

Amir resigns as MD
ISLAMABAD (INP): Amir Fida Paracha has formally stepped down from his role as the Managing Director of Pakistan Baitul Mal. The announcement of his resignation was made public through a statement released in Islamabad on Tuesday. Speaking on the matter, Aamir Fida expressed that his decision to resign was made in accordance with the directives of the party leadership.

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QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar launching Electronic Public Procurement System of Balochistan.

The Frontier Post

— Govt taking multiple initiatives to streamline governance structure of Balochistan

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday pointed out the seriousness of out-of-school children issue which warranted collective efforts for its redressal as properly educated people could transform a human society.

He said in the future, no society would be able to exist without education and knowledge, and stressed that students should have realization for the changes shaping the human societies. During an interaction with the students of different universities of the Balochistan province, PM Kakar said that the out-of-school children issue was a social issue which had two aspects and according to his view, they required to ponder as to what steps should be taken to make the education accessible to such kids.

He stressed upon utilization of existing infrastructure and enhancement of teachers' capacity building, besides increasing the outreach of education. The prime minister suggested that about 10 million Pakistani diaspora, living in different parts of the globe, could play their part in overcoming the out-of-school children issue. If they gave commitment to educate at least five children with their minimum donation, that amount could prove huge for catering to the needs the uneducated children.

With such initiative, the other countries and stakeholders would look towards the move as positive and would be supplementing in those efforts, he opined. The caretaker prime minister, to another query, replied that career counseling should be introduced at universities, keeping in view the contemporary needs of the local industry and particularly in the region, and cited the massive construction work being undertaken in

the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which required skilled manpower.

He also expressed the hope that the upcoming government would focus and improve the skill development capacity of the people by taking different steps. The caretaker prime minister, referring to the trade and economic potential of the region, said trillions of dollars trade was expected in the region. For example, the member states of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) had the population of about 500 million, which meant about half of the quarter of world's population resided there which gave it a central position in the world.

To a question, he opined that political stability would be achieved after the upcoming parliaments completed their respective stints. The democratic system would settle down and amplify the economic strength in future, he said, adding the functional democracy was linked with the economic strength. He also underscored the significance of the efficient system for collecting and spending taxes.

The prime minister expressed the optimism that he was very much hopeful that different challenges faced by the country would be addressed in a gradual and rational manner, and the students would be the main ingredients in the achievement of those goals. Prime Minister Kakar encouraged the students of the province, saying that they possessed huge potential and could compete and excel when compared with other developed areas of the country and even with the best educational institutions of the world.

He stressed that they should evaluate their efforts as to what they had contributed towards the betterment of the society. Responding to a question, he said in the Constitution of Pakistan, no person or group could

Tareen receives papers

ISLAMABAD (INP): Patron In-chief of Istekham-e-Pakistan Party Jahangir Tareen received nomination papers to contest the general elections 2024 from one National Assembly and two Punjab Assembly seats. The nomination papers were received by Tareen's legal team on his behalf. Jahangir Tareen has acquired nomination papers to contest elections from election from NA-155-Lodhran-II, PP-227 Lodhran-IV and PP-228 Lodhran-V.

Matt briskly condoles with Pakistani soldiers

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: When asked by *The Frontier Post* how the United States feels about the twenty one Pakistani soldiers killed by the Taliban using the American weapons left behind by the United States at time of US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Matthew Miller, the US State Department briskly stated that "we express our condolences to those who lost their lives."

It is pertinent to mention here that several months before the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, this correspondent had asked the Pentagon about the future of billion of dollars worth weapons the US was using.



The Pentagon did not reply to the question of *The Frontier Post* but on one occasion White House National Security spokesperson, John Kirby did reply to this correspondent that Pakistan did help with moving some helicopters.

To another question by *The Frontier Post* about the new trend in Afghanistan,

where now a days the trade of Opium is considered ok but Herion is considered Haram and that large supplies are taken out from Afghanistan through China, Matthew Miller stated that

"The primary not the sole but the primary responsibility for investigating and policing international drug trafficking rest of course with the Justice Department, and I would let them let them speak to that, but we do at the State Department here do play a role through our diplomatic engagements in pressing countries to do more to crack down on the trafficking of narcotics that have killed so many Americans and we'll continue to do so."

Hazara community's demand fulfilled, says Solangi

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Tuesday that long standing demand of Hazara community had been fulfilled by start of Hazargi language programmes at Pakistan Television Bolan from today.

Delivering his speech at the opening ceremony of "Hazargi language" programme on PTV Bolan, he said the PTV Bolan was already broadcasting programs in Balochi, Pashto and Brahvi languages. PTV Bolan broadcasts were available on cable and satellite, Murtaza Solangi said adding it could also be accessed through terrestrial antennas that would help people in remote areas too.

"We are grateful to Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar for encouraging us to take this initiative," Murtaza Solangi remarked. The minister said that PTV Multan telecast's duration had been extended to 24 hours earlier this month. With the addition of Kan Maitarai Rebroadcast Center, the number of transmitters of rebroadcast centers has increased from 22 to 23. "Our aim is to ensure equal representation of regional languages on PTV Bolan," Murtaza Solangi maintained.

ECP orders removal of Cheema as PM's adviser

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday ordered the removal of Adviser to the Prime Minister on Establishment Ahad Cheema from his post.

The commission issued the directives while hearing a petition seeking the removal of Cheema, Privatisation and Inter-provincial Coordination Minister Fawad Hassan Fawad and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr Tauqueer Hussain Shah from their posts. The petition filed by Advocate Syed Azizud Din Kaka Khel in October had said the transparency of elections was not possible due to these individuals being part of the caretaker government.

"If the government wants a transparent election, these people should be removed from their positions," the petition said. In the short order issued today, the ECP said that the petitioner's prayer for Cheema to be removed was "reasonable and is accepted" on the basis that the latter was a part of the previous government and could thus "influence the holding of free, fair and transparent elections" if he continued in his post.

Top lawyers bodies express distrust in CEC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Top lawyers' bodies of the country — Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) and Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) — have expressed distrust in Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikander Sultan Raja for holding free and transparent elections slated for February 8 next year.

In a statement on Tuesday, PBC Vice-Chairman Haroon-ur-Rashid and Chairman Executive Committee Hassan Raza Pasha asserted the crucial need for the general elections to proceed as planned on February 8, 2024. They emphasised the necessity of all political parties and independent candidates to be provided a level playing field and equal opportunities, ensuring transparency and fairness in the electoral process.

While expressing their serious concerns over the conduct of the CEC, regarding election procedures, delimitations, and seat allocations, they "highlighted the growing perception that in the presence of the incumbent CECP, elec-

tions cannot be conducted freely and transparently".

The PBC cited a "glaring example" of the allocation of two National Assembly seats to the CEC's own native district Jhelum, with a population of 1,382,000 approximately while district Hafizabad, with a population of around 320,000 is allocated only one seat.

"A similar imbalance is observed in the allocation of seats for District Rawalpindi. Despite its lower population compared to Gujranwala Division, an additional seat has been allocated, raising questions about the transparency of the electoral process," it added. The PBC said it is evident that the conduct of CEC Raja raises serious doubts about the integrity of the general elections, "presenting an environment that appears to lack transparency entirely".

In light of these circumstances, the PBC said it cannot turn a blind eye to these critical matters. The lawyers' body also called upon the Supreme Court of Pakistan to take notice of these discrepancies

"instead of endorsing every act" of the CEC.

"The PBC firmly believes that the primary objective is not merely holding elections but conducting them in a free, fair, and transparent manner, providing equal opportunities to all stakeholders." The PBC said it will soon convene an all Pakistan representative convention to formulate and announce a line of action and date for a lawyers' movement in consultation with SCBA.

"The aim is to ensure the cause of free, fair, and transparent general elections which is not possible in the presence of the incumbent Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan, as it seems, he has different codes for every political party or individual."

Responding to allegations, a spokesperson for the ECP said no new seat was carved out in the native constituency of the CEC. In a statement, the ECP spokesperson said CEC Raja's home constituency is NA-182 in Sargodha. The ECP will not "bow to any pressure or blackmailing," the statement added.

Pakistan facing economic challenges: Bilawal

F.P. Report

LAHORE/ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari attended an event in connection with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan at the Lahore High Court Bar. In his address, he thanked the Bar for giving him the opportunity to speak to the lawyers' fraternity. He said that the Lahore High Court and the Supreme Court are the crime scenes of the murder of Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Two generations have repeatedly come here to ask for justice. The murderer was Zia ul Haq, the judges of the Lahore High Court and the Supreme Court along with the lawyers, politicians and bureaucrats who played the role of the facilitators.

Bilawal said that he is

grateful to Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa and his brother judges for conducting a hearing of the Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Presidential Reference that had been sent by President Zardari twelve years ago. When our judges wash the stains that colour their own institutions, not only will they provide justice to us and our Jiyalas but also write in stone that no other Prime Minister is treated in such a way in the future, be it of the PML-N or the PTI.

This is the only way the country can prosper. We are the fifth-largest population in the world and our people are extremely hardworking and have shown that despite the destitute resources, we can compete with the rest of the world. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had united the Muslim Ummah and conducted a meeting of the OIC in this very city,

Lahore. Today, we are witnessing the barbaric treatment of our Palestinian brothers and sisters. The same treatment had been meted out to them earlier, but we had 'leaders' at the time. He made them realise the significance of oil, since he possessed the far-sightedness of a true visionary. As per the efforts of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Palestinian cause was clubbed with the providence of oil, and an embargo was set. Then, would we consider each and every leader involved in this decision, not dying a natural death, a mere coincidence? Pakistan was the first atomic power of the Muslim world. It was said that it is an 'Islamic Bomb'. However, this could not deter Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam and make him compromise on his beliefs and principles.

Russia boosts nuclear forces, says Putin

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that Moscow is upgrading its nuclear arsenal and keeping its strategic forces at the highest level of readiness as the West wages a "hybrid war" against it. Moscow would continue what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine, and all attempts to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia had crumbled, Putin told a conference of senior defence officials on Tuesday.

The Russian leader also accused the United States of exploiting Europe for its own interests and said his country planned no war on Europe. Russia would be prepared to talk to Ukraine, the US and Europe about the future of Ukraine if they wanted to, but Moscow would defend its national interests, Putin said.

"In Ukraine, those who are aggressive towards Russia, and in Europe and in the United States — do they

want to negotiate? Let them. But we will do it based on our national interests," he said. "We will not give up what is ours." Russia would proceed from its own interests when dealing with Ukraine, regardless of Kyiv's attempts to make any agreements, said Putin, who last week announced that his country's goals in Ukraine remain unchanged and there will be no peace until they are achieved.

Ukraine's membership of the NATO military alliance "is not acceptable for Russia in 10 years, and not in 20", he said. The president said Russia's defence industry has reacted to the conflict in Ukraine faster than that of the West. Meanwhile, Minister of Defence Sergey Shoigu told the same meeting that Russia had increased tank production by 5.6 times since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine last year, and had laid 7,000sq km (2,700sq

miles) of minefields along the 2,000km (1,250-mile) front line.

Moscow has demanded "denazification, demilitarisation and a neutral status" of Ukraine — which Putin has repeated since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Russia has alleged that Ukraine's government is heavily influenced by "radical nationalist" and neo-Nazi groups, which Kyiv and the West dispute.

The Russian government has also consistently demanded that Ukraine remain neutral and not join NATO. Putin announced that he will run in the March 2024 presidential election, in which the 71-year-old leader is almost certain to win a fifth term. He has been in power for 24 years, including his prime ministerial stint, and a victory next year will see him remain president until 2030. — Aljazeera

Army Chief, calls on Commander CENTCOM

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir met Commander US Central Command General Michael Erik Kurilla during his visit to CENTCOM Headquarters at Tampa Bay in Florida.

During the meeting, matters of shared interests, particularly cooperation in regional security matters came under discussion. Both sides discussed avenues of joint training and reiterated the need for enhancing training interactions between CENTCOM and Pakistan Army. General Syed Asim Munir also visited CENTCOM Joint Operations Center during the visit.

Imran moves IHC against indictment

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan on Tuesday challenged his indictment in cipher case and the entire proceedings by the special court — established under the Official Secrets Act — in the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

In his fresh petition, the PTI supreme said: "The learned trial court, while deciding the matter discussed in the petition, did not look into the true perspective of the facts and law which makes the impugned order and proceedings since 23/11/23 illegitimate/not-maintainable in the eye of law and liable to be set aside for the proper dispensation of justice."

