700 children.

According to the Armed Conflict Location & Events Data Project, a nongovernmental organisation specialising in conflict data collection, from October 7 to November 24, there were at least 7,283 pro-Palestine protests that took place in more than 118 countries and territories. Many more have chosen to express their condemnation using their purchasing power, opting to boycott products and services that support Israel, in turn fueling the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement that was set up in 2005 by a coalition of Palestinian civil society groups.

In the United States, students at several universities, including Columbia University in New York City, have said their attempts to speak out against Israel’s bombardment of Gaza have met intimidation and censorship. “I think being at a school at Columbia that has so much global power, I felt the need to act. And also, I just think that this issue is

one that connects so many of other ones where we see police violence, settler colonialism, these issues that are so important in America as well,” said Daria Mateescu, a law student at Columbia University.

Mateescu, 25, is a first-generation Romanian American who leads the Columbia University Apartheid Divest student group, a coalition of about 80 student organisations that see Palestine as the vanguard for collective liberation of the marginalised. She said she and her peers feel the university is not listening to student voices calling for divestment from Columbia’s Tel Aviv campus, which Palestinians and Arabs cannot attend; reaffirmation of free speech on campus; and reinstatement of two student groups – Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) – that were suspended by the university in November.

Mateescu said that in addition to protests on and off campus, members of the community are making consumer choices tied to what they believe. “People are really respecting the targeted boycotts for places like McDonald’s or Starbucks ... ‘We don’t buy from these places.’ That’s incredible to hear,” she told Al Jazeera.

Mateescu said there’s a Colombia-specific boycott list that’s being shared on social media to make local consumer choices. Across the Atlantic in the United Kingdom, a group of students at the University of York have also been holding events to raise awareness about the events in Palestine.

The students requested their identities be concealed due to the backlash for publicly supporting Palestine. “I do find that a lot of people don’t want to take a stance on it and are sort of sitting in the middle and a lot of people that I know don’t really understand what’s going on very much because there’s quite a lot of misinformation. I would say it’s your duty to uplift voices that aren’t necessarily being heard,” one of the society members said.

“I think for me to take the small action of not buying a coffee at a certain chain, it’s very easy to take small actions to make sure that there’s less money being directed towards violence,” she said, explaining the steps she is taking. Another member said they are focused on educating people who may not be equipped with information to form an opinion on the conflict and the conditions of the Palestinian people. — Aljazeera

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Pak-US teamwork

CHIEF of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Syed Asim Munir is currently on an official trip to the United States, where the Army Chief held delegation-level talks with senior government and military leaders including Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of Defence Gen (R) Llyod J. Austin, Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, Deputy National Security Adviser Jonathan Finer and Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Charles Q. Brown. During this high-level interaction between the two nations, several matters of bilateral interests, global and regional security issues, and ongoing conflicts were discussed by the visiting dignitaries with the senior leadership of the host nation. Both sides underscored the importance of understanding each other's perspectives on regional security issues and developments affecting strategic stability in South Asia and identified counter-terrorism and defence collaboration as core areas of cooperation between long-held allies.

The visit of Pakistan's Army Chief General Asim Munir comes at a crucial period in respect of bilateral relations between Islamabad and Washington and the regional geostrategic environment particularly in the context of Afghanistan which has almost slid into the pre-9/11 situations, nearly in two and a half years after US troops withdrew from the country. Meanwhile, the surge of terrorism ramped up into Northwestern parts of Pakistan adjoining boundaries with Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, on which Islamabad boosted its pressure not to allow the terrorist outfits to use its soil to plan and launch terrorist attacks into Pakistan. The Pakistani Security Forces have launched a countrywide Intelligence Based Counterterrorism Operation against terrorist groups, who are currently on the run, trying to hold their feet by creating fear and harassment among the masses through brutal acts of terrorism against innocent public and the LEAs. Although, Pakistan-US relations witnessed a swift backlash during the tenure of the PTI government because of its pro-Taliban approach and PTI's Chairman's accusation against the United States for its alleged role in his ouster from power. However, the important working relationship and cooperation against terrorism had always remained in place between the two countries throughout the past. The current regional geopolitical situation, particularly the revival of terrorism in Pakistan, the growing risk of IS-K, the congregation of terrorist outfits in neighbouring Afghanistan and an increased tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan has specifically aligned the Pak-US strategic interests at this point.

Historically, Washington views Pakistani military leadership as a power hub and credible ally than the civilian governments, therefore, Pak-US military to military ties have always remained warm and kinetic through all the ups and downs between the two nations. There had been a wide-ranging consensus among the intelligentsia and scholarly circles about the ever-deepening need, the desire for security cooperation and a joint Counter Terrorism campaign between the two nations in the context of growing terrorism risk in the AfPak region. Interestingly, the terrorist outfits are aware of the growing consensus between the two countries and the recent deadly terrorist attack in DI Khan had served as a message to potential allies.

In the current scenario, the Pak-US teamwork has historically and increasingly become important for ensuring regional stability, security, and economic progress in the South Asia region. Despite diverging interests in certain avenues at the global level, Pakistan and the United States have tremendous scopes for mutual cooperation in multiple domains particularly trade and investment, renewable energy, education, science and technology, defense and security, counter-terrorism and organized transnational crimes. Both countries agree to promote and expand their bilateral ties along with continuing to collaborate with the global community to bring about peace, development, & stability in Afghanistan. Hopefully, the Pak-US teamwork would be able to achieve shared interests alongside promoting peace and ensuring economic revival and prosperity in the broader South Asian region.

Election saga and sly politics

THE Election Commission of Pakistan on Friday issued the election schedule for the upcoming February 8 polls, in line with the instructions issued by the Apex court weeks ago. The Electoral Watchdog issued a comprehensive plan for filing nominations, scrutiny of candidates, allocation of minority and women seats and other important formalities regarding the upcoming general polls to make them transparent, credible and secure. The Chief Election Commissioner told the media that anyone who had an issue with the appointed ROs, DROs and other election staff must refer to the ECP timely.

As the poll date is coming closer, the political temperature is gradually boiling, and the rumours, prophecies, and predictions of the political pundits are at their peak. Traditional election campaigns and political activities have begun after the ECP announced the schedule for the upcoming nationwide polls in the country. The majority of civic groups had already started lobbying and networking campaigns for the looming contest. Awfully, earlier civic groups were praying for early and timely elections while certain political parties and their leaders approached the top court and the ECP requesting a delay in the electoral process on pitty excuses of cold, law and order situation and economic volatility of the country.

As far as the level playing field is concerned, it is the right of all political parties and candidate to run their election campaigns while observing the code of conduct and relevant provisions of the Constitution and local orders. The ECP, the Apex court and care caretaker government have categorically acknowledged its importance and ensured its provision to all stakeholders without any discrimination and prejudice. Despite this, civic groups have the right to highlight any discrepancy to authorities and media to mitigate that is due promptly instead of playing politics and the blame game.

Presently, the nation has come out of the fiasco of the poll date, while the Apex court and the ECP have categorically mentioned that February 8 would not be altered and elections would be held in a free, fair and transparent manner as per schedule. Therefore, the floods of rumours and propaganda must come to a calm and all political groups and relevant stakeholders must kick start their electoral campaigns in line with the ECP's guidelines and constitutional provisions, so this important political activity smoothly reaches its climax and a peaceful transition of the power could be ensured in the country.

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Vital for Iraq that it maintains stable ties with US

Dalia Al-Aqidi

IN light of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, a series of concerning developments have emerged in Iraq, where Iran-backed militias have launched numerous attacks against the US Embassy in Baghdad and other American facilities accommodating troops.

Beyond the realm of diplomatic representation, the US maintains a presence of about 2,500 troops in Iraq, with its mission being to offer guidance and support to local forces engaged in the ongoing struggle against Daesh.

The US State Department last week strongly condemned the recent rocket attacks, expressing deep concern over the threat these Iran-aligned militias pose to Iraq's security and stability. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani also denounced the targeting of embassies as an intolerable act, emphasizing the imperative of bringing those responsible to justice. He expressed deep concern over the salvos of rockets that were launched at the US Embassy and called on the nation's security forces to exert their utmost efforts in tracking down the perpetrators of this grave offense.

In an ironic move characteristic of successive Iraqi administrations, Al-Sudani initiated a multifaceted response to the situation. Firstly, he ordered a comprehensive investigation into the militias responsible for these attacks. This investigative measure supposedly seeks to identify the individuals and groups involved in orchestrating and executing the rocket attacks and ultimately ensuring that those responsible are held accountable for their actions. Furthermore, the prime minister undertook an organizational change by replacing the security regiment within Baghdad's highly fortified Green Zone. This decision aimed to bolster security measures within this crucial district, which houses diplomatic missions and critical government infrastructure.

The pronouncements

and actions undertaken by the Iraqi leader may appear commendable on the surface, as he seeks to project an image of being in command of the security landscape within his nation and to demonstrate his commitment to holding pro-Iran militias accountable for their transgressions against both foreign and domestic interests. However, a closer examination of these measures raises pertinent questions regarding their efficacy and underlying motivations. The initiation of an investigation, ostensibly aimed at identifying and apprehending those responsible for the attacks, prompts contemplation regarding its significance. It is disconcerting to consider whether such investigative endeavors will yield meaningful outcomes, especially in light of reports that the Iraqi leader already knows the identity of the culprits.

This apparent contradiction raises concerns regarding the efficacy and sincerity of such investigations, as it leads one to question whether they serve primarily as symbolic gestures rather than substantive actions aimed at genuine accountability. Ironically, the leaders of prominent Iraqi factions, such as the head of the Kata'ib Sayyid Al-Shuhada militia, have publicly rejected any notion of ceasing or reducing their operations. Their steadfast commitment to ongoing hostilities is explicitly linked to external events, notably the war in Gaza. These declarations underscore the situation's complexities and the deeply entrenched motivations that fuel these militias' actions, rendering it increasingly challenging for investigations alone to effectively address the underlying issues.

Additionally, senior officials within Kata'ib Hezbollah, another influential militia group, have unabashedly vowed to persist in targeting US assets within Iraq. This unyielding stance not only defies the Iraqi leader's directives but also underscores the persistence of grievances

that continue to fuel hostilities. Perhaps most concerning is the overt challenge issued by these militias to the Iraqi leadership itself. They contend that members of Iraq's security forces who cooperate with US forces are "accomplices in its crimes." This audacious assertion not only undermines the Iraqi government's authority but also serves to exacerbate internal divisions, complicating any prospects for reconciliation or resolution.

A cursory review of Iraqi television broadcasts provides unmistakable evidence that the leaders of pro-Iran militias exhibit a blatant disregard for the authority vested in the prime minister and the rule of law within Iraq. This troubling disregard for established governance structures raises concerns about the potential for these militias to wield considerable influence, to the extent that they could potentially undermine the office of Al-Sudani should Iran choose to exert such leverage. The pro-Iran militia leaders' actions and rhetoric convey a message that they operate outside of the confines of the law and operate with impunity, challenging the very foundations of democratic governance and the rule of law that Iraq aspires to uphold. The possibility that Tehran might choose to utilize these militias as instruments of its foreign policy or exert pressure on the Iraqi government through them is a profoundly troubling scenario. It raises pressing questions about Iraq's sovereignty and its ability to exercise independent decision-making in the face of external pressures. It also underscores the volatile and precarious nature of the political and security landscape in Iraq, where nonstate actors backed by external powers hold the potential to disrupt and challenge the nation's stability and governance.

Undeniably, the Iranian regime seeks to damage the bilateral relations between Baghdad and Washington. If successful, this would have dire consequences for

Iraq, profoundly impacting the country's political, economic and security dynamics. The US severing ties with Iraq could lead to heightened political instability in the country, potentially exacerbating internal conflicts and violence as various factions vie for power. Iraq has a fragile political landscape with multiple ethnic and sectarian divisions. US involvement has played a role in maintaining a semblance of stability, with it mediating between different factions. Cutting ties between the two countries could increase political instability, potentially exacerbating internal conflicts and even leading to violence.

The US has also been assisting Iraq in its fight against various extremist groups, including Daesh. A complete disengagement could weaken Iraq's ability to combat these threats effectively. This could potentially allow extremist groups to regroup and regain strength, posing a danger not only to Iraq but to regional and global security. Meanwhile, Iraq's economy is closely tied to the US through trade, investment and oil exports. The disruption of this financial relationship could lead to economic hardship in Iraq.

The consequences have a humanitarian angle as well. Washington has been providing humanitarian aid and assistance to the central government, including support for displaced populations and reconstruction efforts. Stopping these programs would impact these efforts and potentially worsen the already dire humanitarian situation in some parts of Iraq. It is imperative for Al-Sudani and other Iraqi political leaders to remain acutely aware of Iran's ambitions and exercise prudence to prevent any deterioration in relations with Washington. Failure to do so could have dire consequences, with the ultimate losers being the Iraqi people. It is in the best interest of Iraq to maintain balanced and constructive international relationships for the prosperity and stability of the nation.

Biden, Kirby and dead, ungrateful Palestinians

Andrew Mitrovica

MORE than two years after his death, the odious spirit of Donald Rumsfeld has been resurrected. It is not surprising. Every US administration has its share of banal bureaucrats who, in exchange for an important job with an impressive title, are willing to forfeit their integrity and jettison the truth in the "service" of country.

And so, since early October, the world has seen and heard a lot from Rumsfeld's hideous heir, National Security Council spokesperson, John Kirby. Like Rumsfeld, the former career naval officer speaks in a high-pitched monotone befitting his dour, monochromatic character. Like Rumsfeld, Kirby is obliged to spout state-sanctioned bromides in defence of the wholesale destruction of innocent civilians - casualties all of America's familiar kill-first, think-later foreign policy.

Like Rumsfeld, Kirby is the darling of Beltway pundits who, as a rule, defer to authority and genuflect before power. On cue, the Washington Post described Kirby earlier this week as a "star" whose skill and experience have translated into "a commanding presence" during press briefings where he keeps the White House's "messaging" on Gaza "clear". Kirby, the Post wrote, is "direct, plain-spoken and unmistakably supportive of the administration's pro-Israeli policies".

Oh, that he is. But just as the establishment media's cleansing of Rumsfeld's wretched record could not save the late defence secretary from history's harsh and lasting judgement, Kirby will be remembered - if this pedestrian apparatchik is remembered at all - for his obscene apologia of the obscenities Palestinians have had to endure at the culpable hands of America's proxy, Israel. I thought it impossible that Kirby could outdo his doddering boss, US President Joe Biden who, memorably, trafficked in fabrications about beheaded babies, and questioned the number of killed Palestinian children, women and men. Silly me. Looking ever so commanding in a crisp, black suit, with a white handkerchief jutting fashionably out of his breast pocket, Kirby insisted that Palestinians - among many myopic others - should, at the least, pause to acknowledge America's generosity in the midst of a genocide. "Look, we certainly share the concerns that so many others have ... about the humanitarian situation in Gaza," Kirby said last week from a rostrum at the White House flanked by the Stars and Stripes. "Tell me, name me, one more nation, any other nation, that is doing as much as the United States to alleviate the pain and suffering of the people of Gaza. You can't. You just can't." I should let that astonishing paragraph stand as Kirby's sorry epitaph since it demonstrates how prepared the Biden administration and its smug surrogates are to disfigure reality to promote a revolting lie. But Kirby's deplorable admonition requires a reply. Decency demands it.

Much of Gaza and 18,600 Palestinians - the bulk of them children and women - have been erased and buried in mass graves with the help of America's lethal largesse. Thousands more have been maimed, traumatised or remain entombed beneath the pancake-like rubble - the shattered remnants of once-vibrant homes, businesses, schools, mosques and hospitals.

Bit by inevitable bit, the

occupied West Bank is also being invaded and erased. Hundreds of Palestinians have been arrested or worse, summarily executed, for being Palestinian or expressing solidarity with their besieged brothers and sisters in Gaza. Millions of Palestinians have had to make forced marches in a futile quest for refuge from Israel's incessant attacks. Denied food, water and fuel, countless Palestinians are starving. Disease and sickness are spreading in makeshift, mud-soaked refugee camps where flimsy tents dot the apocalyptic landscape. Young and old Palestinian men have been rounded up like cattle, blindfolded, stripped near-naked and ordered to kneel in streets or barren fields. The sinister aim: to humiliate and degrade. All of it - every cruel, inhumane and ruthless ounce of it - is being perpetrated with the explicit approval and consent of Biden and complicit company. Kirby's revisionism cannot obscure the plain facts that the rest of us can see. Nor can it mask Biden's cynical strategy to circumvent a largely prostrate Congress in order to continue to feed Israel with weapons and ammunition to kill and maim Palestinians wherever it wants to, for as long as it wants to, by whatever means it wants to.

The nauseating corollary of Kirby's rebuke is that Palestinians have been, in effect, ungrateful in the face of America's phantom efforts to "alleviate the pain and suffering of the people of Gaza". Rather than condemning America's collusion with a genocidal campaign, Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and beyond should instead be thankful for America's benevolence. America is a friend, not a foe. This is, of course, the definition of double-speak that performative hacks like Kirby are trained and expected to peddle. War is peace. Harm is healing. Bombs are bouquets. Still, Kirby, the human weathervane, will do as he is told. I suspect that, soon enough, he will be instructed to change tack and parrot the new lines offered up by a rattled president. Speaking recently at a political fundraiser, Biden complained that Israel's retributive pursuit of Hamas may have gone too far by killing too many Palestinians, too quickly and, as a result, was draining "support" among the international community. "They're [Israel] starting to lose that support by the indiscriminate bombing that takes place," Biden said.

Then, remarkably, Biden suggested that a mild form of regime change ought to be in the offing in Israel. "This is the most conservative government in Israel's history," the president said. "He [Netanyahu] has to change this government. This government in Israel is making it very difficult." Biden's calculated volte-face is motivated by parochial, not principled, considerations and interests. Having incensed and alienated crucial domestic constituencies that he needs to remain commander-in-chief next November, Biden is now trying to distance himself from a reactionary Israeli cabinet that he has enabled rhetorically, diplomatically and militarily. Kirby will spin like a Ferris wheel to square that hypocritical circle. He will fail. The grotesque damage that the US has done to Palestinians yesterday, today and tomorrow cannot be undone by malleable "messaging". That malicious legacy will be forever fixed in our memory.

Aljazeera

Removing financial risks to build a modern society

Zeng Gang

THE Central Economic Work Conference held this week made it clear that high-quality development is necessary for building a modern socialist country. And to achieve this goal, it is necessary to further deepen the structural reform of the financial supply side, optimize financial supply, and better serve the realistic needs of economic and social development.

In terms of quantity, it is necessary to create a favorable monetary and financial environment to promote high-quality economic and social development. It is also necessary to maintain prudent monetary policy and pay greater attention to cross- and countercyclical adjustments. In the long run, especially during the economic transformation period, China needs to adhere to prudent monetary policy, maintain sufficient liquidity, reduce the financ-

ing costs, and moderate monetary credit growth. On the structural front, it is necessary to optimize the structure of funds supply, while the financial industry needs to focus on achieving the long-term goals proposed by the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and strengthening the provisions of high-quality financial services.

There is also a need to allocate more financial resources to promote technological innovations, advanced manufacturing and green development, and support small and micro enterprises, in order to achieve innovation-driven high-quality development and strengthen national food and energy security. To achieve these goals, greater efforts should be made in five major areas - science and technology finance, green finance, inclusive finance, pension finance and digital finance -

to boost the real economy.

First, it is necessary to improve the capital market, increase the proportion of direct financing and optimize the financing structure. Second, there is a need to improve the positioning of financial institutions, ensure that competition is conducted in an orderly manner, reduce potential market risks, and more effectively leverage the comparative advantages of various institutions to serve the interests of the real economy. And third, measures have to be taken to strengthen supervision and prevent systemic financial risks. Previously the Central Financial Work Conference emphasized the need to "comprehensively strengthen financial supervision and effectively prevent and resolve financial risks", so as to address issues such as "persistent financial chaos and corrup-

tion problems, and weak supervision and governance in the financial field".

As for intensified supervision, its goal is to "improve the effectiveness of financial supervision, legally include all financial activities in supervision, comprehensively strengthen institutional supervision, behavioral supervision, functional supervision, penetration supervision, and continuous supervision, eliminate supervision gaps and blind spots, and crack down on illegal financial activities". China's risk disposal and prevention mainly focus on local government debt, real estate enterprises, and small and medium-sized financial institutions. Hence, the essential needs now are clearing the stock risks in a timely and orderly manner, and building a long-term mechanism to prevent and remove risks. It

is essential to "dispose of the risks of small and medium-sized financial institutions in a timely manner" by means of "early identification, early warning, early exposure, and early disposal of risks". The risks small and medium-sized institutions face include improper corporate governance, outdated internal control systems, weak risk control mechanisms and uneven qualifications of shareholders.

According to the State Council report on the financial work situation in October, it is important to "resolve the risks of high-risk small and medium-sized financial institutions in an orderly manner, promote mergers and reorganizations, and dispose of the risks in a stable manner", in order to prevent the spread of risks of individual institutions and create a localized financial crisis. On the risks of hidden debts of local governments, a clear train of

thought has been formed at the national level for preventing and eliminating the risks of local government debt by, among other things, optimizing the debt maturity structure and reducing the interest burden. "Three Major Projects" including affordable housing, and develop a new real estate growth model. In the future, the focus should be on optimizing and adjusting policies to encourage financial institutions to provide more financing support for high-quality projects of private enterprises. And in addition to boosting demand in the real estate market, it is also important to optimize local real estate control policies through "differentiated measures according to local conditions", which in turn can help stabilize the demand, creating a better market environment for the high-quality and smooth development of the real estate market.

The China Daily

The case against Trump’s company is bogus

Alexander Talel

IN mid-1950s New York, business corruption was rife, and mafia families were on the rise. Jacob Javits, who was the New York state attorney general at the time, pushed the state legislature to create a law that would give his office sweeping power to identify and go after repeated fraudsters. From that request, Executive Law 63 (12) was born.

Today, the Executive Law is the centerpiece of current New York Attorney General Letitia James' case against former President Donald Trump. To ignore the injustice of the law as applied to Trump is to welcome its unfair application to us all.

James is attempting to use the Executive Law against Trump in a way it's never been used before, making the case that he defrauded certain financial institutions despite those institutions having actually profited from doing deals with him. That makes little sense, illustrating the law's potential for rough justice, especially in the hands of a highly motivated attorney general. Trump was supposed to testify once again on Monday after appearing on the witness stand last month, but he said online late Sunday that he would not be testifying again after all. On Tuesday, Trump's defense rested its case.

James' case argues that the financial statements that Trump submitted to various lending institutions were fraudulent because they exaggerated the value of his real estate holdings. That sounds bad. But what the AG doesn't allege is that any of those lenders complained about Trump's valuations or that his valuations violated those lenders' rules or even that Trump defaulted on any of the loans he received - he hasn't. Can someone be sued by the government for fraud if the supposedly fraudulent conduct hasn't harmed anyone? Under the Executive Law, yes; Trump's case proves it. The commercial consequences of the

law are disturbingly obvious and potentially devastating.

If an individual puts two properties up for sale at double the value assessed by a third-party appraiser, could the AG go after that seller for repeated "fraud" under the Executive Law, despite buyers happily paying the asking prices? Apparently. What about a deli owner claiming in ads to have the "best sandwiches in the world"? Could the AG go after that owner for "fraud" even though customers have only praised and never complained about the quality of those

That ruling makes clear how the Executive Law allows a court to deny an accused individual their constitutional right to a jury trial. Equitable disgorgement usually involves ill-gotten profits - in an insurance scam, for example, in which an individual tricks another into paying premiums for a non-existent policy, disgorgement would require the scammer to pay back whatever profits they illegally collected from the victim.

sandwiches? In theory, yes. And does anything in the law allow the court to rein in the AG for over-reaching? Far from it - New York courts have ruled that the AG's power to act under the Executive Law is basically immune from questioning. Following the guidance of those courts, presiding New York State Supreme Court Justice Arthur Engoron ruled in favor of James in September, finding that Trump had violated the Executive Law. In allowing trial to proceed on the issue of damages, Engoron also ruled that disgorgement - the remedy sought by the attorney general, which compels an individual to return illegally made profits - is "equitable in nature, mandating that the trial be a bench trial, one that a judge alone decides." That ruling makes clear how the Executive Law allows a court to deny an accused individual their constitutional right to a jury

trial.

Equitable disgorgement usually involves ill-gotten profits - in an insurance scam, for example, in which an individual tricks another into paying premiums for a non-existent policy, disgorgement would require the scammer to pay back whatever profits they illegally collected from the victim. That kind of straightforward calculation might be appropriate for a judge to decide alone. But there are no victims in Trump's case and, therefore, no ill-gotten profits. So when James asks that an "estimated"

\$250 million be disgorged from Trump, what she's really seeking is a massive penalty - not a specified, equitable remedy pegged to a victim's suffering, but the kind of unspecified and punitive money damages typically left for juries to decide.

Instead of a jury, however, Trump gets Engoron, who isn't sympathetic to the free-market economic principles underlying his defense. In his September ruling, Engoron ridiculed Trump for "essentially argu[ing] that value is inherently subjective." But value is often subjective, particularly in the real estate market. Engoron's decision obscures this point by mainly citing cases dealing with tax assessment challenges - not decisions implicating contracting business entities like the ones at issue in Trump's case. Engoron similarly mocked Trump for arguing that "no sophisticated counterparty would

have considered the [financial statements] and other information provided by [Trump] as material to extend credit ... without doing their own due diligence." But Trump's argument makes business sense - a bank's ultimate decision to lend is based on its own self-informed valuation, not the borrower's. These points have played out through evidence presented at trial.

During a full day of testimony just after Thanksgiving, an executive of one of Trump's lenders confirmed that there was nothing "unusual" about Trump's inflated valuations - that the bank had done its own due diligence and determined that Trump's assets were less valuable than he claimed but decided to loan Trump money anyway. Individuals and corporations are entitled to value things as they please and to enter into contracts accordingly. But under the Executive Law, the AG and the court are free to interfere with and even punish that conduct. If all that isn't bad enough, the punishment the attorney general can seek for supposed fraud under the Executive Law isn't limited to life-altering disgorgement - the AG can also strip the accused party of its license to do business in New York, as James has done to Trump (the move is on hold while the decision is appealed).

Trump's case illustrates why none of us should want the government to have the power that it does under the Executive Law. That's not to say that Trump didn't puff up the value of his real estate holdings - he surely did. But that's not a reason to ignore that the Executive Law allows the government an unrestricted and unconstitutional power to devastate individuals' livelihoods for puffery in their private business dealings with ultimately satisfied customers. If that behavior is punishable as "fraud," Trump will suffer for it. But many good and hard-working people might suffer for it as well.

CNN

Seize the moment, seize Russian assets for Ukraine

Nigel Gould-Davies

AS Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has dragged on, the West has regularly expanded its support for Ukraine. What was once unthinkable - arming Kyiv with advanced tanks and long-range missiles, and even cluster munitions and fighter jets - has repeatedly become doable. But there is one giant exception: Western governments have refused to use the huge sums of Russian state assets that are frozen in their financial systems to help the victims of the Kremlin's war. And yet the moral, legal and strategic case for doing so is compelling. It is time to seize the moment and seize these assets.

At the start of the war, G7 countries and their allies froze Russian Central Bank (CBR) reserves deposited in their jurisdictions. This well-coordinated and highly effective move deprived Russia of access to - but not ownership of - these assets. While we do not know their exact value, as most states refuse to disclose their holdings, they are believed to total over \$300 billion - twice Ukraine's current GDP. Throughout the invasion, Russia has inflicted over \$400 billion of damage on Ukraine and committed thousands of alleged war crimes. Ukraine's national income has crashed by a third, leaving the country desperately needing continuous financial support. The West has generously provided over \$150 billion in financial and military aid. But its coffers are not bottomless. President Vladimir Putin remains confident that Russia will win the war by outlasting its adversaries in a contest of resolve, one that exhausts Ukraine and proves too costly for the West.

The solution is obvious: use Russia's assets to compensate the victims of its aggression, while also easing the burden on Western taxpayers. The West took bold, creative risks when it provided military support for Ukraine and imposed an unprecedented flurry of sanctions on Moscow. Since then, Russia's CBR assets have laid dormant. When it comes to the question of whether these assets should be seized and used to help Ukraine, Western governments remain timid and avoidant. Why have states been so reluctant to debate the issue openly? They would appear to have four concerns in mind.