The deposed premier further prayed that the operation of the impugned December 12 order and proceedings before the trial court be suspended in the "interest of justice" till the decision of the fresh petition. "Any other relief, which this honourable court deems fit and proper, may also be granted," read the petition.

CPWB Chairperson meets NCCR Chairperson

LAHORE (APP): Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CPWB) Chairperson Sarah Ahmed met with the National Commission on Child Rights (NCCR) Chairperson Ayesha Raza, here on Tuesday.

Various initiatives related to the protection of children's rights and joint ventures between both organization for children's welfare were discussed during the meeting.

The NCCR Chairperson also met with the minor employee Rizwana, who had been a victim of violence. Ayesha Raza praised the efforts of the Chairperson CPWB Sarah Ahmed for the treatment, rehabilitation, and well-being of Rizwana. Ayesha Raza acknowledged the special arrangements for violence victim Rizwana at the CPWB. The CPWB chairperson informed about the measures taken by the bureau for the protection of children's rights. In this regard, she expressed confidence in the collaboration and joint efforts between the two organizations. The meeting underscored the commitment to work together for the welfare and protection of children.

PSCA apprehends gang

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Safe City Authority (PSCA) apprehended a gang in response to the Emergency 15 call in the city on Tuesday.

According to a spokesperson for the authority, a call was received on Emergency 15 regarding snatching incidents in Millat Road Dholanwal area. The Safe City team immediately informed and dispatched PS Nawan Kot and PS Millat Park Police. Acting on the information provided by the Safe City, the police arrested 2 members of the gang who were identified as Rahman and Zaman.

Mushaal lauds COAS for raising Kashmir issue dispute in US

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick on Tuesday highly praised the successful visit of Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir to the United States during which he raised the longstanding Kashmir issue in a befitting manner.

Mushaal, in a statement, said that the COAS unequivocally conveyed to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that peace in South Asia would remain elusive until the resolution of Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of Kashmiri people, giving a fresh impetus to the Kashmir freedom movement and a testament that Pakistan stood firmly with the Kashmiri brothers and sisters in the struggle for right to self-determination. The SAPM lauded the COAS for strongly taking up the unilateral, unconstitutional and illegal actions of the Narendra Modi-led Indian government to change the special status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) at the highest level.

She said that the Indian government had crossed all limits of barbarism and terrorism to silence the dissenting voices within and outside of the country.

All the minority communities in India were being subjected to brutal state terrorism and coercive actions, which was evident from its global terrorist networks targeting people in Pakistan, Canada and even in the US, she added.

The SAPM urged the UN bodies and the world powers to pay attention to the report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) that had exposed the dirty and brutal face of India.

The USCIRF, she said, rightly demanded to the Biden administration to designate India as a "country of particular concern" under the US Religious Freedom Act, for targeting religious minorities overseas.

Mushaal said the report revealed that recent efforts by the Indian government to silence activists, journalists, and lawyers abroad posed a serious threat to religious freedom. She called upon the international community to shun the double-standards, and take punitive and decisive actions against the rogue Indian state to avert the possible human catastrophe, as it was fast spreading tentacles of its terrorist networks across the globe and became a threat to the world peace.

Mushaal made it clear that neither India nor Israel could defuse and suppress the ongoing freedom struggle of Kashmiris and Palestinians through their genocidal actions and use of ruthless power, as both the states had been exercising all options of state terrorism during the last seven decades but they failed to achieve the desired results rather than their merciless measures further ignited the flames of the freedom struggle in both the occupied territories. She underlined that it was high time, the world powers and human rights organizations should press the Indian and Israeli states to stop their genocidal actions and accept the birth rights of people of Kashmir and Palestine.

Salih Zakhoi calls on Ahmad Shah

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Brigadier General Salih Zakhoi, the military attaché of the Iraqi Embassy in Pakistan, met with Muhammad Ahmad Shah, Sindh's caretaker minister for information, minority affairs, and social protection, in his office.

Secretary of Information for Sindh, Nadeem ur Rehman Memon, along with Sohail Farpoo and Atif Farooqui, were also present on this occasion.

In the meeting, matters of mutual interest were discussed, including trade, busi-

ness, and cultural exchanges, aiming to fortify the brotherly relations between Pakistan and Iraq.

Additionally, the proposal for a sea travel facility between Pakistan and Iraq, catering to the convenience of pilgrims, was deliberated upon.

It was mutually agreed that approximately two and a half lakh Pakistani pilgrims travel to Iraq annually. The reinstatement of the sea travel facility from Pakistan to Basra could offer cost-effective transportation for a substantial number of pilgrims.

Awareness workshop on drug use, HIV held

KARACHI (APP): The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination in collaboration with Ministry of Narcotics Control (MONC), UNODC, UNDP, UNAIDS and WHO organized an awareness workshop on 'Drug Use and HIV' here on Tuesday to create awareness among health journalists on drug abuse, HIV AIDS, HIV prevention among people who inject drugs (PWIDs), harm reduction and OAMT.

The one-day workshop was attended by representatives of key media houses and prominent health journalists.

Dr. Farrukh Mahmood from UNODC welcomed all the participants and said that the workshop was being organized to create awareness on drug use and drug use related HIV, the various interventions/approaches for drug dependence treatment and prevention of HIV and blood borne infections transmission among PWIDs.

Joint Secretary, Ministry of Narcotics Controlm Shahzad Durrani in his opening remarks, emphasized on the need of collective and coordinated efforts to deal with the menace of HIV among PWIDs. He mentioned that drug problem was emerging as a threat to health of the people.

There is social and economic impact of drug use on families, society and country. The financial situation of the families of the drug users has an impact on family nutrition and education. The family of the drug user is socially isolated because of the stigma attached to drug use, he expressed and said, children become vulnerable to drug use due to presence of drugs in the household. "Drug use increases the burden on health services, not only related to drug treatment but also other health problems including Hepatitis B, C and HIV". The drugs and HIV problem requires a comprehensive multisectoral response from various departments and sectors, he added. He urged all sectors to play their role in drug use prevention and assured the support of the Ministry of Narcotics Control in all efforts for prevention of drug use and for prevention of HIV among PWIDs.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Sikandar Memon, Additional Director CDC-HIV, Sindh province said that the Provincial Health Department was taking all possible steps to prevent the spread of HIV among key populations and for care of support of those who were living with HIV.

Dr. Umair Malik, National AIDS Control Programme presented a brief background of HIV and AIDS epidemic in the country and shared other dynamics of this deadly and silent disease.

He said the Government of Pakistan is committed to halt the disease and putting all resources with the support of provincial AIDS Control Programs as well as UN partners and Global Fund for fight AIDS TB and Malaria. He shared that over the last decade, the disease was concentrated in certain key populations like injecting drug users, male sex workers and transgender. He added that the epidemic in drug users in Pakistan was alarmingly high, adding that OAMT was being implemented in many countries for prevention of HIV spread among PWID and the results showed that HIV transmission had reduced in many countries due to harm reduction interventions including OAMT.

The participants were briefed that drugs use had social and economic impact on families, society and country and the financial situation of the families of the drug users had an impact on family nutrition and education. The family of the drug user is socially isolated because of the stigma attached to drug use. Increased crime is also associated with drug use. There is high vulnerability of children to drug use due to presence of drug use in the family. Drug use increases the burden on health services, not only related to their drug treatment but also other health problems including Hepatitis B and C and HIV.

As drug problem requires a comprehensive multi-sectoral response from various departments/sectors.

There is low level of awareness about harms associated with drug use and a serious need to raise awareness on drugs prevention including harms associated with drug use. Drug treatment services need to be strengthened both in terms of quality of drug treatment and coverage of treatment services.

MONHSR&C, MONC and UNODC have developed "Drug treatment protocols" and "Drug treatment guidelines" for Pakistan. Several trainings based on the treatment guidelines were arranged for the treatment centres staff from the Government as well as private/NGO run drug treatment facilities. Risk behaviors (including sharing syringes and sexual risk behaviors) of drug users increase their vulnerability to HIV.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (retd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah talking to a delegation of local government officials.

CM urges PM to allocate rightful portion of natural gas to Sindh for smooth industrial activities

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar has urged Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq to allocate Sindh its rightful portion of natural gas under Article 158 of the Constitution, so that the industrial and business activities in the province may be carried out smoothly.

In a DO letter addressed to the prime minister, CM Baqar said that Sindh was facing an acute shortage of gas in all industrial zones, first, due to its complete closure for two days every week (Saturday and Sunday) and secondly, because of deplorably low pressure for the remaining days.

The CM pointed out that the situation has crippled the industrial and business activities in the province. "The industrial and business community has been imploring an uninter-

rupted supply of gas with full pressure; however, there has been no favourable response from the concerned authorities," he told the PM and said that since the foreign exchange reserves of Pakistan have already dipped to \$12.302 billion, the shortage of gas has only aggravated this situation as exporters are unable to meet the deadlines.

According to the excerpt of the letter, the CM told the prime minister that Article 158 of the Constitution was quite clear that the first right of usage of gas was for that province where it is produced: the province of Sindh generates 65 per cent of the total gas of the country. He said that in previous years, 211 mmcf gas was allotted to SNGP instead of SSGC in violation of Article 158, which should now be diverted back to SSGC.

The CM urged the PM that the production from new wells was being

allotted in violation of the historical practice of a 50:50 ratio that was the allocation of Mari Field. "Sindh is also being compelled to buy RLNG (imported gas) which is violative of the Constitution, because the province is not obligated to offer gas to other provinces, except what is available as surplus," the CM said.

Justice Baqar urged the prime minister that the closure of gas for two days a week (Saturday and Sunday) in all industrial zones may be done away with, and uninterrupted gas with full pressure be ensured. He said that Sindh may be provided its due share of natural gas as constitution so that industrial and business activities could flourish.

The interim CM urged the caretaker prime minister to direct the concerned authorities to resolve the serious issue of gas in the larger interest of the province.

CM drives Punjab's high-protein fodder export to Kuwait

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired a meeting in which an important decision was made to export high-protein fodder from Punjab to Kuwait.

The meeting approved measures to enhance the cultivation of high-protein "alfalfa" fodder for livestock development, emphasizing the scientific drying and preservation of this nutrient-rich feed.

Plans to provide seeds to farmers for cultivating "alfalfa" fodder and exploring various proposals for breed insemination to boost

dairy development were also discussed.

Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi directed the full functionality of the Food Research Center in Sargodha to augment the production of high-protein fodder, aiming to capitalize on the potential for increased beef and mutton exports. He highlighted discussions during his visit to Kuwait, where the export of high-protein fodder and the demand for dry fodder from Kuwait were the key points of consideration.

The meeting was told that positive outcomes of disease-free compartment in Punjab were reported.

Emphasizing the necessity of modern technology and local expertise for livestock development, the CM stressed the importance of attracting local farms to adopt model farming techniques.

The meeting was attended by Provincial Minister Ibrahim Hasan Murad, chairman planning and development, secretary agriculture, secretary wildlife, secretary livestock, secretary transport, and others.

LESCO to complete digitisation soon

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) is all set to complete its digital transformation soon.

The LESCO Strategic Planning and IT Steering Committee's Convenor Ali Ayaz Sadiq stated this while chairing the committee meeting here at LESCO Headquarter on Tuesday. LESCO Board of Directors (BoD) Chairman Hafiz Mian Muhammad Nauman, CEO Engineer Shahid Haider, the BoD members and officers concerned attended the meeting.

The meeting focused on crucial aspects such as the implementation of an ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system and the agenda for procurement, switching over from manual to online processes for critical functions within LESCO.

Minister for increasing milk, meat production

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Minister for Livestock Ibrahim Hassan Murad, during a meeting held at Planning and Development's committee room on Tuesday, reviewed the measures of increasing meat and milk production in Punjab. P&D Chairman Iftikhar Ali Sahu co-chaired the meeting with the minister.

Livestock Secretary Dr. Masood Anwar gave a detailed briefing and said that a special committee has been formed on the instructions of the Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab, whose responsibility includes presenting the final plan to increase exports.

Dr. Masood presenting various suggestions, said that there is a need to continue the Pakistan Animal Identification

System (PAITS) program, while the budget of the Livestock department needs to be increased to achieve the target, but more budget is required for medicines and de-worming, along with DCC, Disease Control Compartment would have to be created more.


Addressing the meeting, the minister said that the Livestock department has to take the average of milk from five to nine liters while everyone has to contribute for the development of the livestock sector. He directed to make such a policy that the small farmer is not affected, but the increase in meat and milk exports should be target.