The first is legal: state assets enjoy sovereign immunity under international law and thus may not be seized. But international law also offers a solution. Instead of a sanction, an asset seizure can be a proportionate countermeasure to a grave breach of international norms, and there is no

doubt that Russia's invasion of Ukraine constitutes such a violation.

As Professor Philip Zelikow of Stanford University and others have shown, there are well-established legal principles for developing a powerful case for Western states to take custody of Russian state assets. While Western governments are opaque about the legal advice on which they are basing their approach, they do not appear to have seriously explored their options. They should do so now. The remaining three concerns are related to policy, not law. They suppose that even if Western states are allowed to seize Russia's assets, they should not take this step because the costs of the precedent it would set would outweigh the benefits. This assertion is dubious.

First, policymakers assume that an asset seizure could undermine Western currencies as a store of value. But if the G7 and their partners coordinate taking over CBR assets as effectively as they froze them, all of the world's major reserve currencies would be involved. This would deprive Russian capital of any feasible safe havens to which it could flee. Instead of weakening the global financial system, such a move would be a formidable demonstration of the West's strength. The next concern is that seizing Russian state assets would set a bad precedent that hostile states could use against Western companies. This argument conflates state and private assets. Seizure of the former as a state countermeasure sets no legal precedent for the treatment of the latter. This is not something of concern to hostile states like Russia, as the Kremlin has already appropriated the Russia-based assets of four major European companies and handed them to its cronies.

Finally, some have argued that seizure could deter other states from depositing their reserves in Western banking systems. But an asset seizure inflicts no harm beyond what has already been done. It simply means that assets Russia no longer controls will be repurposed to help Ukraine. Immobilizing these assets at the start of the war set a far more significant precedent by cutting Russia off from its CBR assets. The West rightly had no qualms about taking that step. So, what is the West's official policy? After more than a year of hesitation, the G7 declared in May that Russia's assets "will remain immobilized until Russia pays for the damage it has caused to Ukraine." This policy cannot succeed for three reasons.

First, Russia will never compensate Ukraine, let alone acknowledge its legitimacy as a state, unless it undergoes radical and systemic domestic change. Depositing Putin - itself a tall order - would not be enough as it would require a transformation of Russia's regime and worldview. It is absurd to assume such a scenario as a precondition for success. Second, the G7's position gives Russia no incentive to help rebuild Ukraine. The scale of destruction that Russia has brought on Ukraine means that any compensation it would have to pay Kyiv far exceeds the sum of its assets frozen by the West. Why would Russia agree to be left worse off than before?

Third, the G7 envisages compensation to Ukraine only after the war is over. But Ukraine cannot wait since it urgently needs help now. Its resilience, and thus the outcome of the war, depends on support today, not tomorrow. The longer Western policymakers delay, the less likely it is that Ukraine will win - and thus Russia will feel uncompelled to pay anything at all. There is visible unease among Ukraine's allies with the unrealistic, illogical and contradictory position Western policymakers have taken on the issue of Russia's frozen assets. Canada is making progress toward seizing CBR assets, and the US Congress is considering draft legislation to do the same. The EU, where most of Russia's frozen money remains held up, is exploring ways to invest the assets and give the returns to Ukraine. But the sums involved in these discussions are trivial compared to Ukraine's needs. Moreover, Russia will argue that since it still owns the assets, it also owns the income they generate.

If the West does not act, it risks a grand strategic failure. While its professed commitment to Ukraine remains strong, it is not marshaling the means to match it. The situation is now dire, with budget disputes in Washington and Brussels putting future funding for Kyiv in jeopardy. Seizing CBR assets would not only make huge financial resources available for Ukraine at Russia's expense but it would also send a powerful signal of Western resolve to the Kremlin. As things stand, the West provides Ukraine weapons with which to kill Russian soldiers, but it refuses to give Kyiv Russian money. It is time to demonstrate the same boldness and creativity in the financial realm as it has in security. The war has become a war of attrition. Nobody can afford to hesitate any longer.

Xi’s visit to Vietnam boosts elevation of bilateral ties

Song Qingrun

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping's state visit to Vietnam on Tuesday and Wednesday, his second in six years to Vietnam and perhaps his last foreign trip this year, shows that China accords priority to the development of Beijing-Hanoi ties as part of its neighborhood diplomacy.

During Xi's visit, the two sides announced the upgrading of relations between the two parties and the two countries so as to build a strategic and meaningful China-Vietnam community with a shared future and deepen their comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership. The general secretaries of the two countries' ruling parties share common ideals and values. And as good neighbors, partners, brothers and comrades, China and Vietnam have unique advantages when it comes to building a community with a shared future, which is of huge strategic significance.

The elevation of China-Vietnam ties is a natural progression in line with the current trend. The deep friendship between the older generation of leaders of the two countries has laid a solid foundation for a strong and mutually beneficial bilateral relationship. The phrase "deep friendship between comrades plus brothers" vividly captures the essence of China-Vietnam ties. Besides, party-to-party exchanges have played a special role in deepening the relations between the two countries, marked by regular high-level visits between the ruling parties and the

deepening of their cooperation in various fields.

The two sides share many common economic interests, with China being Vietnam's largest trading partner and Vietnam being China's largest trading partner in the ASEAN bloc and the fourth-largest globally. Also, the long-standing people-to-people friendship has strengthened emotional ties between the two sides, which have carried out with enthusiasm various friendly exchanges and interactions, such as border festivities.

The upgrading of ties charts a bright new blueprint for China-Vietnam relations in the new era. During his meeting with Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee, Xi Jinping, who is also the general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said he believed that with mutual efforts, China-Vietnam relations will enter a new stage characterized by deeper political mutual trust, more pragmatic security cooperation, closer multilateral coordination and better management of differences. The development of socialist China and Vietnam will continue to make new achievements and contribute more to regional and global stability and development. And under the strategic guidance of the two ruling parties, the two sides will likely increase exchanges, deepen mutual trust,

strengthen pragmatic cooperation in various fields, and consolidate the foundation of a China-Vietnam community with a shared future, ushering in new opportunities for development. With the implementation of the agreements they have signed, the two sides can leverage their geographical proximity and complementary advantages to accelerate the alignment between the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and Vietnam's "Two Corridors and One Economic Circle" development plan to build stable and smooth industry and supply chains. And by deepening cooperation in areas such as the digital economy and green development, the two sides can boost their economic growth and promote stronger, greener and healthier global development.

There is also great potential for developing both "hard connectivity" and "soft connectivity" between China and Vietnam. The two countries' cooperation has already led to significant achievements in infrastructure projects such as the Hanoi light railway, setting the stage for deeper cooperation, which would further improve infrastructure connectivity, including railways and highways, as well as land, sea, air and internet networks. With the development and upgrading of cross-border connectivity, and the expedited construction of smart border ports, the flow of people and goods between the two countries

will become even more convenient, promoting trade and cultural exchanges between the two sides. In fact, the Sino-Vietnamese border smart port could become a major regional logistics hub, connecting China with the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in a shorter time, at a more competitive price and with greater efficiency, further liberalizing regional trade.

During Xi's visit, the two sides also agreed to explore and cooperate in maritime projects and jointly promote maritime development, which could turn the challenges posed by their maritime disputes into opportunities for deepened cooperation between the two sides and contribute to the progress of the talks on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea that is of great significance for regional stability and development. The construction of a strategically significant community with a shared future will help both countries in their respective pursuit of modernization.

That the Chinese leader once again chose to visit a neighboring country toward the end of the 2023 diplomatic calendar year demonstrates China's high regard for its neighbors, and highlights the strategic significance of building a Sino-Vietnamese community with a shared future, not least because it could serve as an ideal example for building an Asian community with a shared future and a community with a shared future for mankind.

As England suffered the chaos of Boris, Wales had Mark Drakeford

Richard Wyn Jones

WHEN Mark Drakeford's wife, Clare, died suddenly at the end of January, Glamorgan Cricket Club posted a photo of the couple sitting together in one of the stands, watching their team in action. The photo says a great deal about the Drakefords - a modest, unassuming couple who were, by all accounts, deeply devoted to each other. It also helps explain why Wales's first minister has decided to announce his departure now, when he could easily have chosen to stay on until after the next UK general election, even if that meant remaining in post for another year.

Bereavement has hit Drakeford hard. While dedicated aides and officials have worked tirelessly to support him, and even political enemies have offered succour, high-profile public office offers little space or respite for those consumed by intense private grief. There is no suggestion that the first minister has remained anything other than diligent and dutiful - his ability to read and digest every paper presented to him has long been the subject of awed admiration among Welsh government civil servants - yet he can hardly be blamed for being ready for a period out of the limelight.

He will depart the stage as easily the most high-profile devolved politician that Wales has known. Though the late Rhodri Morgan was more naturally charismatic, the pandemic ensured that Drakeford gained a prominence far beyond that enjoyed by his former mentor and friend. Moreover, if this was the "wrong crisis" for Boris Johnson's "skill set", the opposite was the case for Drakeford.

His calm, methodical, detail-oriented approach may have enraged Conservative critics, but it proved hugely popular among the Welsh public at large. By the time of the devolved election in May 2021, the first minister was being treated as more celebrity than politician as he canvassed for his party's candidates. And this, it must be said, was somewhat to his own bemusement.

There is no doubt that this popularity waned during 2023 - indeed, in the most recent polling, more than half the electorate (56%) say that he's doing a bad job, compared with just under a third (31%) who think he's doing well. The Welsh government's decision to move to a default 20mph speed limit in residential areas has proven particularly controversial. So controversial,

in fact, that the issue appears to have become a lightning rod for all kinds of wider anti-politics and anti-government resentments. It has certainly hurt the first minister's reputation, and made something of dent in Labour's polling numbers.

But the extent of the damage should not be exaggerated. Following the 2019 general election, when the Conservatives secured their highest ever vote share (36%) in Wales, in 2021 Labour won a handsome victory, and its prospects for the forthcoming UK general election are very positive. Normal service has been resumed. Which in Wales means that Labour is about to win big.

Drakeford's party have at least two more reasons to thank him for the legacy he will now leave it. The first minister has ensured that each of the three politicians regarded as possible successors - Vaughan Gething, Jeremy Miles and Eluned Morgan - have extensive experience in high-pressure ministerial roles. This, even though none of them shares his identification with the party's left.

When Welsh Labour chooses between them, it will be therefore be choosing between known quantities with records to be defended

and compared. Drakeford takes the business of government seriously, and he expects and trusts his party to do the same.

Secondly, by working together with Plaid Cymru to secure the expansion of the Senedd to 96 members (from 60), Drakeford has taken responsibility for dealing with the most politically toxic element of a reform process that over a 20-year period has created a fully fledged Welsh parliament.

He is unlikely to receive much by way of thanks for having invested his hard-won political capital in this. There is never a popular argument for more politicians. The opposition Welsh Conservatives have certainly made hay on the issue.

This, even as their own party has propelled ever more supporters into an already bloated House of Lords. Nonetheless, it has long been recognised that the Welsh legislature is too small, and once the change has been secured, the matter will not need to be revisited. As such, the first minister will have played a central role in ensuring that future Welsh governments are better scrutinised. Wales has been fortunate in its first minister. Drakeford's seriousness of purpose, humanity and - yes - vulnerability, will be sorely missed.

The Guardian

Sunak’s Rwanda gamble is about to pay off

Michael Howard

IN the end, the most controversial proposed legislation of this Parliament - appropriately titled the Safety of Rwanda Bill - went through comfortably. The Left-wing excitement over Tory splits was exaggerated. The rebellion was muted. Of course, this very radical Bill, trading new, unprecedented territory, was never going to get its second reading without a row, but the Prime Minister has once again proved his critics wrong.

There are many arguments still to come, but it would be very surprising indeed if it failed to gain the approval of the House of Commons at third reading. Those rebels who abstained on Tuesday must by now understand that they don't have the numbers to get the changes they want added to the legislation. In any case, it would be an act of real self-harm if they allowed what they regard as the best to become the enemy of the good.

And, once again, the hollowness of Sir Keir Starmer's response has been exposed. Labour have no alternative and the shrillness of their rhetoric has failed to cover up the lack of any substance behind it. How would they stop the boats without Rwanda? What exactly would they do? Yes, there will be difficulties in the House of Lords. But its members would be very ill-advised to seek to defy the elected chamber on an issue that matters so much to the general public, who

have been promised that immigration would come under control. So I expect the Bill to become law soon. Then what of the courts? The doubters rub their hands in anticipation of legal challenges which they assert will stop the scheme in its tracks. But the scope for challenge is extremely limited. When Parliament has made its intention clear, it is the duty of the courts to respect the sovereignty of Parliament under our system. I am confident that they will do just that. But will the scheme work? Will it have the desired effect of making it clear to those who pay the people smugglers, in the hope of reaching our shores, that they will be wasting their money, as well as risking their lives, if they continue to hand over large sums to the organisers of this tragic trade? I think there is every prospect that it will.

The nay-sayers point to the relatively small numbers who can be dealt with in Rwanda in the first stages of the scheme. But there is no reason to suppose that it can't be expanded or that other countries with the potential to play a part cannot be identified. Rwanda is a framework.

It can easily be built upon, should we feel the need to do so. The truth is that large-scale migration has become a global problem. While the British Government has had some success in reducing by a third the number of people reaching our shores on

small boats, the number reaching other European countries has continued to increase.

And many of those countries are watching the Rwanda scheme carefully. Several are considering their own version of dealing with asylum claims offshore. This may well prove to be the pattern of the future. And it may well prove to be a challenge for bodies like the European Court of Human Rights. France is already reported to have deported asylum seekers in double quick time, conveniently avoiding intervention by the ECHR. If this method of stemming the flow of migration becomes more widely adopted, it may be appropriate for the ECHR to interpret its decades' old Convention in the light of modern circumstances. Here in Britain, just look at how rapidly things have changed. A week ago, the Rwanda Bill was widely regarded as a lost cause. Two days ago, some thought that dozens of Conservative MPs would vote against it. When the scheme was announced a few years ago, this country was denounced as an international outlier and accused of being a pariah because it sought to work with Rwanda.

Just as we did on Ukraine, so once again Britain is taking a lead in boldly showing the way in which global challenges can be effectively met. Rishi Sunak deserves the highest praise for true leadership and may well yet get the credit and electoral reward he deserves.

Chinese companies to set up factories in Pakistan

— to produce electric cars

KARACHI (PPI): Twenty major exporters of the Advisory Council under the leadership of Caretaker Minister of Commerce Gohar Ijaz reached Pakistan after completing their visit to China.

Former president of Federation Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and member of the advisory council, Zubair, who is part of the delegation, told the media after reaching Karachi that the visit to China was very successful and China is ready for new investment in Pakistan, especially in the auto, mineral, agricultural sector, China is preparing to invest, while it was agreed to start joint ventures in other sectors, including textiles, in addition, China's technology will be transferred to special economic zones in Pakistan, according to a statement issued on Saturday.

Zubair said that the visit of the Pakistani delegation to China headed by the caretaker minister of commerce Gohar Ijaz will speed up the trade relations between Pakistan and China and investments are moving towards Pakistan, the caretaker minister in finding markets and partners for Pakistani exporters. The trade has been

extremely successful while his visit to China was also a part of 'Vision Pakistan 100 Billion Dollars'.

He said that Chinese President Xi Jinping has given a unique gift of CPEC to Pakistan, bringing together the businessmen of both countries, the BRI vision of President of the People's Republic of China is being pushed forward and in this context, Chinese industrialists will increase trade with Pakistan and for this purpose, business-to-business meetings were organized between the Pakistani delegation and Chinese industrialists, which were very successful.

Zubair said that China's automobile sector will invest in Pakistan, which has been decided. Also visited the electric car manufacturing plants where the caretaker commerce minister clarified to the Chinese authorities that electric vehicles manufacturing will be encouraged in special economic zones.

Zubair said that Caretaker Commerce Minister Gohra Ijaz gave a clear message in his visit to China that Chinese investors can take advantage of GSP Plus by increasing exports from Pakistan and Chinese exporters can export from

Pakistan to GCC and Africa. There has been significant progress in Pakistan-China trade relations and China has agreed to revise the Free Trade Agreement.

He also said that the caretaker commerce minister has also invited Chinese industrialists to accelerate investment in special economic zones, there is a strong possibility that China will open its markets to Pakistan.

Zubair said that the Pakistani business delegation had a meeting with China's Deputy Minister of Commerce, Li Fei, and in this meeting, they discussed increasing trade between Pakistan and China. Undoubtedly, the visit of the Pakistani delegation to China under the leadership of Caretaker Commerce Minister Gohra Ijaz proved to be extremely successful, which will have positive effects in the future.

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ISLAMABAD: A laborer on his way carrying banana on his wheelbarrow at fruits and vegetables market.

Gold prices experience significant dip

ISLAMABAD (INP): The gold market in Pakistan observed a substantial decline, witnessing 24-karat gold sliding to Rs216,800 per tola on Saturday.

Even in smaller quantities, the appeal of these prices persisted, with 10 grams of 24-karat gold priced at Rs185,871, while the same quantity of 22-karat gold is available at Rs170,382.

These fluctuations are intricately linked to changes in the value of the US Dollar, underlining the close relationship between currency values and gold prices.

On the global stage, the current gold price stands at \$2,040 per ounce. It is important to note that gold rates in Pakistan can undergo significant variations throughout the day, influenced by trends in the global market.

The provided rates are from reliable sources, primarily located in Karachi and Multan.

For the most up-to-date and accurate gold rates, individuals are advised to consult with local gold merchants and jewellers.

Remaining well-informed about the dynamic nature of gold prices in Pakistan is crucial for individuals keen on staying abreast of market trends.

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Cotton yarn spins down 25%, autos skid 49%

ISLAMABAD (INP): The first four months of the current financial year, spanning from July to October, witnessed a significant decline of 4.08 percent in the production of major industries across the country, as reported by the Federal Bureau of Statistics.

The data revealed a noteworthy downturn in the production of major industries during this fiscal year's initial quarter, with October 2023 witnessing a 2 percent decrease, contributing to an overall reduction of 4.08 percent.

According to the Bureau of Statistics, the production of cotton yarn experienced a sharp decline of 24.73%, while the production of cotton fabrics dropped by 14.73% over the four-month period. Furthermore, iron and steel production recorded a 2.04% decrease, and the automobile industry faced a substantial decline of 48.94%.

The report highlighted some positive aspects, noting an increase in the production of garments by 26.52%, petroleum products by 7.55%, fertilizers by 8.91%, and cement by 7.10% during the same period.

Transfer of technology to SEZs discussed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce, Dr Gohar Ejaz has discussed exploring the transfer of Chinese technology to Pakistan's Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in China tour.

The minister along with a high-profile delegation, has concluded a visit to China. The comprehensive tour spanned three key Chinese cities, providing a platform for fostering collaborations across diverse sectors, said a press release issued here Saturday.

The delegation actively participated in the China-Pakistan Textile Summit, a pivotal event that brought together industry leaders from both nations. Engaging in insightful discussions, the delegates aimed to fortify bilateral trade relations and explore avenues for increased cooperation.

A significant milestone

during the visit was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the China Chambers of Commerce and the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA). This agreement marks a commitment to enhance collaboration and promote mutual interests in the textile sector.

The delegation comprised businessmen, seized the opportunity to engage in fruitful Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings with their Chinese counterparts. The focus was on enhancing textile imports and exports, with the ultimate goal of strengthening economic ties between the two countries.

Exploring possibilities beyond textiles, the delegates delved into discussions on potential joint ventures across multiple sectors.

This exemplifies the collaborative spirit and shared

vision for business growth between Pakistan and China.

Emphasizing the importance of joint efforts, the delegates underscored the need for collaboration among business individuals from both nations. Discussions included the application of advanced Chinese technology to enhance value addition in Pakistan's industries.

The delegates engaged in detailed discussions on how this transfer could drive innovation and economic development in Pakistan.

Highlighting the positive impact of increased Chinese investments on Pakistan's GDP growth, the delegation emphasized the strategic opportunity for Chinese exporters to reach markets in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Africa through Pakistan.

Hyderabad traders hails reduction in oil prices

HYDERABAD (PPI): President Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry Muhammad Farooq Shaikhani on Saturday welcomed the government's decision to reduce petroleum product prices and said that this step by the federal government would help mitigate the wave of inflation.

He mentioned that the announcement made by the Ministry of Finance to reduce petrol prices by Rs14 per liter and high-speed diesel by Rs13.50 per liter is satisfactory news for both the business community and the public.

President HCSTSI stated that this action would be advantageous for all segments of society, especially

for traders and industrialists who face difficulties meeting their orders on time and at specified prices due to the increased cost of petroleum products used in transportation.

He emphasized that whenever the government increases petroleum prices everything in Pakistan becomes more expensive. However, when prices are lowered the impact doesn't reflect in the reduced prices as anticipated even administrative measures to implement this fall short. Therefore, Pakistan's government should devise a systematic mechanism to ensure benefits across all strata of society.

He pointed out that despite the recent reduction

petroleum product prices in Pakistan remain considerably higher compared to international markets. He urged the Pakistani government to align these prices with the global market rates.

Highlighting global trends, President mentioned that all developed countries are transitioning their petroleum needs to alternative energy sources. More than 2030 several European countries have already placed bans on petrol driven vehicles within their borders. He stressed that the Pakistani government must actively explore alternative energy sources for petroleum products to alleviate the burden on the national economy.

China's EV charging piles see robust growth

BEIJING (APP): China saw a year-on-year 51.7-percent growth in the number of charging piles for electric vehicles in November, according to data from the China Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Promotion Alliance.

The number of charging piles rose by 101,000 in November from the previous month, the alliance said. About 75,000 new public charging piles were added every month on average from December 2022 to November 2023.

China has been expanding charging facilities for electric vehicles in recent years, buoyed by the bur-

geoning market.

Sales of the country's new-energy vehicles at the home market jumped 31.7 percent year on year to 7.21 million units in the first 11 months of the year, data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers showed.

China's shipbuilding sector maintains robust expansion: China has maintained its top position in the global shipbuilding market in the first 11 months of 2023, with strong growth in both output and new orders, industry data showed.

The country's shipbuilding output climbed 12.3

percent year on year to 38.09 million deadweight tonnes (dwt) during the January-November period, accounting for 50.1 percent of the world's total, according to data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

New orders surged 63.8 percent year on year to 64.85 million dwt, taking up 65.9% of the world's total during the period, figures from the ministry showed. The sector's holding orders totaled 134.09 million dwt at the end of November, expanding 29.4% year on year. The volume represented 53.4% of the global market share.

Only 7% of private sector credit goes to over 5m SMEs: Anjum

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Businessmen Panel (BMP) of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industries (FPCCI), Mian Anjum Nisar has said that despite their significant importance, over 5 million SMEs face a huge credit gap, receiving only 7% of private sector credit, far below neighboring countries like Bangladesh (25%) and India (18%), with the State Bank committing to increasing SME credit share to 17% by 2023.

He said that to achieve this, we must advocate for targeted and fixed SME allocations in concessional financing schemes, particularly those aimed at the export-oriented sector.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that it was proposed to allocate at least 25 percent of concessional financing, including the Export

Finance Scheme, exclusively to SMEs in the export sector. This strategic allocation will not only boost SME sector's growth but also promote a more inclusive and resilient economy.

He proposed the central bank to review its credit policies by fixing a special quota to finance the small and medium enterprises, as only the large industries have been availing government's all major concessional export loaning facilities, with very limited financing is left for the SMEs which are the backbone of the economy, contributing around 40 percent to the national gross domestic product (GDP).

The Vice President SAARC Chamber and the former FPCCI's president said that the State Bank of Pakistan has launched various policies for the promotion of SME finance, but the required results were still awaited. It was unfortunate that banks were always reluctant to provide financing to SMEs as their financing continued to show negative growth.

He said that the government with a view to help grow the businesses will have to take solid measures to strengthen the industry, especially the SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small industries. The government will have to make a visible reduction in markup rate to help grow the businesses, particularly the SME sector, as Pakistan needs millions of jobs annually.

We need to highlight the critical role of Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in driving sustainable economic development in Pakistan. With an estimated 5.2 million businesses, the SME sector is a

cornerstone of our economy, fostering employment, growth, and export diversification.

In its endeavor to provide concessional financing to the export-oriented sector, the SBP has introduced the Export Finance Scheme, offering financing as low as 3%, in stark contrast to the earlier Export Refinance Schemes' (ERF) markup rates that reached 21%. However, it is a matter of great concern that a substantial portion of this financing has been availed by large corporate industries, leaving no room for SMEs. The current economic challenges demand a targeted approach to support the SMEs, as they are among the hardest-hit and in desperate need of assistance.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that a small section of public sector and Islamic banks and few DFIs were active in financing SMEs sector. Despite significantly contributing to the GDP, exports and employment generation, the financing percentage of SMEs remained pathetic in general.

He urged the government that SME policy should focus on addressing specific issues faced by the SME sector and help check reluctance of financial institutions to provide financing to SMEs.

He said that the FPCCI and the BMP fully supported the proposed measures for promotion of SME finance including the establishment of credit guarantee company for offering risk sharing facility for SMEs. He urged all the stakeholders to collaborate to meet the objectives of the SME policy and support the priority sectors.

Mian Anjum Nisar emphasized the importance of SMEs for the growth and

development of the economy. He called for early and speedy access to finance for SMEs, including creation of enabling regulatory framework, market development, awareness creation and capacity building programs for banks and SMEs and introduction of SME financing targets for banks and DFIs. He stressed that a separate and comprehensive policy for the SME sector was the need of the day to promote contribution of SME sector for inclusive growth.

There are over five million SMEs across the country. These represent about 90 percent of Pakistan's businesses, and contribute 35 percent to GDP with over 30 percent to export earnings. In fact, it is a key pillar of national economy, employing about 40 percent of the workforce for different abilities—skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. These diversified enterprises are engaged in a variety of industrial, commercial and services activities. The long list of businesses include textiles, leather, plastic, sports goods, handicraft, IT, construction, materials, consumer goods, horticulture, fisheries, gems, healthcare, agricultural produce, and energy.

The SMEs are vulnerable to financial strains, increased cost of production, supply chain disruption, and drastic decrease in demand, due to limited financial resources and weaker access to financing and management. Resultantly, there has been gross decline in their sales and profitability in recent months, which has caused deterioration in business conditions; some SMEs going out of business and others facing numerous problems.

Court Notice

In the Court of Jauhar Ali Safi Civil Judge-I/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No. 469/1. Institution 27/7/2023. Date of hearing 13/1/2024. Mohammad Amen etc VS Jihan Gul etc. Notice to No. 4. Khalilur Rehman son. 9. Tajbaron. 10. Bakht Bibi daughters of Sahib Gul residents of Hesar Tehsil Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 a.m dated 13/1/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Fresh record for Dow at end of week dominated by central banks

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): The Dow edged to a fresh record Friday, extending a rally on a mixed day for global equities after this week's central bank announcements.

The blue-chip US index, which topped 37,000 for the first time this week, added 0.2 percent to finish at 37,305.16, a third straight record.

For the seventh straight time, all three indices in New York scored weekly gains.

"Selling efforts had been driven by a lingering sense that stocks are overbought on a short-term basis," said Briefing.com.

"Still, selling was modest considering the scope of recent gains."

Markets largely

shrugged off comments from New York Federal Reserve President John Williams that downplayed talk of imminent interest rate cuts.

Europe diverged amid news of slumping eurozone business activity. Frankfurt ended flat while Paris rounded out the week slightly ahead for a record close but London lost one

percent.

Markets faced a busy week for global interest rates after the US Federal Reserve pivoted Wednesday to signal it would cut next year.

Both the Bank of England and the European Central Bank distanced themselves on Thursday from cutting any time soon.



In brief

Deepti powers India to record Test win

MUMBAI (Agencies): Deepti Sharma starred with both bat and ball as India thrashed England by 347 runs in their one-off women's Test on Saturday for their first-ever win at home against the rivals. Sharma, who made 67 in India's first-innings total of 428, took nine wickets including a red-hot 5-7 in the first innings, with the visitors bowled out for 131 to wrap up the match on the third morning in Mumbai. Medium-pace Pooja Vastrakar grabbed 3-23 as England were dismissed cheaply inside 28 overs during an extended first session of play while chasing a mammoth target of 479 runs. England, bowled out for 136 in their first innings, offered very little fight even in their second outing, losing half their side inside 15 overs at the D.Y. Patil stadium. India's victory margin was the largest by runs in women's Test cricket and also their first Test win against England at home. Harmanpreet Kaur's team took a 292-run first-innings lead after electing to bat first, and declared on their overnight second-innings total of 186-6 for an overall lead of 478. Nat Sciver-Brunt top-scored with 59 in England's first innings but was bowled for a duck by Vastrakar in her second stint. "It's a proud feeling... we bowled according to plan," said Sharma, who was named player of the match. "I was just waiting to bowl and keeping myself warmed up. I got a lot of help from the wicket and I backed myself." England's Heather Knight said India were "outstanding" in the game.