In the Court of Jehangir Khan Judge Banking Court-II Federal Judicail Complex Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar Case No: 122/1 Next Date: 15-1-2024 Suit for recovery of Rs.2,82,483/- HBL Mardan Branch Vs. Zeeshan Amin. Notice Versus:1) Zeeshan Amin S/o Noor ul Amin Sikandari Road Sikandari Korona Mardan Distt Mardan. Where is the plaintiff Bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs.2,82,483/- against you under section 10(2) of the Financial institutions (Recovery of Finance) Ordinance 2001. You are herby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/ publication of the notice in the newspaper filling which an expertee decree shall be passed in favor of the plaintiff Bank with costs.

Banking Court-II Peshawar



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali talking to a 40-member delegation from District Mohmand at Governor's House.



پاکستان بول ایوی ایشن اتھارٹی

PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

CORRIGENDUM INVITATION TO BID

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

S. No.	Description & Bid No.	Bid Fee (PKR)	Fixed Bid Security (PKR)	Bid Submission Date/Time	Bid Opening Date/Time/Place	Last date for issuance of Bidding Documents	Basis PKR (Price)
01.	Procurement of Multi Service Access Transport Solution (Multiplexer) for JIAP Karachi (Testing, Installation /commissioning) HQCAA/1992/224/XXLN	2,500/-	Rs. 2,000,000/-	03-01-2024 1030 Hours	03-01-2024 1100 Hours Log. Center (S) (Log. ANS Branch)	02-01-2024	F.O.R.
02.	Procurement of Multi Service Access Transport Solution (Multiplexer) for AliAP Lahore (Testing, Installation /commissioning) HQCAA/1992/225/XXLN	1,500/-	Rs. 325,000/-	03-01-2024 1100 Hours	03-01-2024 1130 Hours Log. Center (S) (Log. ANS Branch)	02-01-2024	F.O.R.

All other clauses would remain the same. This corrigendum is also available on PPRA website.

Additional Director, Logistics (ANS),
Logistics Center (South), HQs Civil Aviation Authority,
JIAP Karachi Pakistan Tel: 021-9907-2265 Fax: 021-99242675
www.caa-pakistan.com.pk

PID(K)#1808/23

Steps being taken for development

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam has said that steps have been taken to usher tribal areas into new phase of progress and to address deprivations of tribal people.

He was talking to thirty five member delegation of Mohmand tribal district. The delegation was led by Malik Shehryar Khan. Speaking on the occasion, Governor said that provincial and federal governments have taken steps for the development and progress of merged tribal districts.

Governor highlighted sacrifices of tribal people for the peace of country and to strengthen its sovereignty.

He also urged youngsters to counter narrative of elements that are targeting state institutions and added that it is prime responsibility to each and every citizen to join hands for protection of motherland.

The delegation informed governor about their problems relating to transport, health, education and other basic amenities.

The governor listened to their problems and assured cooperation to resolve them and stressed use of modern technology to tap potential of tribal area.

A delegation of local government representatives of North Waziristan also called on governor and discussed their problems with him. Governor also assured them cooperation to convey their concerns to relevant authorities.

Governor also met with a delegation of Artists Action Foundation that included Tariq Jamal, Shazman Haleem, Waisai Khial and others. The governor also met with a delegation of Sind and discussed with them matters of mutual importance.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary KP Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and Additional Chief Secretary Abid Majeed visiting Central Jail Peshawar.

District Returning Officers took oath of office

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Election Commissioner, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shamshad Khan administered oath to 36 District Returning Officers (DROs) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tuesday.

The Provincial Election Commissioner took oath during the training of District Returning Officers.

Shamshad Khan urged the District Returning Officers to perform their duties as election officials as per election rules.

He said that the District Returning Officers should ensure the conduct of transparent elections by utilizing all resources.

The Provincial Election Commissioner asked the DROs not to take into account any political pressure in conducting the elections.

The Provincial Election Commissioner further said that the Election Commission assures full cooperation for conducting transparent elections. Provincial Election Commissioner

Meanwhile, Chief Secretary, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry also visited the training session of DROs.

Malgary Wakeelan arranged protests

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Malgary Wakeelan arranged protest against partiality of Judges in Peshawar High Court (PHC) toward one political party at the cost of other petitioners and held rally from the court's premises to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Assembly, on Tuesday.

Awami National Party (ANP) lawyer wing named Malgary Wakeelan provincial president Ahmad Farooq Advocate argued that the judges may not make PHC a political court. This he claimed while talking to media personnel and added that High Court should disseminate justice equally to all citizens despite favoring one political party.

The lawyers threatened that if their demands will not fulfilled then they will arrange protest on larger scale across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after three days. The lawyer displayed banners and chanted slogans for impartiality of judiciary for establishment of Rule of Law in the society.

A quarrel was happened among Insaf Lawyer Forum and Malgary Wakeelan in which on advocate of ANP was injured while they also arranged protest on jail road. PTI's lawyers stormed into bar room while legal fraternity members mediated among the groups.

DC for completion of arrangements of polls

PESHAWAR (INP): The Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Afaq Wazir has directed the officials concerned for in time completion of all the arrangements for the polls.

Chairing an important meeting regarding the conduct of the general election 2024, the Deputy Commissioner directed chalking out of a comprehensive plan to ensure all the arrangements especially the training of polling staff, deployment of staff, provision of required facilities at polling stations, transport and security for the elections, said a hand out issued here Tuesday.

He directed all the Returning Officers to ensure implementation of the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan in letter and spirit. The meeting was attended by the Returning Officers of Peshawar including District Election Commissioner Peshawar Hayatullah Jan.



PESHAWAR: PPP leader Syed Zahir Ali Shah along with members of ANP's central committee talking to media. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

ANP grants majority tickets to youth on 90% seats

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Awami National Party (ANP) has granted tickets to 90% for general elections scheduled on 8th February in which majority of candidates are educated youth including Arbab Zain Umar nominated for NA-30 Peshawar.

According to details, Arbab Zain Umar is son of prominent politician Arbab Khalid Umar and graduated from Heriot Watt Scotland University. He is known as successful businessman in federal capital Islamabad, Pakistan.

ANP Candidate from NA-30 is nephew of former Nazim Town-IV and relative of former Federal Minister Late Arbab Noor Muhammad, former MNA Arbab Amir and Arbab Muhammad Zahir Khan.

It is worthy to mention retired bureaucrat Late Gulzar Khan also elected from the constituency while youth is hopeful for success of educate Arbab Zain Umar.

CS inspects Central Jail Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and Additional Chief Secretary, Abid Majeed on Tuesday visited Central Jail Peshawar and inspected its various sections.

He was received by Inspector General Prisons, Usman Mehsud. During visit, CS was briefed about problems of inmates, and the facilities being provided to them.

He was told that vocational center has been established in jail to train inmates in different skills enabling them to earn livelihood after release.

The CS also met with prisoners and listened to their problems. He was briefed that a system has been established for court proceedings of prisoners through video link.

Afterwards CS visited mental hospital in jail and directed authorities to transfer the facility to designated location. He appreciated jail administration for their efforts and directed to further improve cleanliness in the jail.

Police unveil plan to combat crimes

PESHAWAR (APP): Superintendent Police (SP) Osama Amin Cheema of Fakraabad division on Tuesday conducted a crime meeting with police officers to ensure the protection of citizens' lives and property.

Emphasizing zero tolerance for compromises on public safety, a comprehensive strategy was devised, focusing on hotspots and trouble points to eliminate street crimes.

The implemented plan includes information-based search operations, surprise raids, increased police patrols, intensified efforts to combat drug trafficking, and accelerating crackdowns against wanted criminals.

The SP directed the acceleration of the crackdown on narcotics and the prompt resolution of public social issues.

He stressed the importance of raising awareness among the public and finding timely solutions to their problems.

Six associate professor promoted

PESHAWAR (APP): The KP government has promoted six female associate professors of higher education department to Grade 20 following recommendations of Provincial Selection Board.

According to details, Mst Ali Nisar, Bibi Salma, Mst Aida Khanum, Yasmin Begum, Saira Ilyas and Azra Khatoon have been promoted to Grade 20.

Their postings and transfers would be notified later, said a statement issued by KP Establishment Department here on Tuesday.



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

Arms manufacturing unit discuss uplift of sector with KP Minister

PESHAWAR (APP): A representative of Shaheen Arms Engineering, a local private Sporting Hunting Arms Manufacturing Company, Shaheen Arms Engineering, Shaheen Khan, called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Dr. Aamer Abdullah, here at his office in Peshawar on Tuesday and discussed with him matters regarding the possible development of local sporting hunting arms industries.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Javed Iqbal Khattak was also present on the occasion.

During the meeting, the representative of said industry said that his company manufactures hunting and sporting arms and other related equipment at Kohat Road in Peshawar, which exports to Tanzania, Nigeria, Canada, Philippines and Kuwait.

He said that due to the best quality and modernity, their products are getting recognition in the international market, while in this regard, the Ministry of Commerce cooperation is needed for presentation their products in international arms exhibitions for the promotion of domestic exports through this industry.

He further said that for the development of this industry, the government should provide tax exemptions in the import of modern machinery and support in importing raw materials and related parts so that the production of international level sporting hunting arms can be made here at the local level which can make possible to bring more foreign exchange to the country.

On this occasion, the caretaker minister, while appreciating the efforts of the local arms manufacturing company for hunting, said that he would provide all possible support to the Association of said industries in this regard.

He appreciated the performance of the company in manufacturing various types of advanced and technology based supporting hunting weapons.

Izhar Ullah Khalil vows to work for party's uplift in PK-78

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Izhar Ullah Khalil, the provincial leader of Awami National Party (ANP), has thanked the provincial president of ANP Aimal Wali Khan and other party's senior leadership for awarding him a ticket for contesting Provincial Assembly seat PK-78 Peshawar.

Lauding the central and provincial leadership decision, Izhar Ullah Khalil while issuing a news statement on Tuesday said that the party's leadership has taken an admirable decision that will be proved beneficial for the party in coming days.

He said he had worked a lot for the party in the area and leave no stone unturned to work for people's issues as well.

The ticket holder Izhar Ullah Khalil is said to have good reputation by resolving disputes among people and also take part in social activities. He said it is a proud moment for him to be given the ticket for PK-78 as there were so many senior leaders of the party in the area who did not secure the provincial ticket for the said constituency.

He clearly stated he would initiate a campaign after being given ticket and already held several activities in which locals of the area have joined ANP and expressed confidence in the leadership of Aimal Wali Khan.

Chairman Board of Governors visits Khyber College of Dentistry

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Chairman of the Board of Governors, Dr. Umar Ayub Khan, visited Khyber College of Dentistry. He received a warm welcome from Dean KCD, Prof. Dr. Syed Nasir Shah, and all the faculty members, which he appreciated. During the meeting, important discussions took place which included regarding establishment of a Basic Sciences Department that will provide a strong foundation in natural phenomena and the processes of Dentistry.

Additionally, to introduce an Emergency Ward to offer immediate medical attention to patients requiring emergency treatment, to start the commencement of an Oral Medicine Postgraduate Program that will provide cutting-edge diagnosis and medical treatment for conditions of the mouth, face, salivary glands, and jaw bones. Our commitment to quality patient care and outcomes is evident in our submission of monthly Clinical Audit Reports. Through systematic reviews of care against explicit criteria, we are constantly seeking to improve and enhance patient care.

During the Q&A session, Chairman BOG answered several questions on the spot, including solving the grading structure and discussing the benefits of the MTI Act regarding job security, educational

leaves, accommodations, allowances, and parking issues. Lastly, Chairman BOG urged the attendees to submit their proposals for promotional issues, which he would present to the election commission and discuss in the next meeting.

KP Education Dept announces schedule of winter vacations

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Education Department on Tuesday announced the schedule of winter vacations for government schools of plain and mountainous areas.

As per announcement, the government schools in the plains areas of province will be closed from December 23 to 31. Meanwhile, educational institutions in the winter zone are scheduled to remain closed for an extended period, spanning from December 23 to February 29.

The schools located in the cold mountainous areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) will have two and a half months of winter vacation.

The Education Department decision aims to ensure the safety and well-being of students during the winter season.

ICP announces winter vacations from December 22 to 30: The Islamia college Peshawar (ICP) on Tuesday announced vacations from December 22 to 30 at ICP and its affiliated institutions.

A notification issued here said that the already issued schedules of examinations, tests, interviews would remain unchanged and all the non-teaching staff would remain on duty accordingly.

Four members Afghan phone snatching gang busted

PESHAWAR (APP): Hayatabad police on Tuesday claimed to have arrested a four-member hardcore gang of street criminals and recovered expensive mobile phones from their possession.

Police said in the wake of frequent incidents of mobile phone snatching, a team under the headship of SHO Hayatabad was formed to arrest the culprits.

The police team while working on scientific lines started surveillance of the habitual criminals and those released from prisons recently.

The police got a breakthrough when the ring-leader of an active street criminal gang was arrested. The arrested gang leader, named Himmat Khan, an Afghan national, told the names of his three accomplices to the police during interrogation.

The police succeeded in arresting all the named street criminals.

Police said the four members of the mobile snatching gang were identified as Himmat Khan (Ring leader), Bilal, Idrees and Raj Dar adding that all the four street criminals belonged to the neighboring country of Afghanistan.

During the investigation, police recovered 19 precious mobile phones from the possession of the arrested criminals who have confessed to their criminal activities during interrogation. Police have also recovered crime weapons and motorcycles from these criminals.

The gang also confessed to shifting a consignment of the snatched mobile phones to Afghanistan and said the second consignment was ready to be smuggled to Afghanistan.

Police said they were working on identification of the owners of the recovered phones adding that one of the phones has been handed over to its owner after verification.

According to ASP Hayatabad, Nayab Ramzan on identification of these criminals, several other facilitators including the buyers and receivers of the stolen phones would also be included in the case.



In brief

Man dies, four injured

PATTOKI (INP): One person died while four others were seriously injured when a vehicle wedding party overturned here, rescue sources said on Tuesday. According to details, the accident took place on main highway in Pattoki where a vehicle with wedding guests on board turned turtle due to over speeding. One person died on the spot and four others were critically injured turning the wedding ceremony into mourning. The rescue personnel reached the scene and shifted the body and injured to hospital.

Rescue 1122 sprang into action

MULTAN (INP): Multan's Rescue 1122 service sprang into action over 270 times in the past 24 hours, demonstrating their dedication to the city's safety and well-being. Responding to a wide range of emergencies, the team's quick and efficient interventions ensured timely assistance to those in need. A spokesperson of 1122 said on Tuesday, road safety remained a key concern, with 65 accidents reported within Multan city itself. A further accident each occurred in Shujaabad and Jalalpur Pirwala, bringing the total for the region to 67. Fortunately, Rescue 1122's swift response helped minimize casualties. He said that medical emergencies constituted a significant portion of the callouts, with 173 occurring within Multan city, 5 in Shujaabad, and 2 in Jalalpur Pirwala. Prompt transfers to hospitals by Rescue 1122 ambulances ensured timely medical attention for these 180 patients. The team's diverse skill set saw them address a variety of other emergencies as well. They responded to 6 crime-related incidents and tackled 24 miscellaneous situations, highlighting their adaptability and commitment to serving the community in all its needs. Lives Saved, Relief Provided: At the heart of these operations lies the successful rescue of 270 individuals.

Motorbikes, cash robbed

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Police registered at least four cases of robbing motorbikes and cash worth thousands from Khan Garh and outskirts with locals protested for coping with increasing cases of street crimes surfacing across the district on Tuesday. As per detail received from the police source, a motorbike owned by shoe store's owner, Ishaq Tariq was stolen from the main bazar here. In second incident, the muggers looted the fish seller, Mukhtar Pappu the cash worth 80, 000 along with a motorbike from him. Another motorbike was stolen outside of the mosque when the owner Zain had stopped to offer prayer in Khan Garh.

Awareness session held

SARGODHA (APP): An introductory awareness session was held in the Darul Aman under the direction of the Punjab Women Protection Authority. SP Headquarters Ziaullah, Divisional Directors Social Welfare, Shakira Noreen and Zeiba Andlib, Assistant District Public Prosecutors Fauzia Shafiq, Tahira Yasmin, Advocate Rana Naveed, Superintendent Kashana Rizwana Kausar, social activists Qaisra Ismail, Rifat Rani and Samira Abdul Khaliq participated. Darul Aman Superintendent Sana Raouf presided over the function.



QUETTA: Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Domki.

BUJ demands arrest of senior Mehar's killers

QUETTA (PPI): Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ) on Tuesday demanded of the authorities to arrest the killers of Jan Muhammad Mehar, senior journalist, former President, Press Club Sukkar and erstwhile President, Sukkur Union of Journalist.

This demand was made in a protest demonstration held under the aegis of BUJ outside Quetta Press Club. Addressing the protest demonstration, speakers said that the government of Sindh had failed to provide security to journalists.

Condemning the forced sacking of journalists of BOL News, they demanded of the authorities of BOL News to reinstate the services of sacked journalists of BOL News Balochistan Bureau. They called on the authorities to arrest the

killers of Jan Muhammad Mehar.

The protest demonstration was addressed by Irfan Saeed, President, Balochistan Union of Journalists, senior journalist Ayub Tarin and others. The leaders demanded of the authorities to arrest killers of slain journalist Jan Muhammad Mehar, provide security to all journalists and stop forced termination of jobs by BOL News.

Rind says he quit PTI over Imran's behavior: Senior politician, former provincial Minister and Chief of Rind tribe Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind, has said that the behaviour of Imran Khan, Chairman, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), was the main reason that he parted ways with PTI rather than the incidents of May 09.

Talking to media here on Tuesday, Rind said, "I left PTI when I was the provincial minister and was holding the charge of the position of Special Advisor to Prime Minister", adding that politics of PTI had remained limited only to social media.

"I joined PTI after being impressed by the talks of Imran Khan, but after joining the party, I deemed it right to leave PTI owing to the behaviour of Imran Khan", he said, adding that protest was the right of any political party, but whatever happened on May 09 was not a protest. He said that sense of deprivation had prevailed in Balochistan and still the sense of deprivation existed in Balochistan, adding that no one was sincere to end the sense of deprivation of Balochistan.

Kashmiris' to continue, says Sardar Attique

MIRPUR (INP): Former prime minister of AJK and President Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan said that geographic and ideological stability, solidarity and strong defence of Pakistan were the top agenda of his party Muslim Conference.

Kashmiris' ongoing struggle for the right to self-determination would continue till they achieve their goal of freedom from Indian occupation, he said while addressing a public meeting marking the observance of the 56th death anniversary of veteran Kashmiri leader Ch Ghulam Abbas at his

Faizabad mausoleum.

On the occasion, he said Kashmiris and Palestinians were struggling to achieve freedom against illegal occupations of India and Israel respectively. The meeting venue was profusely decorated with Pakistani and Palestinian flags, party flags and banners. Ongoing Israeli atrocities against Palestinians were loudly condemned via speeches and resolutions.

Rich tributes were paid to the principled leadership of veteran Kashmiri leaders Ch Ghulam Abbas and Mujahid Awwal Sardar Mohammad Abdul Qayyum Khan for steering

the ideological platform of the Muslim Conference in the hardest phase of history leaving behind a wealth of legacy.

Sardar Attique said that it has been decided at the party level that the party role would be expanded and further strengthened at all levels. By several unanimously passed resolutions, rich tributes were paid to the brave armed forces of Pakistan for their robust defense role, martyrs of armed forces were paid respectful homage, and special prayers for early liberation of occupied Kashmir and Palestine were also offered.

PPP to place country's economy on track: Zehri

F.P. Report

TURBAT: The people of Makran have always supported the Peoples Party and in the upcoming elections, like other parts of the province, the people of Gwadar, Turbat, Panjur will also make the Peoples Party successful with their valuable votes.

These views were expressed by the senior leader and spokesman of former president Asif Ali Zardari and district president Hub Mir Ali Hassan Zehri in a statement after the successful workers convention in Turbat. He said that the workers convention in Turbat is historic and the holding of workers' convention here was reflection of the importance of this area.

The success of the effective workers' convention has given the decision of the brave people of Makran and the success of the convention is a sign of the success of the Peoples Party. He said that the former president Asif Ali Zardari clearly said in his speech that we understand the suffering of Balochistan and the development of Balochistan is our first priority because Balochistan is the heart of Pakistan. He said that Balochistan needs someone to move forward.

It is a province rich in precious minerals as well as every blessing of the world. Balochistan was not treated well in the past. The vested interests brutally plundered

the resources of Balochistan due to which Balochistan was left behind in the race of development.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri further said that Pakistan Peoples Party will give Balochistan its fair right by winning the upcoming elections. Providing the best education and health facilities to the youth here is the priority of the Peoples Party. Our leader Asif Ali Zardari and young Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's heart are beating for Balochistan and no effort will be spared to fulfill all the promises made in the future. He clarified that as the people of Balochistan love the Peoples Party and its leaders; there is no doubt that the victory will be of the Peoples Party and the Chief Minister of Balochistan will also be Jayla, while the next Prime Minister of Pakistan will be Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri added in his statement that the enthusiasm of the Jiyalas and the people of Balochistan on the occasion of the workers' convention in Turbat will be visible and will also prove to be the spokesperson of the public aspirations. The kind of enthusiasm seen in the convention represents not only the people of Balochistan but the whole of Pakistan. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that the Pakistan Peoples Party is the only political party which has always worked for the cultivation of democracy and the

supremacy of the Constitution.

PPP Played its role and never supported any undemocratic behavior. He said that the release of the election schedule by the Election Commission is a good omen, which has increased the enthusiasm of the workers. He asked the workers to speed up the preparations for the upcoming elections and convey the party's message door to door.

Police raided Usman's mother house

SIALKOT (INP): Sialkot police reportedly raided house of former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Usman Dar's mother and defiled the sanctity and security of the home by disrespecting the women present there.

In a video message posted on social media, Usman Dar's mother alleged that police raided her house at the behest of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Khawaja Asif. She alleged that the raiding police party humiliated them. Usman Dar's mother alleged Khawaja Asif is doing such acts to refrain her from contesting general elections against him.

She appealed to Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa to take notice of the matter.

Abasin Adabi Tolana holds farewell ceremony

F.P. Report

KOHAT: The Abasin Adabi Tolana Kohat, arranged a farewell ceremony in honor of Muhammad Sarwar Mahmood Khattak, a renowned Pashto Poet and Writer and Deputy Director Information Kohat at a private college here the other day.

Famous Poet Muhammad Jan Atif, presided over the ceremony while newly posted Regional Information Officer Kohat Irshad Mohammad Afridi was the chief guest. Producer Pakhtunkhwa Radio Kohat Abasin Mohmand was the guest of honor on this occasion.

A Grand Mushaira was also organized in which Syed Masoom Shah Masoom, Firoz Khan Sadiq, Mazhar Salam Mazhar, Maulana Abdul Halim Al Hakimi, Rahmat Shah Rahmat, Abbasin Mohmand, Master Shafullah, Malik Muhammad Umar Khog Afridi, Muhammad Jan Atif and others in their speeches paid rich tributes to Muhammad Sarwar Mahmood Khattak for his literary efforts and services to Abasin Adabi Tolana.

The participants said that Sarwar Khattak has a simple and good-natured personality. He has great love for his country and his Book "Da Shahbaz Manzil" is a reflection of his mission which gives a positive message for the Pakhtun nation and its Youth. Sarwar Khattak in his speech thanked Abasin Adabi Tolana for arranging the event in his honor and said today he realized how much his literary friends have an attachment with him. He said he will always remember the golden memories of these people.

‘Coming era belongs to PML-N’

QUETTA (PPI): Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, President, Pakistan Muslim League-N, Balochistan, has said that the coming era in the country belonged to PML-N, adding that Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, supremo of PML-N was the only ray of hope for the people of the country.

These views were expressed by him while addressing a press conference at Quetta Press Club with Jamal Shah Kakar, General Secretary, PML-N, Balochistan, Haji Noor Muhammad Dumar, Dostan Khan Domki and other provincial leaders of PML-N, Balochistan on Tuesday. Mandokhail said that PML-N would be able to form federal government besides forming governments in Punjab, Sindh, Khyberpushtunkhwa and Balochistan.

Welcoming Chief of Abdani tribe Sardar Israr Khan Tarin for joining PML-N, he hoped that Sardar Israr Khan Tarin would work for organising the party in Harnai. Speaking on the occasion, central leader of PML-N, Dostan Khan Domki said that PML-N was the biggest parliamentary party of the country. Chief of Abdani tribe and provincial leader of Balochistan Awami Party, Sardar Israr Khan Tarin on the occasion announced his joining of PML-N along with his associates.

Martyrs 14th anniversary observed in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Members of the civil society and relatives of the Timergara police lines' blast martyrs held a function and a peace walk to observe the 14th death anniversary. A suicide bomber had blown up himself near the police lines mosque after the Friday prayer on Dec 18, 2009, killing 15 worshippers and injuring 27 others. Shakil Shaheed was also among the martyrs whose elder brother, Peer Imtiaz established the Shakil Shaheed Development Organization (SSDO), a welfare organization to work for children of the martyrs in the district.