Shami ruled out of SA series

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Injured pacer Mohammed Shami was left out of India's squad for the two-Test series against South Africa beginning this month after he failed to regain his fitness, the cricket board said. Shami, 33, was earlier named in the squad announced by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) for the away series but his inclusion was subject to fitness clearance. "Shami, whose participation in the Test series was subject to fitness has not been cleared by the BCCI Medical Team and the fast bowler is ruled out of the two Tests," BCCI said in a press release. Mohammed Shami played a key role during India's recent World Cup campaign, bagging 24 wickets from seven games to finish as the tournament's highest wicket-taker. India won 10 games in a row in the tournament before losing the final to Australia. The BCCI also said that medium pacer Deepak Chahar had withdrawn from the one-day squad due to a family emergency. He was replaced with Akash Deep, who is already in South Africa as part of the India A side. Batsman Shreyas Iyer will be available for the first ODI but will skip the remaining two in order to prepare for the Test series, beginning on December 26. The first game of the three-match ODI series begins in Johannesburg on Sunday. Captain Rohit Sharma, along with Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah and Ravichandran Ashwin left for South Africa on Friday and are likely to feature in the practice game on December 20-22 in Pretoria. India's updated ODI squad for South Africa series: Ruturaj Gaikwad, Sai Sudharsan, Tilak Varma, Rajat Patidar, Rinku Singh, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (C), Sanju Samson, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Mukesh Kumar, Avesh Khan, Arshdeep Singh, Akash Deep.



PERTH: Usman Khawaja and Steve Smith of Australia run between wickets during day three of the Men's First Test match between Australia and Pakistan at Optus Stadium.

Shaun Tait appointed as Quetta Gladiators' bowling coach for PSL 9

QUETTA (Monitoring Desk): 2019 Pakistan Super League (PSL) champions Quetta Gladiators on Saturday, appointed former Australian pacer Shaun Tait as their bowling coach for the upcoming PSL 9. Quetta Gladiators announced Shaun Tait's appointment as the bowling coach on their official X, formerly Twitter, account. "Purple Force get another Australian boost as Shaun Tait joins Team Quetta as bowling coach," said the franchise. "Tait – one of the fastest bowlers to have ever played the game – will work with [Mohammad Hasnain], [Mohammad Amir], [Mohammad Wasim Jr] and co.," the statement added. Notably, Shaun Tait served as the bowling coach of the Pakistan Men's cricket

team from February 2022 to January 2023. He represented Australia in three Tests, 35 ODIs and 21 T20Is, picking up 95 wickets across formats. Shaun Tait will join his former teammate Shane Watson – appointed as the head coach – in Quetta Gladiators' coaching panel. "The Quetta Gladiators owner and the team management has decided to appoint Former Australian all-rounder and Gladiators' best run-getter in the PSL, Shane Watson as head coach of the team," the 2019 PSL champions stated. Earlier, Quetta Gladiators also announced a change in their management with Moin Khan being appointed the Team Director, who served as their head coach since the inaugural season of PSL.

Under Moin Khan's coaching, Quetta Gladiators reached the play-off stage in the first four editions, playing three finals. Quetta Gladiators became PSL champions in 2019 under the captaincy of Sarfaraz Ahmed, with Shane Watson leading their batting line-up. Watson was the highest run-scorer with 430 runs at a strike rate of 143.81 and was named player of the tournament during the 2019 edition. However, since then Gladiators failed to qualify for the play-off stages in the next four editions of the PSL. Shane Watson has previously served the IPL franchise Delhi Capitals as an assistant coach in 2022, as well as the head coach of the Major League Cricket franchise San Francisco Unicorns earlier this year.

Nida Dar ruled out of ODI series against New Zealand

CHRISTCHURCH (NNI): Pakistan women's team captain, Nida Dar, has been ruled out of the third ODI against New Zealand, scheduled to take place at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch on Monday, 18 December. Nida was struck on her face by a ball during the first ODI at the John Davies Oval in Queenstown on Monday, 11 December, and was forced to miss the second ODI at Hagley Oval after developing symptoms of concussion. She has shown much improvement over the last two days after being assessed by the doctor and team physio. However, she still requires some more time to recover from concussion and keeping in mind the wellbeing of the player, Nida has been advised further rest and hence will not be available for the final match of the tour. Fatima Sana will continue to lead the side in the absence of regular captain, Nida. Under Fatima Sana's maiden ODI as captain, Pakistan lost a thriller against White Ferns by one wicket on Friday. The ICC and PCB Emerging Cricketer of the Year, Fatima, scored 90 not out with the bat – her highest score in this format – and also bagged two wickets. Reacting to missing out on the third ODI, Nida said, "I am disappointed to not be available for the final game. The way the girls have performed on the New Zealand tour is incredible, and I am really proud of each and every member of the team." Fatima Sana has shown great maturity in her captaincy by leading from the front in the last game and taking the side close to a win, which was exceptional. Even though we have lost the ODI series, the way girls have fought on the ground and shown character is great to see. I am sure they will continue to show the same spirit in the third ODI and will end the tour on the winning note." Pakistan 14-member squad for third ODI: Fatima Sana (captain), Aliya Riaz, Bismah Maroof, Ghulam Fatima, Muneeba Ali (wk), Najjha Alvi (wk), Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Omaima Sohail, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Umm-e-Hani and Waheeda Akhtar.

San Antonio Spurs end losing run against Los Angeles Lakers



LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Devin Vassell scored a career-high 36 points to help the San Antonio Spurs end their record 18-game losing streak and beat the Los Angeles Lakers. The Spurs came through 129-115 with seven players, including French star Victor Wembanyama, in double figures. It was the teenager's first time to face superstar LeBron James after the four-time NBA champion missed Wednesday's game through injury. Wembanyama finished with 13 points and 15 rebounds. The 19-year-old also managed five assists, two blocked shots and two steals for his fifth game of the season with multiple blocks and multiple steals. Despite James' return, the Lakers were still under strength with Anthony

Davis, D'Angelo Russell and Cam Reddish all absent and they trailed from start to finish. Los Angeles cut the deficit to four points shortly before the break with a run that included James' high-arching three-pointer over the towering Wembanyama. But the Spurs kept the pressure on, outscoring the Lakers 29-25 in the third period to take a 98-87 lead into the final quarter and go on to claim their first win since beating Phoenix on 2 November. "This is what I'm addicted to, winning, this is what I love," said Wembanyama, who credited Vassell's shooting for keeping the Lakers at bay. "Everything went in," he added. "I think if he didn't make those shots they would have had more runs, but by himself he kept the lead for us." James said the multiple

injury absences were just too much for the Lakers to overcome. "You give credit where it's due," he said. "San Antonio played great tonight, they shot the ball extremely well. They attacked us and we're just limited with bodies." James said his first clash with Wembanyama only reinforced his previous assessment that the highly touted rookie is a "special talent." Elsewhere, Joel Embiid had 35 points and 13 rebounds as the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Detroit Pistons 124-92, the Pistons setting a franchise record of 22 straight losses. The Pistons' old mark of 21 defeats was set between the 1979-80 and 1980-81 seasons. It was the ninth consecutive game that Embiid managed at least 30 points and 10 rebounds. Jalen Brunson had career highs of 50 points for the New York Knicks including nine three-pointers while leading his side to a 139-122 win over the Phoenix Suns. Brunson scored 35 points in the second half and did not miss a single three-point shot, matching the NBA record for most three-pointers without a miss, shared by Ben Gordon (2006, 2012) and Latrell Sprewell (2003).

Spurs stun Arsenal to claim historic WSL derby win

LONDON (Agencies): Arsenal squandered the chance to move top of the Women's Super League with defeat at local rivals Tottenham. Martha Thomas scored the only goal of the game in the second half to earn Spurs a first-ever WSL win over the Gunners. It leaves Arsenal in second, behind champions Chelsea on goal difference, having missed the majority of chances at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. Spurs remain sixth after their first win in six league games. Arsenal, knowing a win would take them top for at least 24 hours before Chelsea visit Bristol City on Sunday, came closest in the first half when Caitlin Foord struck the post. They continued to dominate after the break, Alessia

Russo sending a header off target from just six yards out while Frida Maanum whistled another effort only just over the bar from wide on the left. But Spurs held steady and took a shock lead on 58 minutes, a clever passing move from the back culminating in Thomas sliding in from Celin Bizet's low cross. Arsenal fail to build on Chelsea performance After dismantling Chelsea 4-1 so impressively at Emirates Stadium last week, Arsenal appeared to have an opportunity to showcase themselves in this game - with a chance to beat their rivals at one of English football's most impressive arenas, and potentially lead the WSL at Christmas. Things did not work out that way. Arsenal did not

have a shot on target until the 42nd minute, Maanum stinging the gloves of Barbra Votikova, in a sluggish first-half display. They struggled to play with pace and get the ball wide. When they did, they found Foord in space to create their best first-half openings. The Gunners clearly faced strong words from manager Jonas Eidevall and started the second half at a much higher tempo - but failed to take their chances. Eidevall had to smash the emergency glass to send on Vivianne Miedema, still returning to full fitness after an anterior cruciate knee ligament injury, midway through the second half. It was her 100th WSL appearance, and the first time she, Russo and Beth Mead have been on the pitch for the

Gunners at the same time. Having such a quality attacking trio gives hope they can keep pace with Chelsea in the new year - but this was far from the perfection Arsenal need for a first WSL title since 2018-19. Spurs adapt to earn sensational win Spurs manager Robert Vilahamn took the hint to adjust his side to the test of facing a WSL top-four side, following the chastening experience of conceding 11 goals in their past two matches, against Manchester clubs City and United. He may also have had in mind a dreadful WSL record against Arsenal - Spurs had not beaten their rivals in seven previous league meetings, losing six, while never keeping a clean sheet.



Spurs' 4-4-2 was much more compact and deeper lying, and it helped them ride out a stormy opening to the second half where Arsenal had eight shots in 13 minutes. And they took

their chance when it came through Thomas - her first goal in six league matches, having scored six in her opening four WSL games. They should have scored a second in the final sec-

onds as they broke forward following an Arsenal corner, with keeper Manuela Zinsberger stranded after coming up. Only a spectacular last gasp tackle denied Rosella Ayane a tap-in.

Australia build big lead over Pakistan as Lyon moves to 499 Test wickets

PERTH (AFP): Usman Khawaja and Steve Smith dug in to stretch Australia's lead and take the first Test away from Pakistan Saturday, as veteran spinner Nathan Lyon moved within one wicket of the 500-mark. The hosts reached stumps on day three in Perth at 84-2, building their lead to 300 after bowling out the visitors on the cusp of tea for 271 in reply to their first innings 487. Veteran spinner Lyon was the best of the bowlers with 3-66, but he was made to wait to reach a milestone that will put him in elite company alongside just seven other players. At the close, Khawaja was on 34 and Smith 43 as Pakistan's hopes of a first Test win in Australia since 1995 faded. The home side had a shaky start with first innings century-maker David Warner out for a duck. The 37-year-old, fresh from his defiant 164, mistimed a pull shot from Khurram Shahzad and lobbed to Imam-ul-Haq for a comfortable catch at mid-wicket. Marnus Labuschagne also surrendered cheaply on a pitch offering uneven bounce,

out for two with Shahzad again the tormentor, tempting a big edge taken by wicketkeeper Sarfaraz Ahmed. It left Australia tottering at 2-5. But Khawaja and Smith steadied the ship with an unbeaten 79-run partnership heading into day four and a potential declaration. Pakistan resumed on 132-2 after building a solid foundation in the run chase, but they were no match for Australia's top-class attack. Stoic opener Haq began on 38 and nightwatchman Shahzad on seven. Shahzad, on his debut, lasted just two balls before Pat Cummins took out his middle stump in the first over with a full and straight delivery. That brought dangerman Babar Azam to the crease in his 50th Test, tentatively facing 13 balls before getting off the mark with a cover drive to the ropes off Cummins. Biding his time against a seam attack finding bounce and speed on a pitch baked by the sun, he struck another in Cummins' next over to ensure the scoreboard ticked over. At the other end, Haq continued chipping away and brought up a

ninth Test 50, and his first in Australia, off a glacial 161 balls with a single off Lyon. But the runs were hard to come by and when Mitchell Marsh was introduced, he immediately made an impact, removing Azam for 21, with the former captain edging to wicketkeeper Alex Carey. It sparked a mini-collapse, with Haq stumped for 62 when Lyon was brought back into the attack, charging down the wicket in a lapse of concentration, with Carey whipping off the bails. Sarfaraz Ahmed lasted just six balls, having no answer to Mitchell Starc's swinging delivery that sent the stumps flying. Australia took the new ball after lunch and Josh Hazlewood produced a quality bouncer that Saud Shakeel tried to fend off but lobbed to Warner at slip. He departed for 28 and Faheem Ashraf followed for nine, caught low by Khawaja at square leg off Cummins. Lyon returned to take his 499th wicket, with another stumping from Carey accounting for Aamer Jamal, before Travis Head's part-time spin took care of Shaheen Shah Afridi.

PCB signs agreement in Dubai to host ICC Champions Trophy 2025

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board signed an agreement with the International Cricket Council (ICC) in Dubai on Friday for hosting rights of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, the PCB said in a statement. Chairman PCB Management Committee Zaka Ashraf was joined by ICC General Counsel Jonathan Hall at the signing of the hosting rights to Pakistan at the ICC headquarters. "The PCB in its capacity has already intimated the government to provide foolproof security to visiting international teams for

the Champions Trophy," the PCB statement said. "Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in a recent meeting with Chairman PCB Management Committee assured the security agencies' cooperation in the successful hosting of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025." The event marks the return of the ICC Champions Trophy after an eight-year gap when it was last held in 2017. For the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy, a total of eight teams will participate and play the One Day International (ODI) format. The qualification

process involved the top seven teams from the ICC ODI World Cup group stage, along with the host nation, Pakistan, securing their positions for this upcoming tournament. The teams confirmed for the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy are: Pakistan (hosts), India, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Afghanistan, England, Bangladesh. Some Test-playing nations such as Sri Lanka and West Indies have missed out on the global tournament, with Sri Lanka failing to secure a top-eight position in the ICC World Cup 2023 points table.