The Monday function was attended by police officers, relatives of the martyrs, social and political activists. They laid floral wreaths on the Yadgar-i-Shuhada and offered fateha for the departed souls. A function in this regard was addressed by DSP Iqbal Nasim, political activist Abdullah Shah, SSDO chief Peer Imtiaz Ahmad, tehsil chairman Mufti Irfanudin, Naseeb Rawan, president Anjum Tajir, Timergara Haji Anwarud Din, president Dir Chamber

of Commerce and Industries Mian Noor Alam, president district bar Syed Kifayat Yar Bukhari, JUI-F district chief Sirajud Din, former tehsil nazim Riaz Muhammad and others.

The speakers paid rich tributes to all the martyrs and expressed solidarity and sympathy with their families. They said that active nations did not forget their martyrs. They said that officials of security forces and police along with civilians had sacrificed their lives to restore peace in the region.

Meanwhile speakers at a function expressed their pleasure that the majority of educated youths wished to run their own businesses in the area. They were speaking at a function after inaugurating an online business center at the Timergara Shaheed Chowk here on Monday.

The function was addressed by the president Dir Chamber of Commerce and Industries Mian Noor Alam, Haji Anwarud Din, former manager NBP Malik Naqashband Khan and others. They said that online business was increasing in the world and educated youths should opt for it. They said that now it

was difficult for the state to provide jobs to the graduates of universities, so they should start their own businesses.

Murderer convicted: The court of additional district and session judge Timergara Lower Dir Said Ameen sentenced one Yar Hussain, a resident of Inzaro Pengal Talash for rigorous imprisonment for life and also to pay Rs 100,000 as fine for killing his wife on June 29, 2022 at his house.

The court observed that the prosecution had established that on June 29, 2022 the accused had hit the deceased, Huma Gul, wife of the accused with stick blows on the skull with the intention to cause her death and resultantly she had died on way to a hospital.

The court admitted that the accused had committed Qatl-i-Amad of his wife punishable under section 302 PPC however, mitigating circumstances existed in the case as the murder was not preplanned, and hence capital punishment could not be awarded to the accused. According to the FIR registered by the Talash police station the accused had committed the crime over a petty issue.

Annual report on budget transparency published

F.P. Report

BANNU: CPDI has released its fourth annual report on the "State of Budget Transparency in Pakistan, International Best Practices". The report pointed out shortcomings in the budgeting process at the federal and provincial levels and calls for budget proposals to be widely discussed with civic groups, government agencies and key stakeholders.

This report does not only aim to present findings but to facilitate dialogue between governments, civil society, and the citizens at large. The report says Pakistan should consider launching a centralized digital platform dedicated to fostering citizen participation. This platform should be designed to present intricate budgetary details in a manner easily digestible to the citizen.

Governments must prioritize the initiation of nationwide public consultations, including town-hall meetings and workshops, during the crucial budget formulation phase. Report also demanded to develop and issue separate budget statements for Women,

Minorities, Children, and PWDS, outlining specific allocations and strategies tailored to each group's unique needs and challenges. The reports urges to avoid the inconsistency observed in Pakistan, the practice of presenting a citizens' budget should be formalized through specific legislation or regulations.

According to the CPDI report, Governments should make budget data available in widely accepted machine-readable formats like Excel and CSV. In addition, the participation of citizens in the budgeting process should be given legal protection and government agencies should be required to consult with the citizens during the various stages of budget making process. In particular, the role of MPs should be enhanced during budget formulation and its implementation.

While talking with elected representatives, LG representatives, CSOs and media persons, during "stake holder's dialogue on transparent budgeting" organized by member organization of CNBA (Citizens Network for Budget Accountability Mr

Ikram Ullah khan Marwat advocate said that for the past decade, CPDI has been working to improve the budgeting process in Pakistan from the district to the federal level to promote transparency in it. As a result, fourth report based on "State of Budget Transparency in Pakistan 2023" has been released.

This report not only examines budget transparency in Pakistan but also helps to gauge the effectiveness of access to information laws in Pakistan in obtaining budget information. This report recommends that Instead of fast-tracking the budget, it should be referred to the finance committees in both federal and provincial assemblies well in advance of the fiscal year. CPDI report also demands for making all Planning Commission Forms (PC-I to PC-V) available to the public across all federal and provincial levels, not just PC-I documents. He further added that according to the report, participation of citizens in budgeting, legislative oversight, duration of budget debate in parliaments and equitable budgeting are required to be addressed.

Public participation in budget process stressed for prosperity

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Young Star Development Organization (YSDO) in collaboration with Center for Peace and Development Initiative (CPDI), Citizen Network for Budget Accountability (CNBA) held an awareness creating workshop in a local hotel at Boni, district headquarters of Upper Chitral.

The theme of this seminar was Stakeholders Dialogue on Transparent Budgeting. On this occasion, former Nazim Union Council Rashun Amirullah was Chief guest while Subedar Major Mirza Alam presided over the seminar.

Inamullah, manager of YSDO while performing as stage secretary, highlighted the aims and objectives of this event. He said that YSDO organizes such awareness seminars and workshops on public opinion and their involvement in the budgeting process in collaboration with these partners organizations so that public opinion can also be included in the budgeting process because Budget is prepared for the welfare and development of the people, in which if public opinion is also taken, its transparency will be further improved.

On this occasion, Chief guest, speakers and Chairman of YSDO Asfandiar Khan also expressed his concern and

highlighted the importance of public network in the process of public participation in the budgeting process and accountability. Commenting on this process, he said that CPDI has released its fourth annual report on "Status of Budget Transparency in Pakistan, International Best Practices". The report identified shortcomings in the budgeting process at the federal and provincial levels and called for a broader discussion of budget proposals with civic groups, government agencies and key stakeholders.

The purpose of this report is not only to present findings but to facilitate dialogue between governments, civil society and citizens at large. The report states that Pakistan should consider launching a centralized digital platform to promote citizen participation. The platform should be designed to present complex budget details in a manner that citizens can easily understand. Governments should prioritize the initiation of nationwide public consultations, including town hall meetings and workshops, during the critical phase of budget formulation.

The report also calls for the preparation and release of separate budget statements for women, minorities, children and persons with disabilities, outlining specific allocations and

strategies tailored to each group's unique needs and challenges. The report calls for regularization of the citizen budgeting process in Pakistan through specific legislation or regulations. According to the CPDI report, governments should make budget data available in widely machine-readable formats such as Excel and CSV.

In addition, citizen participation in the budget-making process should be legally protected. And government institutions should be mandated to consult citizens during various stages of the budgeting process, especially the role of parliamentarians should be enhanced during budget formulation and implementation.

With elected representatives, local government representatives, civil society representatives during the "Stakeholder Dialogue on Transparent Budgeting" organized by CNBA member organization (Citizens Network for Budget Accountability).

YSDO Chairman Asfandiar Khan said that since last one decade, CPDI has been working to improve the budgeting process in Pakistan from district to federal level to promote transparency in it. As a result, the fourth report on "Status of Budget Transparency in Pakistan 2023" has been released.



REYKJANES: An Icelandic coastguard helicopter flying above magma near Grindavik on Iceland's peninsula.

Fear among civilians amid Assad regime's bombardment

IDLIB: Seven civilians were killed and 20 others were injured when the military of President Bashar al-Assad bombed the city of Idlib and towns in the countryside near Aleppo. Syria Civil Defence, a volunteer group that offers medical services, as well as rescue and relief assistance to communities in opposition-held areas of the country's northwest, said they responded to the deaths of five civilians, including a child and a woman pregnant with twins, in the town of Darat Izza. They also assisted an additional five injured people, including two children, after more than 40 artillery shells fell on the area.

Another 15 people were injured, including five children and a woman, as a result of missile bombardment on residential neighbourhoods in the city of Idlib. Abu Amin, an observer who monitors the movement of missiles and military aircraft in the area added that two others were killed in the town of Abzimo in the western countryside of Aleppo, as a result of artillery shelling with Acacia 152 launchers and Grad 40 missiles.

So far this month, there have been 48 attacks on civilians in 15 cities and towns, resulting in the deaths of nine people, including three children and a woman, according to the Civil Defence. The deputy director of the Syrian Civil Defence, Mounir Mustafa, told Al Jazeera that the bombing caused a state of "terror" among residents, in addition to the damage it caused to residential buildings, shops and public facilities. The Syrian Civil Defence are also known

as the White Helmets.

A shell fell a few metres away from Majoun Turki, a resident of the Shuhada Camp in Darat Izza, and he was wounded by a small piece of shrapnel. "When it fell, I no longer realised what was going on around me. I became dizzy, and my eyes still hurt," the 60-year-old man told Al Jazeera. While Darat Izza, which connects the areas of the northern and western Aleppo countryside and Idlib, is subjected to repeated bombardment by the ruling regime's forces, the most recent bombing led to the displacement of civilians towards nearby farmlands.

"My family has now fled towards the highway. I asked them to leave for the sake of the young children", said Turki, a father to 11 children, whose family has been displaced since 2011, when the attacks began on his village in the eastern Hama countryside. "Fear was intense yesterday," said Bashar Fandu, whose two cousins were among those killed in the Darat Izza bombing. They were buying gasoline when the shell fell on top of them, killing them along with the seller and two passers-by. "The violent shelling continued during the burial at night," he added.

The Syrian regime and its ally Russia deny targeting civilians and proclaim that they target military faction sites. Abu Amin, the observer, said that the recent attacks on the city of Idlib were "unprovoked", as they were not accompanied by military actions by the opposition factions, and the strikes did not target the positions of

those factions. "The bombing sometimes coincides with military actions by the opposition factions," Abu Amin said, noting that the attack on the towns of the western Aleppo countryside yesterday evening was in response to the bombing of the towns of Nubl and al-Zahraa, located in regime-controlled areas, by the opposition factions.

While the region has been subject to a ceasefire truce since March 2020, violations have continued, especially during the last four months. Civil Defence teams have counted 1,206 attacks by regime forces and its allies from the beginning of 2023 until December 10, which have killed 154 people and injured 652. "These attacks threaten the lives of residents, impose a state of instability, and force people to flee at a time when the humanitarian crisis is worsening with the approaching winter," Mustafa from the Civil Defence said. Of the 4.5 million people who live in northwestern Syria, 2.9 million are displaced. About two million of them live in random camps that lack basic services.

Edem Wosorno, director of operations and advocacy for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, spoke to the Security Council on November 28 about the danger of renewed bombing campaigns on northwestern Syria, describing it as "the most significant we have seen since 2019." According to the UN, recent months have witnessed the displacement of 120,000 people from the southern Idlib countryside to the north, as a result of repeated bombing.— Aljazeera

Marcos faces 'greenwashing' claims as climate spending soars

MANILA: After typhoon Doksuri battered the Philippines earlier this year, pastor Thaad Samson waded through waist-high waters while going door to door to check on his neighbours. Seventeen towns in his home province of Bulacan were paralyzed by days of flooding after the typhoon hit the archipelago in July.

When the rains began, Samson's parish was unfazed since it sits on land "as high as the tip of a cathedral", but it wasn't long before residents were crying out for help, Samson told Al Jazeera. "The towns which didn't used to experience flooding are now getting a taste of it," Samson said. Samson blames reclamation projects in the region for his community's sudden vulnerability to extreme weather. "This is not just my opinion, it's a scientific fact," he said.

In 2017, the Philippine government spearheaded 13 land reclamation projects along Manila Bay, spanning five provinces including Metro Manila and Bulacan. While civil society groups and lawmakers sounded the alarm about potential harm to the environment, Manila pointed to massive expenditures on climate-related projects aimed at offsetting the risks and negative effects of large-scale development. For environmental advocates like Samson, though, Manila's climate spending is nothing more

than an attempt to greenwash environmentally damaging development projects like reclamation. "They are destroying mangroves across 15,000 hectares of water. I don't see how that protects us from climate change especially when flood levels have been rising in nearby areas," Samson said.

The Philippines experiences 20 typhoons annually. According to the World Bank, flooding caused by typhoons has resulted in about 30,000 deaths during the past three decades in addition to massive economic losses. Since 2009, climate-related spending by the Philippine government has ballooned, with most expenditure funnelled towards infrastructure. According to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), "climate actions have been mainstreamed and institutionalised in our development plan and the National Budget. This resulted in a significant increase in the budget for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures by about 60 percent compared to the previous year's allocation".

For 2024, the Philippines has proposed allotting 543.45 billion pesos (\$9.74bn) for climate expenditures, a 17 percent increase in spending from the current year, which was already 60 percent higher than 2022. Climate expenditures account for 9.4 per-

cent of the country's total budget, with the DBM proudly touting that the number exceeds the country's 8 percent commitment under the latest Philippine Development Plan. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr remarked in November that economic development hinges on recognising the country's vulnerability to climate change.