Handball trials begins under PM Youth Talent Hunt Program in Mardan

PESHAWAR (APP): The Handball trials of the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Program got under way under the aegis of Directorate of Sports University of Peshawar at Government Post Graduate College for Boys Mardan, here Saturday. Large number of players age between 15-25 year of age turned up for the trials part of the Prime Minister Talent Hunt Youth Handball League in the main indoor hall of the Government Post Graduate College for Boys. Principal Post Graduate College Mardan Abrar Akhuzada formally inaugurated the trials. Deputy Director (DD) of Sports Higher Education

Department, KP and former international handball player Arshad Hussain, international player of Pakistan Handball and brand ambassador of KP Handball League Hazrat Hussain, Director of Distance Education System Dr Noorzada and other important personalities were present. Dr Noor Zada said that the trials in other regional headquarters including Swat, Bannu, Kohat Hazara and Peshawar would be organized in different dates and the players of handball from all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) would get ample opportunities to come up and be part of the trials and play the League round event. Dr Noor Zada said, "As

instructed by Coordinator Higher Education Commission Bahre Karam, all appropriate measures have been taken for the players and officials. A large number of players participated in the trials from all across Mardan Division." "In the first phase, trials will be held in all zones, in which twelve players will be selected, while in the second phase, provincial competitions will be held in which players will be selected for the KP team while the National Championship will also be held in Peshawar," he added. According to the schedule, "After Mardan, Swat trials will be held on December 20-21, Hazara from December 24-25 and Bannu from December 28-29."



In brief

IESCO issues power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Saturday issued a power suspension programme for Sunday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to the IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, GSO Circle, F-6/2, PM Secretariat, CBR, PM Staff Colony, Blue Area, OGD, Quaid-e-Azam University, Saudi Embassy, Residential Saudi Embassy, Taxila, Sher Shah Suri, Haru, Bohi Ghar, BOC, HMC-3, R/Polk, Salar Gah, SSD Wah, Engineering University, Ghor, Nawaz Shaheed, Nisar Shaheed, Museum, Margela, MMC Road, HMC-3, Labor Complex Feeders, From 07:00 AM to 06:00 PM, Kalial, Shahpur, Adiala, Khasala, Humayun, Dhok Noor, Gulshanabad, 502 Workshop, Adiala Jail, Shaheken, Defense Road, Askari, 14, PGHS, Klarkahar, Khairpur, Miani, Padrar, Manara, Istiqal Camp, PAF Feeders, From 02:00 PM to 05:00 PM, Gulberg, 5, 7, 8 & 9, Rezdensha, 17, RIU feeders and surrounding areas.

Murree receives first snowfall

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Tourists' favourite destination Murree received its first snowfall of the winter season on Saturday, which was enjoyed by the visitors. It is relevant to mention here that the Met Department had earlier forecast snowfall for the hill station. The temperature in the city was recorded at 1 degree Celsius. Earlier on Saturday, Abbottabad (Galiyat) had also received snowfall, which attracted many tourists to the areas covered in snow.

IRSA releases 85,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 85,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 37,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1480.06 feet and was 80.06 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,400 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1162.30 feet, which was 112.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,800 cusecs and 26,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 55,400, 34,700, 28,000 and 3,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

2 killed in road mishap

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least two people were killed in dumper-motorcycle collision in Kasur, late Friday. According to detail, rescue sources told that the accident occurred at the Dipalpur Road in Kot Sardar area of Kasur where a rashly-driven dumper hit a motorcycle, killing two persons on the spot, said a private news channel reported. Police and rescue teams rushed to the site and shifted the bodies to nearby hospital. The deceased were identified as Samiullah and Rizwan. According to police spokesman, the driver of dumper managed to flee from the scene.



ISLAMABAD: A gypsy child collecting garbage at Fruit and vegetable market in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Nation to remember APS children, teachers' sacrifices

ISLAMABAD (APP): The nation will never forget the sacrifices of innocent children and brave teachers of Army Public School (APS) Peshawar.

Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan said this in a message on the ninth anniversary of the Army Public School tragedy.

He said that nine years have passed since the tragedy of APS, but the grief of the victims is still fresh today. He said that 16 December 2014 will always be remembered in the history of the country as a black day. Dr Nadeem said, "I pray that Allah may raise the ranks of the martyrs and grant patience to their families. I also pay tribute to the martyrs of Pakistan Army."

He said that the people and all the state institutions are on the same page to protect the homeland and national security. Dr Nadeem said, "The entire nation stands and will continue to stand by the armed forces to fight terrorism."

Islamabad police conducts search operation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad police on Saturday conducted a search and combing operation within the jurisdiction of Bhara Kahu police station and nabbed one suspect.

In adherence to specific directives from Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, these operations are being systematically carried out across various sectors of the city. The primary objective is to ensure the safety and security of the

citizens of Islamabad. In line with the ICCPO's instructions, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), in collaboration with local police teams under the supervision of SP CTD, executed a comprehensive search and combing operation in different areas falling under the purview of Bhara Kahu police station.

Throughout this operation, a comprehensive inspection was conducted on 77 residences, 14 motorcycles and three motor vehicles. Consequently, one suspicious individual was apprehended and a bike was impounded at local Police Station.

ICCP Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan emphasized that the purpose behind these search and combing operations is to enhance security in the Federal Capital. Zonal officers have been instructed to persist with these operations within their respective areas. The cooperation of citizens is earnestly requested during the inspection process.

Sheikh Rasheed all set to launch election campaign

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former interior minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed has announced to launch his election campaign.

Talking to journalists outside the District and Sessions Court Islamabad on Saturday, head of Awami Muslim League said he do politics of two

seats in the Rawalpindi. He said it's not an easy task to contest the elections.

He announced to submit his nomination papers for three constituencies and would contest from two.

He said the elections campaign would be launched from Lal Haveli, after submission of the

nomination papers.

Former minister is named in a vandalism case registered with the Kohsar police station and the Judicial Magistrate Chaudhry Mehmood heard the case. Sheikh Rashid appeared before the court along with his lawyer Sardar Shehbaz.

Ksrelief distributes Food Packages among Chitral people

ISLAMABAD (APP): The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief) has distributed 350 food packages among the residents of the remote Broghil Valley in Upper Chitral.

"In response to the challenging circumstances faced by the residents of this isolated region, KSrelief has initiated the distribution of 350 food packages, which is part of the 3rd phase of KSrelief Food Security Support Project Pakistan 2023-2024," said a news release issued here on Saturday.

Each food package, weighing 95 kg, includes 80 kg of flour, 5 liters of cooking oil, 5 kg of sugar, and 5 kg of Daal Chana—sufficient to sustain a family throughout the month.

This humanitarian effort was initiated in response to a special request from the Secretary of RR&SD KP and involved collaboration with NDMA, PDMA, UNOCHA KP, and FAO, and implementation through the joint efforts of KSrelief and the EHSAR Foundation.

The distribution of these food packages underscores

KSrelief's commitment to reaching the most vulnerable populations, even in remote and challenging areas.

The initiative aimed to provide essential sustenance to improve the well-being of the community, particularly amidst the unique hardships posed by severe winter conditions.

Approximately 2,450 individuals in the Broghil Valley have benefited from this relief package, demonstrating the tangible impact of humanitarian efforts in addressing the needs of communities facing adversity.

Pakistan Railways to recover outstanding dues from govt depts

ISLAMABAD (INP): 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, the state news agency reported.

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 up-gradation of unmanned and vulnerable railway level crossings across the country in collaboration with respective

Aneeq terms "Road to Makkah" as unique facility for Hujjaj

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Minister for Religious Affairs Aneeq Ahmed has expressed his gratitude to Saudi government for providing the best facilities for the next year's Hajj.

Talking to Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Saeed Al-Malki in Islamabad, he said Road to Makkah is a unique facility. Handling all immigration related requirements of pilgrims at the local level is the best decision of the Saudi government.

The Minister said his ministry will provide the best possible facilities to the pilgrims. He said he will also visit Saudi Arabia next month to review Hajj arrangements.

The Saudi ambassador assured to extend full cooperation for the facilitation of Pakistani pilgrims. He mentioned that they are bringing innovations to the arrangements, keeping in view the convenience and safety of the pilgrims.

Christmas is festival of happiness; Kamran

RAWALPINDI (APP): Senator of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Kamran Michael on Saturday said that Christmas is a festival of happiness in which everybody's participation makes this pleasure dual.

He expressed these views while speaking as a special guest at the Christmas cake-cutting ceremony organized by Pastor Naem Bhatti.

The senator urged the Christmas community to remember the poor and deserving brothers in the joy of Christmas.

Michael further said that the PML-N will sweep the upcoming general elections in the entire country as the PML-N believes in the politics of service.

In the ceremony, Vice President Muslim League-N Minority Wing Pakistan Johnson Simon, Vice President Muslim League-N Minority Wing Punjab Khuram Gul, Deputy Coordinator Minority Wing Rawalpindi Division Nadeem Khokhar, Senior Vice President Rawalpindi Raja Habib, Pastor Rahat Gill, Pastor Nawaz Bhatti, Pastor Emmanuel, Pastor Javed George, Pastor Khuram and others participated.

Mushaal urges world to do more, raise voice against continues injustices in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advisor to the Prime Minister on Human Rights, Mushaal Mullick Saturday urged that the United Nations bodies, world powers and human rights organizations should do more and raise their voice against continues injustices against innocent Kashmiris in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K).

Talking to PTV news channel, she regretted, "The international community is mysteriously quite over the Indian Supreme Court verdict despite knowing that the India is committing worst human rights violations in IIOJ&K."

She mentioned, "Pakistan has always advo-

cated the Kashmir cause on all international forums and will continue to do so till the people of Kashmir get their right to self-determination in accordance with UN resolutions."

"No doubt despite the worst atrocities by the Indian forces, the freedom struggle of the Kashmiris is gaining momentum with each passing day and the time will come when the people of Kashmir will get their fundamental right of plebiscite, she also expressed hope."

"It is incumbent upon the international community to fulfill its responsibility in alleviating the suffering of the Kashmiri people and assisting them in realizing their funda-

mental right to self-determination," she stressed.

Mushaal said indigenous movement of Kashmiri people for their right to self-determination would continue till getting rid of Indian subjugation, adding, lasting peace in South Asian region could not be achieved without resolving the issue.

Replying a query, she highlighted, "Indian occupying forces have not kept any stone unturned in making a high record of human rights violation."

"Everyday new methods are being invented, adopted, introduced and practiced in the name of security and social order to exploit people of IIOJ&K," she added.

RMU, a national asset in the health sector; Dr Jamal

RAWALPINDI (APP): Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Health and Population Welfare Punjab Dr Jamal Nasir has said that Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU) held a prominent position in the health sector and the nation was proud of its educational standard.

The minister expressed these views while addressing the 14th Convocation of RMU here on Saturday. It is the foremost institution of the country in medical education and the people associated with it have always worked with the spirit of humanitarian service in emergencies, the minister added.

Dr Jamal Nasir said that the services of the institution during the COVID-19 epidemic and floods were commendable. Dr Jamal said that today was a memorable and auspicious day for the young graduates of Rawalpindi Medical University. Congratulating the graduating doctors and their parents, he said that the University was playing a constructive role in the field of health and the whole nation values it.

He said that the medical profession was associated with human service and it was a matter of honour to be associated with this field. Medical teaching hospitals were being established in five districts of Punjab while projects worth billions of rupees had been started in Rawalpindi.

He added that multi-billion projects had either been completed or were in the process of completion in 100 big hospitals, including 78 Tehsil headquarters hospitals and district headquarters hospitals across Punjab. The minister added that revamping and renovation work of the Holy Family Hospital was underway for two billion rupees while Benazir Bhutto Hospital was being upgraded for Rs 160 million. Similarly, District

Headquarters Hospital was also being progressed for Rs 110 mln. The budget of the 35-bed hospital in Murree had been increased by expanding it to 85 beds and the shortage of nurses and staff had also been met on an emergency basis.

He said that the Dialysis Center at Murree Hospital had been made operational for 24 hours. Dr Jamal further said that a 30-bed burn center was being established in the Red Crescent Hospital, which will be fully operational in the next two months. "Rawalpindi Maternal and Child Hospital will soon be taken over by the Punjab government." He said that appointments were being made on merit in the health sector. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Umar on the occasion informed about the ongoing programs in Rawalpindi Medical University.

He said that all the faculties of RMU have worked as a team to maintain the quality of education. The state regularly invests huge amounts for students studying in public sector medical universities and now was the time to return this investment to the students who graduated. Other speakers said in their address that it was an honour to study at RMU as serving humanity was no less than worship. Certificates were awarded to MBBS 2019, 2018 and 2020 students in the convocation.

The students who took prominent positions were awarded gold medals by the provincial minister. Head of Edhi Foundation Muhammad Faisal Edhi, Principal Dr. Prof. Jahangir Sarwar and Dr. Masood Gondal also participated in the convocation. At the end of the convocation, Muhammad Faisal Edhi, head of the Edhi Foundation, was presented with a check for philanthropic work by the faculty of the University.

35 outlaws including three professional beggars arrested

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police apprehended 35 outlaws including three professional baggers and 11 absconders from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directions, the Aabpara police team arrested an accused namely Azaz Ali and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession. The Noon police team arrested two accused namely Muhammad Yasir and Shan Nawaz and recovered 420 gram heroin from their possession. The Kirpa police team arrested an accused namely Zain Ali and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession, while police team also arrested two accused namely Aqeel Ahmed and Waheed Abbas involved in illegally refilling gas cylinders.

Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. During the ongoing crackdown against professional beggars, court absconders and proclaimed offenders, the Islamabad Capital Police arrested three professional baggers and 11 absconders.

ICCP Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan directed the police officials to further intensify the crackdown against the criminal elements. "Safety

from their possession. The Sangani police team arrested an accused namely Abdul Rehman and recovered 513 gram heroin from his possession, while the police team also arrested two accused namely Habib Ullah and Hamza Ahmed involved in illegally selling petrol.

The Sumbal police team arrested an accused namely Hasnain Ali and Muhammad Ehsan and recovered 1,130 gram hashish from their possession. The Industrial Area police team arrested an accused namely Muhib Ullah and recovered 310 gram heroin from his possession.