"It is the basis on which we have to act for the future, on which we have to design our systems. We have to keep climate change in mind," Marcos said. Around 461.5 billion pesos (\$8.27bn), or 84.9 percent of spending, has been earmarked for flood control or railways, with much of the formerly related land reclamation in Manila Bay and the latter touted as a means of reducing carbon emissions. Despite being tagged as climate spending, critics query whether such expenditure has more to do with supporting the government's policy agenda than the climate and whether it may in fact be doing more damage to ecosystems.

"Our country's entire climate program is pure lip service," Arlene Brosas, assistant minority leader in the Philippine House of Representatives, told Al Jazeera. "When the world asks what the Philippines is doing about climate change, we will have new trains and inept flood control to show for it, plus significantly less mangroves and farmlands,"

Brosas added.

Climate spending disbursed through Special Purpose Funds (SPFs), which allocate money under broad categories of use rather than specific projects, is an emerging trend in the Philippines, according to Brosas, who argues the funds are corruption-prone and an example of "climate pork" doled out "for those uninterested in actual results". Under the government's plans, SPFs intended for climate mitigation and adaptation are set to increase in size next year by about 68 percent compared to the current allocation, reaching 22.47 billion pesos (\$400m).

Still, Manila is unable to say how the money will be spent apart from supporting adaptation and mitigation efforts by government corporations and local governments. University of the Philippines Professor Timothy Cipriano, an environmental geographer with the national research group AGHAM, said the climate spending label is "technically accurate" but distracts from better solutions to climate change. "Using infrastructure as a climate change solution is antiquated. Too often in the Philippines, we see adaptation projects drain the water from certain areas only to divert flooding to another community," Cipriano told Al Jazeera. — Aljazeera

Five people feared dead in suspected ADF attack

KAMPALA: At least five people were killed, including a local leader, after suspected rebels from an armed group allied to ISIL (ISIS) attacked an area in western Uganda, the area legislator told Reuters on Tuesday. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) attacked Kyabandara parish in Kamwenge district in Western Uganda at about 10pm (19:00 GMT), the lawmaker, Cuthbert Abigaba, said.

The attackers then killed a local councillor whom they found in a small roadside restaurant she operated alongside four of her clients who had just sat down for a meal. Abigaba said. "After the killing, they burnt the restaurant and also proceeded and looted items from nearby shops before fleeing," he said. The deputy spokesperson for Uganda's military, Deo Akiiki, confirmed the attack and said they would give details later.

The ADF was formed as an anti-Kampala rebel group in the mid-1990s and initially battled the government of President Yoweri Museveni from bases in the Rwenzori mountains. After its formation, the group was eventually routed by the Ugandan army, with remnants fleeing into eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo where they have since orchestrated deadly attacks with thousands of casualties in the last decade across both countries. The ADF in 2019 pledged allegiance to ISIL, which has previously claimed responsibility for some of the ADF's attacks.

Uganda launched a ground and air campaign against the ADF in the DR Congo in 2021. Museveni has said the operation has succeeded in killing a large number of rebels, including some commanders. The group has continued to carry out attacks including on a school in Western Uganda in June in which dozens died and another that killed two foreign tourists and their Ugandan tour guide. — Aljazeera

Japanese prosecutors raid ruling party offices

TOKYO: Prosecutors have raided the offices of Japan's governing Liberal Democratic Party amid a political funding scandal that has sent Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's approval ratings to some of the lowest levels in the country's post-war history. Investigators from the Tokyo District Public Prosecutors' Office searched the offices of two LPD factions associated with former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and former secretary-general Toshihiro Nikai, local media reported on Tuesday.

Prosecutors are investigating allegations that party officials failed to declare a combined 600 million yen (\$4.18m) in fundraising proceeds, directing money to faction-run slush funds. LDP secretary-general Toshiyuki Motegi said the raids were "extremely regrettable" and the party would take "necessary measures while observing the fate of the investigation". The scandal has fuelled public discontent with the LPD and Kishida, who last week sacked four cabinet members implicated in the allegations, including Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno, in an effort to stem the fallout.

"The party must work to restore the trust of the people with a strong sense of urgency," Kishida told reporters on Tuesday. "I'll double down my efforts as the leader of the LDP to restore trust," Kishida told a news conference last week. Kishida's cabinet reshuffle, however, has done little to boost his flagging approval. In an opinion poll published by the Mainichi newspaper, 79 of respondents said they disapproved of the government — the highest figure since the poll began in 1947. Other polls by the Asahi, Yomiuri and Nikkei newspapers over the weekend put Kishida's approval rating at about 20 percent, the lowest of any premier since the LDP returned to power in 2012 following a brief interruption in its decades-long ruling streak. — Aljazeera

Zuma lays down S Africa election challenge to ANC

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): By announcing he will not vote or campaign for South Africa's governing African National Congress (ANC) in next year's general election, former president Jacob Zuma is seeking to portray himself as its saviour.

This might seem a contradiction in terms, but the strategy appears clear from his words, including the highly personal attack on his successor, President Cyril Ramaphosa. Many South Africans see Mr Zuma as representing what is wrong with the recent past, and with having tainted the ANC by presiding over widespread corruption in government.

He is a highly divisive figure, dismissed by many as sinister and irrelevant but loved by his supporters. His statement highlighted social problems and divisions in South Africa which, for some, have never gone away. His intervention comes ahead of an election widely seen as the most competitive for the ANC since it first came to power nearly 30 years ago, following the end of the racist system of apartheid. The ANC was born in opposition to racial injustice and oppression, and still regards itself as a national liberation movement.

But, according to Mr Zuma, the ANC of President Ramaphosa has betrayed its revolutionary heritage. In saying so, he is seeking to appeal to ANC voters unhappy with its record in power. The personal history between the men is important. In 2014 then President Zuma appointed Mr Ramaphosa as his deputy.

Four years later, amid significant pressure from within the ANC as he was dogged by corruption allegations, he resigned as president and was succeeded by Mr Ramaphosa. The 81-year-old Mr Zuma, who joined the ANC as a teenager, was an anti-apartheid activist and spent a decade in jail as a political prisoner. He was part of its armed wing, uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), or Spear of the Nation. President Ramaphosa was also an anti-apartheid activist and had key ANC roles during the early 1990s, including being its chief negotiator in talks with the apartheid regime.

But, unlike Mr Zuma, he was not associated with MK and he spent years out of politics from the mid-1990s when he made a fortune as a businessman. Mr Zuma is casting himself as a true revolutionary, and characterising President Ramaphosa as a sell-out. The many controversies surrounding Mr Zuma have not receded in the years since he left office, and he is still facing charges of corruption over a 1999 arms deal. He denies the charges.

Some South Africans will regard Mr

Zuma's new intervention as a distraction from these personal challenges. He was jailed in 2021 for contempt of court after refusing to testify before an inquiry investigating financial sleaze and cronyism under his presidency. He spent two months in prison before being released on medical grounds. The release was later ruled illegal, but he did not return to prison due to overcrowding in the system. The new party which Mr Zuma says he will support bears the name of the ANC's former armed wing, uMkhonto we Sizwe, and uses the same abbreviation, MK.

There is a deep symbolism in adopting it, and in the date and location - 16 December in Soweto - of Mr Zuma's announcement. This date was the anniversary of MK's founding in 1961, which was itself the anniversary of a highly contentious event in South African history - the 1838 Battle of Blood River between white settlers and Zulu people in what is now the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The battle's outcome was seen by white Afrikaners as showing divine approval of them and for decades they marked it during apartheid as a public holiday called the Day of the Vow. After the end of apartheid, the public holiday remained but its name was changed to the Day of Reconciliation, with the aim of encouraging national unity and racial harmony.

Soweto, the location of Mr Zuma's announcement, is where MK was disbanded in a ceremony 30 years ago to the day, on 16 December 1993. MK's disbandment came ahead of South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, and what was seen as the miraculous birth of a "rainbow nation" under the presidency of anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela. Mr Zuma now says there can "never be reconciliation without socio-economic justice and equality" and that the new MK party is seeking the "return of our land to its rightful owners, the African people". By adopting the MK name and with his statements, he is showing he thinks post-apartheid South Africa has not delivered all it should have done for black people.

Mr Zuma spoke of a "new people's war" but said it would involve ballots rather than bullets. His rhetoric was incendiary. He characterised President Ramaphosa as a "proxy" of "white capitalist interests" and said voting for the ANC will lead to government by "sell-outs and apartheid collaborators". There will be concern among some that violence and instability could be triggered, depending on how political events play out from now on.

Erdogan and Orban pledge to strengthen ties

BUDAPEST: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban have pledged to strengthen ties after talks in Budapest. The meeting marked the Turkish president's second visit to the country in four months. Hungary and Turkey are the only two NATO countries that have so far not ratified Sweden's bid to join the transatlantic military alliance in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Earlier this month, Erdogan made Turkey's ratification of Sweden's NATO bid conditional on the United States Congress "simultaneously" approving Ankara's request for F-16 fighter jets. The two leaders did not comment on the issue in their address to reporters. NATO enlargement was discussed during Erdogan's visit, according to Hungarian President Katalin Novak, who also met the Turkish leader. Erdogan's visit coincides with the 100th anniversary

of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

"We wish to further strengthen our ties in areas such as defence and energy, where we already have fruitful cooperation," Erdogan said, adding that the two countries aimed to increase their trade volume to \$6bn from \$4bn currently. Erdogan was received with military honours in Budapest's Heroes' Square before heading into a meeting with Novak and then with Orban. Orban presented Erdogan with the gift of a Nonius horse — though the Turkish leader fell off a horse in 2003.

"The gift from one equestrian nation to another," Orban wrote on Facebook. In return, Orban was gifted with an electric car made in Turkey, a photo of which he posted on X. "The best deal I've ever made! For one horsepower, I got 435. Welcome to Hungary," President Erdogan wrote. During a joint press conference, Orban said his coun-

try was "looking for allies with whom we can win". "The big plan is that Turks and Hungarians will be victorious together in the 21st century," he said.

In recent years, Hungary has pursued a policy of opening up to the East, not only towards Russia but also towards China and Central Asian countries. The central European country of close to 10 million people is the only European Union member state that has maintained close ties to the Kremlin since the beginning of the Ukraine war. On Sweden's NATO membership, Budapest has chided Stockholm over its "open hostile attitude", accusing Swedish representatives of being "repeatedly keen to bash Hungary" on rule-of-law issues. Orban told parliament in September that ratifying Sweden's NATO bid was not "urgent". In the past, Orban has repeatedly stated that Hungary supports Sweden's bid, claiming that the approval was merely a "technicality". — Aljazeera

Texas governor signs law allowing arrest of illegal migrants

TEXAS: The governor of Texas has signed a law allowing state authorities to arrest and deport people suspected of illegally crossing the border between the United States and Mexico. Republican Governor Greg Abbott's endorsement of Senate Bill 4 set up a potential legal battle with the federal government, which is usually tasked with enforcing immigration laws.

Abbott, who signed the bill in a ceremony in the border town of Brownsville, accused President Joe Biden of doing nothing to stop a "tidal wave of illegal entry" into Texas and claimed the measure would cut unauthorised arrivals by 50-75 percent. "Biden's deliberate inaction has left Texas to fend for itself," Abbott said, describing the consequences of unauthorised entry under the measure as "so extreme that the people being smuggled by the cartels, they will not want to be coming into the state of Texas".

Under the new law, Texas

state police will be able to arrest anyone suspected of crossing the border illegally and local judges will be authorised to order them to leave the country. Critics have cast the law as the most extreme attempt by state authorities to regulate immigration since a 2010 Arizona law that was largely struck down by the US Supreme Court.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Texas said it would challenge the measure in court, arguing it "overrides federal immigration law" and "fuels racial profiling".

More than 20 congressional Democrats also signed a letter urging the US Justice Department to take legal action to block the measure. Record numbers of migrants have been picked for unauthorised entry from Mexico since Biden took office in 2021, with more than half of the 5.8 million arrests taking place in Texas and neighbouring New Mexico.

Former President Donald Trump, who Abbott has backed to be the Republican nominee in the 2024 presidential election, has made immigration a key plank of his bid to retake the White House. During a visit to Edinburg, Texas near the US-Mexico border last month, Trump claimed that the US had the most insecure border in the history of the world and that the country was being "invaded". Trump said immigrants coming to the US were "poisoning the blood of our country," drawing a sharp rebuke from the White House.