Furthermore, the Shams Colony police team arrested an accused namely Azaz Ali and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession. The Noon police team arrested two accused namely Muhammad Yasir and Shan Nawaz and recovered 420 gram heroin from their possession. The Kirpa police team arrested an accused namely Zain Ali and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession, while police team also arrested two accused namely Aqeel Ahmed and Waheed Abbas involved in illegally refilling gas cylinders.

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ICCP Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan directed the police officials to further intensify the crackdown against the criminal elements. "Safety

and security of the citizens is our foremost priority and no laxity will be tolerated in this regard", he maintained.

Wanted members of thief, snatcher gang arrested

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police Shalimar and Nilore police team arrested four accused involved in house burglary and snatching activities and recovered stolen gold ornaments, snatched cash and weapons used in crime from his possession, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directions, the Shalimar police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending an accused involved in burglar activities in the area of the Shalimar police station jurisdiction. The accused were identified as Muhammad Zafar Iqbal.

Police team also recovered stolen gold ornaments worth two million rupees from his possession. Case was registered against the nab accused and further investigation is underway.

Similarly, the Nilore police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending three wanted members of a snatcher gang involved in numerous snatching activities in various areas of the Nilore police station jurisdiction.

Symposium organized

ATLANTA (Pajhwok): A two-day symposium on "Afghan media in exile" has been held in Berlin. The Afghanistan Journalists Centre (AFJC) said the meeting, which was launched by the "European Fund for Journalism in Exile" (JX Fund), discussed the situation of exiled Afghan journalists and ways to support them. Penelope Winterhager, the managing director of the JX Fund, said they were committed to strengthening the media in exile in a sustainable way.

The Frontier Post

Jamadi-us-Sanni 03, 1445 — Sunday, December 17, 2023

'Afghan embassy active'

KABUL (Ariana News): India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, confirmed that India's approach to Afghanistan is consistently shaped by historical relations, friendship with its people and adherence to relevant UN resolutions. Responding in writing to a query in Lok Sabha, the lower house of India's parliament, Jaishankar noted that over the past two years, some Afghan diplomats have departed India due to residency obtained in third countries.

Attacks decreases in Afghanistan: Report

KABUL (Ariana News): Attacks by armed opposition groups and Daesh have decreased in Afghanistan, the United Nations Secretary-General said in a new report released.

Between 1 August and 7 November, the United Nations recorded 8 ISIL-K (Daesh) attacks in three provinces, compared with 27 attacks in six provinces during the same period in 2022, the report said.

The United Nations recorded 1,414 security-related incidents, a 2 percent increase from the 1,384 incidents recorded during the same period in 2022. Armed clashes

decreased by 41 percent, from 104 to 61 incidents; detonations from improvised explosive devices by 72 percent, from 65 to 18.

Referring to the economy, the report said that the economic situation remained uncertain and fragile and the trade deficit is increasing due to rising imports.

The UN said that it has transferred \$3.23 billion between 1 December 2021 and 15 October 2023 (\$1.4 billion since January 2023), and the cash continued to indirectly support the stabilization of the Afghan currency.

According to the report,

the return of so many people in such a short period of time is imposing a severe strain on the country's economy and social fabric.

On girls' education, the UN Secretary-General said that while girls and young women are reportedly able to access all-female madrasas, UNAMA has been unable to verify the number of girls studying in these institutions or the quality of the education provided, particularly with regard to whether it includes modern subjects and leads to the same opportunities as those provided to boys.

Hunger crisis threat to Afghan children

KABUL (TOLONews): Save The Children in a report said that in the next year (2024), one in three children in Afghanistan will face hunger.

According to the report, nearly 16 million people are expected to face acute food insecurity before March 2024, and more than 7 million of them are children.

Employment opportunities are reduced during the winter and winter food and fuel prices rise and increase poverty among the people.

"An estimated 15.8 million people, more than a third of the country's population, are expected to experience acute food insecurity before March 2024. Almost half of those or 7.8 million are children," said Save The Children.

Some residents of the capital said that with the arrival of the cold season, their challenges have multiplied.

Children in the capital also said that economic challenges have forced them to do hard labor.

"We don't have a person at home to work, I work for 200 to 300 Afghani a day. We want the government to provide us with work," said Mahdi, a child worker.

"My father doesn't do anything, I come here myself, sell the bolani (Afghan food), and take the money home," said Farshad, a child worker.

Meanwhile, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid has said that from January to October 2023, nearly 23 million Afghan citizens have been helped.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (OCHA) said in a report that "between January and October 2023, humanitarian organizations operating in Afghanistan reached 21.3 million individuals with food and livelihood support, 13.7 million with healthcare, 8.9 million with water, sanitation and hygiene support, 4.8 million children and pregnant lactating women with nutrition assistance."

"United Nations humanitarian aid has had a relative impact on reducing poverty, but our demand from aid organizations, including United Nations organizations, is that aid should be considered in the development sectors," said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy of the Economy Ministry. The list published by The International Rescue Committee shows that 20 countries, including Afghanistan, are facing the risk of worsening humanitarian crises in 2024.

Kabul, Tashkent extend deal

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) has announced a one-year extension in the electricity supply agreement with Uzbekistan.

DABS Chief Executive Officer Mullah Muhammad Hanif Hamza led a delegation to Tashkent, where he met Uzbek Minister of Electricity Mirza Mohammadov Jurabek.

General Manager of the National Electricity Company (NEGO) Dadajan Isakulov also met Hamza, according to a statement from the power utility.

Hamza discussed with his interlocutors increased power tariffs, reduced electricity supply, solving visa problems for DABS technical staff and the Surkhan Pol-i-Khumri project.

Technical problems in providing sufficient electricity to the public, industrial, commercial, and government consumers also came up for discussion.

In response, Jurabek said Uzbekistan was currently addressing technical problems in electricity supply through emergency measures.

Once the issues are resolved according to the agreement, Uzbekistan will provide electricity to Afghanistan in a smooth manner.

Turkmenistan Foreign Minister visits Afghanistan



KABUL (BNA): The Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister arrived in Afghanistan, where Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Acting

Foreign Minister of the Islamic Emirate, received him in the port of Torgundi in Herat. Hafiz Zia Ahmad, the

deputy spokesperson of the Ministry in a statement, the tenacity of the high-level Turkmen delegation's trip to Afghanistan is to expand

relations between the two countries in economic, transit, electricity, railway, and energy sectors, as well as to visit joint projects.

Hamid Karzai meets Iran's Special Envoy



KABUL (Ariana News): Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai in a meeting with Iran's special representative for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi has discussed the current situation in the country and the

region.

In a post published by Karzai's X page, the need for strengthening good bilateral relations between the two countries was emphasized at this meeting. Karzai also expressed

his gratitude for Iran's cooperation with the people of Afghanistan and demanded the continuation of such contributions, especially in the field of providing education for Afghan boys and girls.

NGOs raise alarms over Afghans deported

KABUL (TOLONews): Non-governmental organizations have expressed concern in a report about the bad situation of immigrants deported from Pakistan and said that the returnees need more help.

The International Rescue Committee, Danish Refugee Council, Norwegian Refugee Council, Islamic Relief Worldwide, CARE, Intersos, and other organizations said that 500,000 people who have returned to their country are in dire need of food, shelter, and work opportunities in the winter.

These organizations have asked the international community to increase support for families returning to Afghanistan.

"Since the economic situation of Afghanistan is unfortunately dire and

a large number of Afghan immigrants enter the country in the winter season, the aid of the international community must be focused on the people of Afghanistan," said Abdul Zahur Mudabir, an economist.

Meanwhile, some immigrants who have returned to the country said that they are in a bad situation and that the interim government should pay more attention.

"They have helped us in Torkham with 10,000 Afghans, and my family is huge, and the money will not even cover my expenses for a week," said Mohammad Nayeem, a refugee.

"We request that the Islamic Emirate provides job opportunities for Afghan youth so that they

do not travel to other countries because it is very controversial," said Dawood, a refugee.

The Ministry of Economy pledged to provide the necessary assistance to newly deported immigrants.

"The Islamic Emirate has organized various committees for our refugees in the areas of health, shelter, accommodation, and job creation, and we call on international aid organizations to help us in this regard," said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy of the Economy Ministry.

Earlier some aid agencies have expressed concern about the poor situation of Afghan immigrants in the country. Aid agencies have emphasized that the deportees need increasing assistance.

AI hails Neda Parwani's release, calls for other women's freedom

KABUL (Khaama Press): Amnesty International has welcomed the release of Neda Parwani, a human rights activist and protesting woman who was arrested and imprisoned three months ago and has called for the release of other protesting women who have been struggling with poor mental and physical conditions in the prisons of the Taliban administration for months.

This organization, in a message published on the social media platform X following the release of Neda Parwani, wrote that the arrest of Ms Parwani should not have happened at all and that her release

was a positive event.

Sources confirmed to Khaama Press on Friday that Neda Parwani and her husband were released on bail from the custody of the Taliban on Thursday after three months of imprisonment.

Ms Parwani is one of the protesting women who took to the streets in protest against restrictions imposed by the caretaker government against women and girls in Afghanistan and participated in many street protests. She and her husband were arrested by the Taliban on 19 September due to their protest activities.

Several media outlets,

citing their sources, have reported that Neda Parwani and her husband, Arash Parwani, were tortured in prison and are now in a poor mental and physical state.

According to these reports, Ms Parwani was transferred to a health centre after being released from prison and is receiving medical care.

Human Rights Watch has criticized the global community's silence towards human rights violations, particularly the violation of women's rights by the Taliban, and expressed concern for protesting women who are in the prisons of the Taliban and are

deprived of lawyers or visits from their family members.

Currently, Julia Parsi, Manizha Seddqi, and Parisa Azada are protesting women who have been detained for weeks with no news available about their condition in the prisons of the Taliban.

Heather Barr, the deputy head of the women's section at Human Rights Watch, has also expressed concern about the situation of women in the prisons of the Taliban and has said that the number of imprisoned women and girls in Afghanistan is higher than what is usually reported in the media.

China calls for alteration of UN sanctions against Afghanistan

KABUL (BNA): China has requested the United Nations Security Council to adjust sanctions against Afghanistan considering the current conditions in the country.

Xinhua, the official news agency of China, has reported, that Gang Shuang, the deputy representative of China to the United Nations, stated that Afghanistan is in a critical stage of reconstruction and revitalization.

The international community must strengthen constructive engagement with the authorities of this country to emerge from the humanitarian crisis and boost the economy and livelihoods of the people.

He also emphasized "improving human rights in Afghanistan and the country's return to the family of nations." He added: Terrorist threats in Afghanistan remain seri-

ous. The international community must assist Afghanistan in combating all terrorist forces.

Geng Shuang stated, that the Security Council must ensure that the regime of sanctions has an impact on improving peace and stability in Afghanistan, and at the same time, adjustments should be made to these sanctions given the current conditions.

He said China believes that the Security Council should facilitate genuine interaction between the international community and Afghanistan by timely adjustments to sanctions, preventing the negative effects of these sanctions on the livelihood of the Afghan people and the development of the country.

The Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations added, in the first step, that the



Security Council should consider lifting sanctions exemptions on the travel of certain officials of the Islamic Emirate as soon as possible.

China has always considered such exemptions as a necessary tool to facilitate dialogue and interaction, believing that this

issue should not be used as a means of coercion or pressure.

This comes as the United Nations Security Council has extended the mandate of the committee overseeing sanctions against the Islamic Emirate for another year, a decision that may seem unjustifiable.

Traffic accident kills 4, injures 6 in Herat



HERAT (Khaama Press): The provincial authorities of Herat province have confirmed that as a result of a collision between two vehicles in the Adraskan district of the province, four people have died, and six others have been injured.

The press office of the Herat provincial security command has released a statement saying that this incident occurred on the evening of Friday on the

Herat-Kandahar highway.

Local officials have attributed the cause of this incident to a collision between a 'Paso-type vehicle and a 'Fielder'.

According to health officials, two children were among those killed in the incident, and the condition of several of the injured is critical.

Previously, as a result of a traffic accident in the Khwaja Du Koh district of Jowzjan province, one per-

son died, and another was injured.

This comes at a time when the increase in traffic accidents in the country annually takes the lives of dozens of people and leaves many injured and disabled.

Lack of caution by drivers, non-compliance with traffic laws, poor road conditions, and excessive speed have been cited as causes of traffic accidents in the country.

Israeli hostages killed mistakenly in Gaza were holding white flag

JERUSALEM: Three Israeli hostages killed mistakenly in Gaza by Israeli forces had been holding up a white flag, according to an initial inquiry into the incident, a military official said on Saturday.

The incident happened in an area of intense combat where Hamas militants operate in civilian attire and use deception tactics, the official said. A soldier saw the hostages emerging tens of meters from Israeli forces in the area of Shejaiya, the official said. "They're all without shirts and they have a stick with a white cloth on it. The soldier feels threatened and opens fire. He declares that they're terrorists, they (forces) open fire, two are killed immediately," said the military official.

The third hostage was wounded and retreated into a nearby building where he called for help in Hebrew, the official said. "Immediately the battalion commander issues a cease-fire order, but again there's another burst of fire toward the third figure and he also dies," said the official. "This was against our rules of engagement," he added. The military on Friday identified the three hostages as Yotam Haim and Alon Shamriz, abducted from Kibbutz Kfar Aza, and Samer Talalka, abducted from nearby Kibbutz Nir Am, all kidnapped by Hamas on Oct. 7.

Meanwhile, hopes for a peaceful resolution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian militant

group Hamas are contingent upon a change of leadership at the top of the Knesset, as it seems incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is convinced peace is not an option.

That, at least, is the view of several experts, who believe Netanyahu's obsession with seeing the decades-old conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as something that can only be managed, not brought to an end, has impeded all other alternatives. "Netanyahu is irrelevant to peace," Yossi Mekelberg, professor of international relations and associate fellow of the MENA Program at Chatham House in London, told Arab News.

Mekelberg is of the view that Israel should be "looking for a future leadership," adding that, despite not being in the "actioning peace" phase of the conflict, this would have to "start soon, if we don't want another prolonged period of low intensity war." Despite having developed a reputation for survival and rebirth over his 20-plus years at the top of Israeli politics, Netanyahu's poll numbers indicate his ouster in the near term is now a very real possibility.

Given the corruption charges awaiting him once he is stripped of the legal immunity afforded by high office, the stakes are particularly high. A recent report by The Wall Street Journal found that support among Israelis for Netanyahu to remain in office for the long haul stands at just

18 percent, with 29 percent demanding he leave now and 47 percent seeing no place for him in government after the war ends.