"Echoing the grotesque rhetoric of fascists and violent white supremacists and threatening to oppress those who disagree with the government are dangerous attacks on the dignity and rights of all Americans, on our democracy, and on public safety," White House Deputy Press Secretary Andrew Bates said. — Aljazeera

Tunisia's historic Kairouan walls collapse, killing three

TUNIS (BBC): Three stonemasons have died after a section of the historic walls around the Old City of Kairouan in Tunisia collapsed. Officials say a 30m section of the wall near the Gate of the Floggers crashed to the ground. Two others were also injured in the accident and are said to

have suffered fractures

An investigation has been opened into the accident. Authorities say it could be linked to recent heavy rain. Moez Tria, a spokesperson for the Civil Protection Department said a perimeter had been set up to stop people from walking under part of the wall which

is still at risk of further collapse. The city of Kairouan was founded in 670 AD and is one of North Africa's holiest cities.

It was the capital of the Muslim world in North Africa for four centuries, before Tunis was chosen as Tunisia's political capital in the 12th century. Kairouan

became a Unesco World Heritage site in 1988 and is home to the Mosque of the Three Doors, the oldest known mosque with a sculpted facade. Unesco describes the mosque as "an architectural masterpiece that served as a model for several other Maghreban mosques".

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Unrestricted inflation and plight of nation

THE price hikes continue hitting the people hard, as soaring food prices and higher energy tariffs not only kept the weekly inflation over 43 per cent for the fifth consecutive week. The purchasing power of the masses has largely shrunk. The public is neither able to fully satisfy their personal needs nor can help revitalize the national economy by boosting domestic demand. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) remained at 43.16pc in the week ending December 14 because of the high prices of sugar, pulses, eggs, rice, and other food items along with the energy tariff that sets at the top of all essential commodity as winter looms. According to the World Bank report, the high cost of living pushes 2 million Pakistanis below the poverty line on an annual basis while these figures exceeded 18 million in the current year.

The headline inflation has witnessed a sharp upsurge touching a historic high of 43.16 % during the previous week which is the highest one in the past six months. The prices of essential commodities and daily use items were seriously affected due to the increase in gas and electricity prices that gave birth to a new wave of inflation in recent days. Meanwhile, a lack of governance and failure in the implementation of official fixed prices further aggravate the problem of inflation in Pakistan. A comprehensive mechanism is in place under the Duputy Commissioners, Price Control Committees, duty magistrates, and Food Inspectors to check inflation and prevent hoarding of highly needed food items, yet all those arrangements failed in putting a curb on illegal profiteers and mafias that seriously hurt the poor masses. This alarming trend means the gains made by the country's economy during the last few months are being reversed as the SPI touched the highest level since June.

Pakistan is passing through a difficult time, as the months-long political unrest and haphazard governance together with politically motivated policies of the successive governments plunged the economy into unresolvable crises and pushed the entire nation into unceasing ignominy. The high energy prices and massive taxation jammed the wheel of industry and rendered Pakistani exports expensive, and uncompetitive in the global market. A narrow tax base and low revenue generation increased the country's dependence on foreign loans, while current account deficit and debt servicing threaten the survival of an ailing economy. The State Bank of Pakistan owes the sole idea of high markup to support economic life-line while the government was compelled to receive loans and cash deposits from friendly nations and global lenders to sustain their rule, boost their politics, and run governmental affairs of the country. The leaders' dilemma is surely unique, as the IMF and global institutions pressed them to increase taxes and raise the prices of commodities to overcome the budget deficit, whereas the public demands relief, subsidies, comfort, and development work in their areas. So far, the leaders-lenders nexus has always brought unbearable inflation and great pain for the masses instead of providing them relief.

There had been significant improvement in the National Economy along with a sharp reduction in inflation after the Special Investment and Facilitation Council (SIFC) implemented stringent financial and economic measures and brought foreign investment to the country. However, lax administrative control, corruption of government officials, and energy price hikes are resisting the momentum and reversing gains made during the past few months by the country. After the 18th Amendment price control and regulation is a provincial subject, hence the district administration and provincial governments must play their role in controlling inflation and providing relief to the public, that becomes crucial at this time when Pakistan is making concerted efforts to get out of persistent economic ailment.

Gaza ceasefire and UN's impotence

THE UN Security Council delayed a vote on an Arab-sponsored resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in the ongoing conflict in Gaza to allow unhindered access to deliver humanitarian aid to the hundred thousands civilians in dire need of food, water, medicine and other essential commodities of daily life. According to the UN food agency, about 56 percent of Gaza's households were experiencing severe levels of hunger on December 14 and afterward, while those numbers would ultimately grow with every passing day if the global community fails in achieving a lasting ceasefire in the heightened hostility between Hamas and Israel.

Historically, this would be the third draft tabled by multiple Arab states and a majority of the world nations to achieve a ceasefire in the over two months long hostility that erupted on October 7, after Hamas fighters stormed into Southern Israel and took hostage 240 Israelis and foreigners. The previous two resolution drafts could not get passage from the 15 member UN Security Council (UNSC) primarily due to opposition from the United States, the strategic ally, resolute supporter and patron in chief of the sole Jewish state. Currently, the UN Security Council has delayed its vote on the proposed draft that aimed at conceiving an urgent ceasefire to avert the worst humanitarian crisis that is currently underway in Gaza and the West Bank. The global community is requesting the United States not to use its veto power by either supporting the globally agreed upon resolution draft or stay absent so this urgently needed resolution passes through the forum. The reports suggest that American diplomats are still opposing the draft and that's language is likely to change, urging the parties a suspension in hostility instead of calling for an urgent and sustainable ceasefire.

More than 19,400 Palestinians have been killed, while thousands more Palestinians lie buried under the rubble in Gaza, since Israel declared war on Gaza. Nearly two million out of a total 2.3 million Gazans suffered displacement and the entire region faces acute hunger and famine because the Israeli military has completely choked the provision of necessities including food, water, fuel, medicine and items of daily usage. So far, the massive displacement, scores of death and countless miseries, material and infrastructure damage could not satisfy the anger and hostility of the Jewish state and its staunch supporter, who persistently blocked the global efforts for peace in Palestine. The global community might fail in achieving its objectives but the outcome of the latest headcount will further segregate the supporters of oppressors and apartheid from human rights advocates and saviours of humanity.

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‘From the river to the sea’ and the decolonisation of our collective future

Mark LeVine

“From the river to the sea, Israel will be free.”

OK, that is not the way it is supposed to go, is it? But at this moment of war and mass death, this proposition is worth reflecting on: Palestine cannot be free without Israel - or at least the Israelis - being free. True freedom between the river and the sea can only be achieved by breaking free from the chains of settler-colonialism but also the narrow bounds of the nation-state.

Before I explain further, let me get into the current debate over the slogan "river to the sea". When most Israelis, and no doubt a significant number of Palestinians, hear the phrase "river to the sea," they imagine it in exclusivist terms. This is not surprising.

The zero-sum understanding of the nation-state - a specific territory under the exclusive control of one national community, has been the determinative communal identity for at least four centuries. Its logic is as simple as it is violent: if this territory belongs to my group, it cannot belong to yours. Not every country's identity and politics are based on this logic, but many are. Even countries with a long tradition of inter-communal tolerance can rapidly veer towards chauvinism. The dynamics are even clearer in settler-colonial societies, where the settler community has to conquer the territory and subdue or expel the Indigenous population in order to build its own society. Genocide is more often than not a core experience of this process. Israel is, of course, the quintessential settler-colonial society; yet it is also one whose maximalist impulse has yet to be realised. Palestinians have not been reduced to a manageably small minority who can be given formal political rights and then ignored, repressed and extracted without meaningful resistance - as was the fate of Indigenous Americans and Australians.

Given the violence inherent to colonialism, Indigenous resistance has naturally been imagined by settler societies as the mirror image of their eliminationist impulses and policies: We want them gone and will

commit whatever violence is necessary to achieve that goal, so they must want and would do the same. Not surprisingly, when resistance does take the form of mass violence, as happened on October 7, that imagination is powerfully reinforced. In this context, when most Zionist Israelis and Israel supporters hear the phrase "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free", they hear "a genocidal call to violence to destroy the state of Israel and its people to replace it with a Palestinian state extending from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea". The fact that some Palestinians, particularly Hamas, have leaned hard into a violently exclusivist connotation of the phrase only serves to reinforce the idea. But Hamas has never represented most Palestinians, despite the concerted efforts of the movement and successive Israeli governments (for very different reasons) to elevate its status. Its popularity in, if not control over, Gaza had waned significantly before the October 7 attack. Into this deeply dysfunctional mix enters Representative Rashida Tlaib, currently the only Palestinian American member of the United States Congress. Along with her colleague Ilhan Omar and occasionally other members of "The Squad", she has been the only national political voice advocating unhesitatingly for Palestinian rights.

For the vast majority of her congressional colleagues and most who describe themselves as "pro-Israel", Tlaib's use of the "river to the sea" slogan permanently marked her as an enemy of Israel. This was why, on November 6, she was officially censured by the House of Representatives. Of course, Palestinians are not the only ones advocating a "river-to-sea" discourse. It has more or less been the official policy of the Israeli state since 1967, when it occupied the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights. Since then, every Israeli government has pushed for the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, rendering the two-state solution an

impossibility well before the Oslo peace process began. Within the Israeli political space, from the far-right to the liberal left, the idea of sharing the land with the Palestinians as equals was never on the table.

The problem Israel has faced - like other settler-colonial powers - has been that Indigenous populations rarely if ever go gentle into that good night. Revisionist Zionism founder Ze'ev Jabotinsky would not have disagreed with Tlaib's argument in the immediate aftermath of the Hamas attack, that the "suffocating, dehumanising conditions" of permanent occupation inevitably "lead to resistance". Exactly a century ago, in his 1923 manifesto, The Iron Wall, he advocated overwhelming Jewish power to turn Palestine from the river to the sea into a Jewish ethnostate precisely because of the inevitability of Palestinian resistance. Regardless of whose side one is on, as long as the understanding of the "river-to-sea" discourse is filtered through the prism of the inherently colonial nation-state, one's imagination of other possibilities will be highly constrained. And a far more expansive imagination is precisely what is most desperately needed today, not only to establish freedom, justice and peace for all the inhabitants of Palestine/Israel in the midst of the present horror, but to address humanity's myriad existential problems, in which the Israeli occupation is deeply embedded. In that regard, Tlaib's argument - echoed by innumerable Palestinian activists and their allies, including many Jews - that "from the River to the Sea is an aspirational call for freedom, human rights and peaceful coexistence, not death, destruction or hate" represents a radically post-nationalist imagination of the future in Palestine and Israel. In fact, it is one that Palestinians on the front lines of the occupation, joined by Israeli and international solidarity activists, have been putting into practice, however tentatively and against overwhelming force, for decades, as anyone who is engaged in solidarity work in the occupied territories

will attest.

To share a communal meal in Nabi Saleh or Bil'in, Atwani or the Jordan Valley after a day spent planting or harvesting olive trees, walking children to school, facing off against Israeli settlers, bulldozers or tear gas - and now to struggle daily together in the US and across the West, is to repeat an experience common to the Freedom Riders, the multi-racial African National Congress, and others who struggled for freedom. Intercommunal solidarity and joint action towards a common future were central to all these struggles, as they pushed for imagining possibilities for sharing land, resources and power that previously seemed naive, far-fetched or even dangerous. Every day, more and more Jews and others join Palestinians in causing precisely the sort of "good trouble" that previously helped end - however imperfectly - apartheid in America and South Africa, and formal colonial rule across the Global South. There is a growing awareness, particularly among young people, that the stakes of Gaza extend beyond Palestine and Israel, representing the front lines of a battle for the future, for the possibility of humanity not being engulfed by growing violence and inequality as we veer towards ever more deadly threats to our collective survival.

For those still trapped inside binary identities and safely ensconced in an increasingly psychopathic global capitalist system, a free Palestine from the river to the sea - indeed, a truly free, equal and sustainable world - remains an unthinkable proposition. But as the latest wave of violence conditions, Israel cannot be free until Palestine is free, and the price of that freedom is real decolonisation. This means the creation of a political order, whatever its name or form, in which all people living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea are accorded the same fundamental rights and freedoms. In the face of the horrors of Gaza, we should be working to encourage real decolonisation not just in Israel/Palestine, but globally, before the violence engulfs us all.

Biden's economic sugar rush now threatens to destroy him

Kate Andrews

ON the face of it, Joe Biden's economy is booming. It was only a few weeks ago that the US reported provisional 4.9pc growth in the third quarter - the kind of figure a country might boast about in the good times, let alone when its economy is recovering from high inflation and fast-rising interest rates.