Interviewed by The New Yorker, Dahlia Scheindlin, a political scientist and expert on Israeli public opinion, said that Netanyahu's popularity had reached its nadir. "By every possible indicator we have, and there have been lots of surveys done since Oct. 7, his popularity is abysmal," said Scheindlin. "It's the worst I've seen, certainly since 2009. I'd like to say ever, but I would have to check every single survey since the early 90s."

That decline could have implications for how the war in Gaza is fought, with Netanyahu's coalition, built in 2022, having lost its majority, dropping from 64 to 32 seats in parliament. And yet, part of that loss of public support stems from the manner in which Netanyahu has sought to manage the conflict with Hamas, with many Israelis blaming his failure of leadership for the attack that set off the latest phase of violence.

Osama Al-Sharif, a Jordanian analyst and political columnist, believes Netanyahu's political fate is tightly bound up with how the war has been fought. "A more likely scenario over Israeli plans for the demilitarization of Gaza is that Netanyahu himself leaves the scene before Hamas does as the public begin to complain of the victory that may never come," Al-Sharif told Arab News. — Arab News



LAHORE: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the seminar titled 'Role of insurance ombudsman in strengthening business sector.'

Call to fight militants & not appease them

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An important lesson of the Dec 16, 2014 massacre of nearly 150 students and staff of Army Public School Peshawar on this day is to look inwardly and shed any doubt that the militants must be fought to the end and not appeased.

This was stated by the Senator Farhatullah Babar president of the human rights cell of the PPPP while addressing the civil society demonstration in Islamabad Saturday evening to commemorate the APS martyrs. "December 16 is a dark day in the history of the country on this day that innocent students were martyred in a school in highly secured zone of the city and earlier in 1971 Pakistan broke into two after humiliating surrender in Dacca.

"Introspection and an admission of mistakes on such a day is no shame". The APS tragedy and the recent resurgence of terror in the country is a reminder that state's security and foreign policies have failed as the non state actors are active once again are on a rampage with impunity, he said. Those who sought to placate the militants and negotiate peace with them last year have done incalculable damage to the nation and must be held accountable.

He said that soon after the APS tragedy all political parties and institutions devised a National Action Plan to fight the terrorists but it has not been implemented. The Commission set up to inquire into the massacre of scores of lawyers some time back in Quetta headed by Justice Qazi Faez Isa stated it in no uncertain terms.

There is need to implement the recommendations of that Commission, he said. A closure of the tragedy will not be achieved without answering some fundamental questions about the APS attack repeatedly asked by the heirs of the victims, he said. On this day let us also reiterate that terrorists are terrorists without any distinction of good or bad and they must be dealt with an iron hand and not appeased.

Short-term inflation surges past 43 per cent

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's short-term inflation surged 43.16 per cent in the week ending on Dec 14, primarily fuelled by pulses, rice and vegetables, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data showed Friday.

The weekly inflation remained above 41pc for the fifth week in a row as gas prices, electricity tariffs stood higher than a year ago. On an annual basis, the price of gas charges for Q1 increased (1108.59pc), cigarettes (93.22pc), chillies powder (81.74pc), wheat flour (81.40pc), garlic (71.17pc), rice basmati broken (64.30pc), rice IRR1-6/9 (60.64pc), gents sponge chappal (58.05pc), gents sandal (53.37pc), sugar (50.52pc), gur (50.42pc), and pulse mash (44.80pc).

Alvi: Insurance vital for welfare of community

F.P. Report

LAHORE: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that insurance is highly important for welfare of the community and humanity. He said this while addressing a seminar on 'Role of Insurance Ombudsman to Strengthen Business Sector', held at Governor's House, on Saturday. He said that collective efforts were required to increase quantum of insurance in the country for larger benefit of people.

He said that steps had been taken to formalise insurance for compassion of humans. Insurance was important in different ways but people did not trust the product, he said and added that there was need to bridge the trust gap. Basic concept behind insurance was community consciousness, he said and added that old age insurance was a state encouraged phenomenon. Dr Arif Alvi said, "Employees Old Age Benefits Institution is a social insurance institute while Benazir Income Support Programme is also a financial support scheme." He said that it was basic function of the government to provide

level playing field to all segments of society for better development.

The president said that Scandinavian countries get high taxes and give more benefits, adding that if any country follow prejudices, this was not good at all. He said, "Elite exploitation and capitalism culture actually create unevenness in society." He said that world's few rich people hold almost 50 per cent wealth of the world. Dr Arif Alvi said our beloved Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) taught us about the essence behind charity and he added that alms-giving was all about compassion towards humanity.

He said that Islamic laws were community related, adding that Islamic society was all about living in a society where love and care of each other could be practised. He said that he used to think that wherever there was a democracy there would be compassion towards humanity, but situation in Gaza was totally opposite. He said the world should consider brown and black people equally. The president said that economic deprivations actually make generations lethargic.

Dr Arif Alvi said that it was vital to inform people about Insurance Ombudsman that it was one stop shop for solution to their problems.

He further said that he was also listening to appeals himself so that backlog could be cleared. Hazrat Umar (RA) taught us that decision of cases of people coming from far-flung areas should be done swiftly, relevant authority should contest case of the poor and uneducated people, decision should be revisited if any wrong was done, and the decisions should be implemented immediately, Arif Alvi said and added that all these guidelines needed to be implemented for provision of justice.

Insurance was contributing 0.85 per cent to the country's GDP, while this percentage was higher in other countries, he added. He said that decisions made by the Insurance Ombudsman should be highlighted to create awareness among people. Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce Vice President Riffat Malik, Federal Insurance Ombudsman Dr Muhammad Khawar Jameel also spoke.

SC's verdict lay to rest conspiracies: Siraj

F.P. Report

GUJRANWALA: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sirajul Haq has said that the Supreme Court verdict on general elections was commendable as it laid to rest conspiracies and doubts surrounding delays in the polls.

Addressing a road caravan in Gujranwala on Saturday, he said that it was now the responsibility of the Election Commission to ensure free and fair general elections on February 8, earning respect from the nation. The caravan organized by the JI received a warm welcome at various reception points throughout the city.

Sirajul Haq emphasized that Pakistan was not established to be governed by family rules. He criticized former ruling parties as dynasties that prioritized personal interests over national service.

He attributed the country's numerous problems to the inept governments of PML-N, PPP, and PTI. Referring to December 16, the JI chief noted that the day marked two tragedies for the nation: the country's division and the APS Peshawar incident. He asserted that unity among the nation and honest leadership were essential to putting Pakistan on the right track. He emphasized that defeating terrorism

required not only the efforts of the army and police but also a government with public support.

Siraj dismissed the notion that tested parties could provide solutions to the country's problems, urging the nation to choose JI for a change in its destiny. He declared February 8 as a golden opportunity for the people to rid themselves of status quo parties. If voted to power, the JI would bring about the real change, he vowed. JI Central Punjab chapter Emir Javed Kasuri also addressed the gathering on the occasion. District Emir Mazhar Iqbal Randhawa was also present.

SC issues written order after ECP's schedule

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has issued the written order for its yesterday's hearing on the petition submitted by the Election Commission of Pakistan against the decision of the Lahore High Court which had stayed the appointment of District Returning Officers (DROs), Returning Officers (ROs) and Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) from the executive.

In the written order, the Supreme Court sought an explanation from the PTI additional secretary general and petitioner Umair Niazi on contempt of court. The SC asked why contempt of court should not be taken against Umair Niazi under Article 204 and the Contempt of Court Ordinance, 2003 for disregarding the apex court's November 3 order regarding the conduct of general elections on Feb 8, 2024. The poll date was mutually agreed upon in a meeting between the President and the Election Commission of Pakistan.

According to the SC order, the Lahore High Court's decision has been suspended as the high court can't take further action related to the ROS, DROs and AROs. The order said that the LHC judge acted beyond his territorial jurisdiction and without referring to the Supreme Court's judgement. The Supreme Court, on the request of the Election Commission, issued notices to the federal government, the attorney general, and the provincial advocate generals.

It also issued a notice to Umair Niazi. The Supreme Court summoned all the parties after the winter break. Earlier, acting in

compliance with the Supreme Court order, the Election Commission of Pakistan last night issued the election schedule for the upcoming February 8 polls. As per the ECP notification, nomination papers will be filed from the 20th to 22nd of this month. The names of the nominated candidates would be published on 23rd while the scrutiny process to be held from 24th to 30th. The last date to file appeals against rejection or acceptance of papers will be 3rd of next month, which will be decided by Appellate Tribunals till 10th. The revised list of candidates will be published on 11th of next month and candidates may withdraw their papers till 12th. Election Commission will allot election symbols to political parties on 13th of next month while polling to be held on 8th of February.

No plan for raising tax on salaries: IMF

ISLAMABAD (INP): The resident representative of International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Pakistan has clarified that the lending body has no plan to urge Pakistan to increase taxes on salaries, business income and media reports in this connection are baseless.

It should be mentioned here that there have been reports in media that the IMF asked Pakistan to cut the number of tax slabs for the salaried and business class from the existing seven to four, increasing tax incidence on the middle and upper-middle income group. There have also been reports of an increase in the maximum petroleum development levy. IMF's resident representative in Pakistan Esther Perez Ruiz said that there have been such plan under consideration.

The South Asian nation was operating under a caretaker government after an IMF loan programme, approved in July, helped avert a sovereign debt default. Under the \$3 billion standby arrangement (SBA), Pakistan received \$1.2 billion from the IMF as the first tranche in July.

Under the bailout deal, the IMF also got Pakistan to raise \$1.34 billion in new taxation to meet fiscal adjustments. The measures fuelled all time high inflation of 38% year-on-year in May, the highest in Asia, which still is hovering above 30%. Earlier, the Pakistani government has given assurance to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on maintaining the power sector's circular debt at Rs2.31 trillion.

The Power Division presented the details before the Senate Standing Committee for Power today. The caretaker federal government assured the IMF to maintain the circular debt of the power sector. The session of the Senate Standing Committee for Power was held under the chair of Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar. In a briefing, the Power Division officials said that the circular debt stood at Rs2.31 trillion by June 2023 which will be maintained.

IHC rejects plea

ISLAMABAD (INP): Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Amir Farooq on Saturday has officially dismissed the plea challenging the constituencies of NA-53 and PP-10 of Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan.

The written decision, issued on Saturday, emphasized that there are no legal issues with the Election Commission's delineation of NA-53 and PP-10 constituencies. The Chief Justice ruled that judicial intervention is unnecessary, stating that the Election Commission faces various objections during the delimitation process, and detailed reasons are not mandatory for each objection.

KP CM announces Quantum Valley in Abbottabad, Haripur

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice Retired Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, on Saturday visited District Haripur and Abbottabad, and spent a very busy day.

During his visit the Chief Minister paid visits to various higher education institutions including Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute of Applied Sciences, Haripur University and Abbottabad University of Science & Technology, and inaugurated a number of developmental projects worth billion rupees which include students hostel in Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute, Examination Block in Haripur University and two academic block in Abbottabad University of Science and Technology.

Addressing as chief guests the inauguration ceremonies in these institutions, the Chief Minister announced to set up Quantum Valley in Abbottabad and Haripur districts on the analogy of Silicon Valley of United States wherein modern trainings and education would be imparted to the youth in the field of Information & Communication Technology, Artificial Intelligence and industrial technologies with its branches in other districts of the province as well.

The Chief Minister stressed upon the higher education Institutes to change the traditional scheme of education and training, and align it with the market demands of the modern world so that the graduates are able to get respectable jobs not only in the national markets but in international markets as well adding that unfortunately, the graduates of the traditional education are often jobless which causes depression and frustration for them, and resultantly they get involved in negative activities.

Arshad Hussain Shah termed Human Resource as of vital importance for sustainable national development of any country and remarked that we can make our youth a real asset by imparting them markets oriented skills and training which otherwise will turn into a liability for us adding that we, as a nation, need to work on emergency basis with an ambitious and aggressive plan in this regard.

Touching upon the line of action of his government to this end, the Chief Minister

maintained that as caretaker Chief Minister his basic job was to assist the Election Commission of Pakistan in holding free, fair and transparent elections which he would definitely do but side by side he would spend every single day of his tenure doing something positive to mitigate the miseries of the general public and especially the young lot.

"Education is our top priority and youth is our main focus, and our motto is Skill and Will to Youth to Work with Respect and Responsibility", Arshad Hussain remarked and added that the caretaker government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under its Khush Hall Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Initiative, has chalked out an ambitious and aggressive plan to export five lac humans resource to various countries during next one year.

He continued that under the Human Resource Export Strategy, the provincial government, in collaboration with various universities and technical & vocational training institutes, will arrange short term and long term IT and AI based crash courses for youth as per the demands of international markets to enable them compete for jobs in international markets, adding that admissions in such crash course would be announced very soon.

He urged upon the higher education institutions to come forward, join their hands together with the provincial government and play their role in achieving the set targets for human capital export and said that though the time is too short and there is a lot to do but when there is determination and passion then a lot of work can be done in a short time even, and together we can make this dream come true.

He made it clear that under the human capital export program, the Newly Merged Districts and the southern district would be given top priority as these areas are affected by terrorism and hence need special attention of the government. Special Assistant to CM on Planning and Development Syed Sarfaraz Sha, Secretary Health, Mahmood Aslam, Commissioner Hazara, Zaheerul Islam, Regional Police Officer Hazara and other high ranked officials accompanied the Chief Minister during the visit.



ABBOTTABAD: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah distributing laptops among university students.

Repatriation of Afghan nationals underway

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The authorities are actively continuing the process of repatriating Afghan residents who are illegally staying in various cities of the country.

Govt's statistics indicate that on December 15, another 1,854 Afghan nationals left their country, including 523 men, 394 women, and 926 children among those returning to Afghanistan, 114 vehicles

were used, involving 235 families. It is worth noting that even before the announcement by the Pakistani government, a significant number of illegal Afghan nationals had been returning to Afghanistan from Pakistan due to the fear of widespread arrests.

On December 15, 2023, 1854 Afghan citizens, including 534 men, 394 women, and 926 children, left for their country. The

cumulative total of illegal Afghans departing Pakistan has now reached 433,518.

However, according to official statistics as of December 14, a total of 431,431 Afghan nationals have returned to the country. It is evident that, like the rest of the country, Karachi also had many illegally residing individuals. Smuggling and extortion were quite common due to illegal non-citizens in Karachi.