In the words of American economist and Federal Reserve Governor Christopher Waller, the numbers alone indicate a "blowout" performance from the US economy, overseen currently by a president who continues to insist that mass spending and state intervention is the recipe for impressive economic growth. Still, Americans aren't quite buying it.

It's speculated that the US isn't going to be able to sustain this level of growth - the fastest it's seen in two years, since the country was in its immediate recovery from the pandemic. This third quarter may be an outlier, with growth driven by surprisingly resilient consumer spending, despite those rising rates. Other economic indicators would suggest tougher times ahead. October's unemployment numbers for the US have led to quiet panic, as the rate rose to 3.9pc. That's low in historical terms, but notably above the record-low levels of 3.4pc achieved earlier this year, and often a warning in America that the economy is taking a turn for the worse.

Despite good-on-paper figures, there is a growing feeling that the numbers are moving in the wrong direction. It's perhaps a sign that those rate hikes are finally seeping through, being felt by employers and consumers, with all eyes on the evidence that will emerge leading up to Christmas. But perhaps most importantly, claims of increased prosperity and being "better off" don't seem to be translating to your average voter. When it comes to the economy, in fact, Biden is in trouble. The 46th president pledged more than \$1 trillion on the Inflation Reduction Act (which at the time was estimated to boost inflation slightly) at a time when it was clear far too much money had already been pumped into the economy - all in a crude attempt to secure some political leverage. Instead, he is forced to grapple with abysmal polling, which illustrates just how disappointed Americans are with the economy's performance.

Polling from Gallup this autumn finds that only 20pc of Americans consider the country's economic conditions to be "good", compared to 60pc who consider those conditions to be either "only fair" or "poor". Meanwhile, the vast majority of respondents fear the outlook for the economy is moving in the wrong direction, with 73pc reporting that they believe these conditions are getting worse, while only 24pc think they are improving.

This kind of doom and gloom perspective of American voters compares, Gallup says, to attitudes more than a decade ago, during the time of the financial crash. It seems, then, that despite splashing the cash - and creating a trillion-dollar sugar rush - Americans are still not very impressed with the Biden economy. And their verdict is being delivered at the same time as seemingly impressive

growth rates. (Put an outlier third quarter aside: the country's second quarter numbers are still at 2.1pc.)

Of course, these are the kinds of numbers that Rishi Sunak and Jeremy Hunt must dream of - yet are nowhere near realising. This week we learned that the provisional growth in the UK's third quarter flatlined, which follows on from just 0.2pc growth in the second quarter. If the Government makes good on its promise to grow the economy this year, it is set to do so on a technicality: UK GDP remains stagnant while friends across the pond are racing ahead.

Britain is edging towards stagnation - with the inflation rate in the UK still almost double the US rate, unemployment slowly creeping up, and perhaps most importantly, growth at a standstill. The best news Britain can muster up is that it has avoided the technical definition of recession. Some will view this as cause for celebration - not least given doomsday predictions from the IMF, and others, at the start of the year. But the economy just staying on the right side of the recession line isn't much to boast about.

Are Americans too demanding, expecting better economic conditions than what they have right now? Or are British expectations just dismally low, as they get ready to watch the Government hail some kind of victory for GDP growth that sits under 1pc? Wherever the answer, it is clear there is substantial opportunity on both sides of the Atlantic for more growth reforms. In the UK, policy announcements are already being framed in the context of a general election, but that process has not kicked off yet, and there is still time for the various parties to present their pro-growth agendas to voters. But in America, the far longer process is well underway, with Republican candidates (apart from Donald Trump, who refuses to show up) taking to debate stages across the country to put forward their vision for the country.

Unfortunately, minds are elsewhere. Between the shadow of Trump, the tempting allure of culture war issues and fighting yesterday's battles (including some kind of abortion ban across the US), the Republican candidates for president have failed to find the time to properly acknowledge voter concern about the economy and how they might address it. It's a shame: recent polling from the New York Times and Siena College finds that Trump is currently leading Biden in key swing states, including Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada and Pennsylvania (Biden is leading in Wisconsin).

But the real insight from this most recent round of polling is that while Trump may lead Biden by several percentage points, a "generic Republican" is no less than 14 points ahead (in Pennsylvania) up to 18 points ahead (Arizona). What does it mean to be a "generic Republican"? That's debatable, but almost certainly includes a nod to the GOP's history with voters of being fiscally responsible and energetic towards the economy. In America, Biden's fragile, sugar-high good isn't good enough - even if in Britain, Rachel Reeves's equivalent might well be.

The Telegraph

Unity key to tackling the global rise in forced displacement

Mr. Majid Rafizadeh

THERE has been a dramatic rise in forced displacements and migration around the world, which has led to major debates in some countries and regions, particularly the EU and the US. As of last month, more than 127,000 migrants had arrived in Italy by sea in 2023, nearly double the number for the same period last year.

The uptick in the number of migrants and asylum seekers has led to deep divisions among political parties and political spheres in some European nations. For example, the Dutch government collapsed in July after failing to reach a deal on immigration.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte, whose conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy had attempted to restrict the flow of asylum seekers into the Netherlands, pointed out in a televised news conference: "It's no secret that the coal-

ition partners have differing opinions about immigration policy. Today, we unfortunately have to conclude that those differences have become insurmountable. Therefore, I will tender the resignation of the entire Cabinet to the king."

When it comes to immigration policy, if the divisions in the political stances of European leaders continue to grow, the situation may become similar to that of the US, where the gap between the political parties on this critical issue is too deep to bridge. This will make it extremely difficult to pass bills, introduce informed policies or oversee substantial reforms in order to adequately address the crisis. In other words, it will lead to total stalemate. The most important step to take in order to address this global and humanitarian issue is to be united. Concerning the EU, the member states can work in unity within the bloc's framework in order to

more efficiently tackle the rise in migration. This huge task ought to be shared between EU members so that certain countries do not bear the brunt of the rise in migration.

This will also facilitate the process of registering and integrating arrivals and make it easier for those nations that receive large numbers of migrants in comparison to others. A huge influx of people can have a significant impact on the social, economic, political and even environmental landscapes of host countries. This is due to the fact that, if the hosts are not prepared for the situation, they tend to face political and economic strains. Even if migrants are successfully resettled in a new country, they then face other significant challenges, including language barriers and difficulties accessing medicine and healthcare services,

finding suitable housing, adjusting to new cultures, rules and norms, and finding work, as well as prejudice and racism. In other words, problems arise when host countries do not have the resources or are not economically and socially prepared to deal with a large influx of people.

Nevertheless, it was a step in the right direction that the EU last week reached a deal on immigration. Fernando Grande-Marlaska Gomez, the acting Spanish minister for home affairs, said: "We have achieved a huge step forward on a critical issue for the future of the EU. With today's agreement, we are now in a better position to reach an agreement on the entire asylum and migration pact with the European Parliament by the end of this semester." And German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock posted on X: "It is

a common step forward that solidarity between member states is mandatory in the event of a crisis." Another issue is to raise awareness in society about the situation of those who are forcefully displaced. It is key to point out the courage and strength that it takes to flee one's home and attempt to find a safe and secure place for one's family, particularly with children and the elderly.

Being forced to abandon the place where one has lived, studied and grown up, being forced to leave friends and relatives behind and to start a new life in a foreign place is traumatic. To survive and thrive in a new home needs extraordinary courage, faith and strength. There are several underlying reasons people decide to flee their homes. The most important factors are violence, conflict, war and the fear of persecution.

Although the EU and the US have witnessed a rise in migration this year, it is

important to point out that the vast majority of people who flee their homes to find shelter in other countries (about 85 percent) are hosted by developing countries.

This is why it is critical for wealthier nations to offer assistance. With effective investments and integration, migrants can be an asset that stimulates the host country's economy and promotes productivity. As Amnesty International has stated: "Wealthier countries aren't doing nearly enough to share the cost of protecting people who have left everything behind. In a nutshell, forced displacement and migration has become a global crisis. This is why it is necessary for the international community to work in unity and solidarity in order to address the increase in forced displacement and migration and to ensure that the basic humanitarian needs of everyone, particularly women and children, are met."

The tango in Gaza and its destructive repercussions

IT has been around a month and a half since the Oct. 7 operation in the Gaza Envelope; skepticism is increasing and the risks are accumulating. Setting to one side the bravado shown by Benjamin Netanyahu and his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who have talked about changing maps and claimed that what preceded Oct. 7 will not resemble what follows, as well as the puffery of some Hamas leaders regarding what happened, let us go over some of the facts.

Based on the dangerous strategic dimensions of this war and the explicit and unprecedented Western positions on it, I believe that any sensible analyst has come to feel that what we are seeing has exceeded the bounds of "legitimate self-defense," a "surgical operation to rescue hostages," revenge for Oct. 7 or even the elimination of an "ISIS-like group," using another term for the terror group Daesh. As per international law, the right to self-defense does not allow for the deliberate targeting of residential buildings with missiles or forcing hundreds of thousands of people to choose between being forcibly displaced and dying under the rubble of homes, hospitals, schools, mosques or churches. And it certainly does not justify bombing the areas where these civilians were ordered to flee in the south of the Gaza Strip. Moreover, hostage rescue operations are supposed to be aimed at ensuring the safety of the hostages. Instead, we are hearing Israeli officials brazenly and haughtily talk about sacrificing them.

As for Hamas, I believe anyone with minimal familiarity realizes the following. One, it is a political

movement whose leadership clearly has a Muslim Brotherhood background. It has openly engaged in both political and military action. It is not a murky and mysterious group like Daesh, which appears and disappears when needed. Two, over the years, Israel has assassinated several Hamas founders and leaders who had tried to engage in political action and move away from the targeting of civilians, most notably Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Ismail Abu Shanab and Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Rantisi, while it has exiled or imprisoned others. Three, Israel, like the US, recognizes that there are several wings within Hamas. The Oct. 7 operation very clearly attests to this fact, as the leadership of Hamas and its Lebanese-Iranian ally Hezbollah have said that the plans were a closely guarded secret and that it was carried out without the majority of the movement's leaders having advance knowledge of it. Four, regarding Hezbollah, several Western capitals have for years stressed the need to distinguish between the party's political and military wings. The same applies to Hamas, especially since several of its leaders reside in countries that are friendly to the West.

For all these reasons, the claim that Hamas - regardless of one's political stance on the movement and what happened on Oct. 7 - is a copy of Daesh is totally baseless. To believe it is to buy into obvious incitement by Israel's ruling Likud party. Nevertheless, the Hamas leadership does bear some responsibility. It can be blamed for failing to make a proper assessment of its surroundings, succumbing to its ideological and organizational con-

traditions and being unable to define its priorities as an organization ready for genuine political engagement. The claim, for instance, that the organization is keen on preserving the Palestinian national identity and the unity of the Palestinian struggle becomes untenable when it contributes to splitting the ranks of the Palestinians and effectively separates the Gaza Strip from the West Bank. It is very bizarre that Hamas, a group that sprung from the Muslim Brotherhood, is standing against the Syrian popular uprising and supporting the oppressors of the Syrian people after Iran and Western capitals sought to "demonize" this uprising by linking it to the Brotherhood. Furthermore, from a purely sectarian standpoint, how can some wings of Hamas explain their stance on the Iranian leadership after all of the sectarian policies we have seen from the latter and its displacement and marginalization of Sunni communities in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen?

Going back to the Israeli side of the disequilibrium, I believe one of the most dangerous repercussions of Oct. 7 might be the deeply harmful stances of actors who are supposedly capable of distinguishing between the insidious incitement to violence and the morally acceptable limits of diversity of opinion and political disagreement. The gravest and most hideous failing of many Western democracies, though not all of them, was in this regard. Making matters more painful, this did not suddenly emerge as a reaction to the Oct. 7 operation. Yes, the positions and statements we hear today from Western politicians, both senior

and junior, and read in the media and on social media, do not seem to have arisen in the spur of the moment or come out of momentary shock. More and more, they are beginning to seem like part of a strategic course that began in December 1991 with the UN's repeal of a previous General Assembly resolution (No. 3379) that asserted that Zionism is "a form of racism." We have now almost reached a point where any criticism or opposition to the extremist right-wing and settler government in Israel is considered a form of antisemitism.

To my knowledge, this is unprecedented in Western democracies. Never before have leaders raced to appease the most extreme Israeli governments and engage in McCarthyistic restrictions on criticism of a bloody campaign that has killed more than 11,000 innocent civilians to date, branding it either as "support for terrorism" or "antisemitism." In Middle Eastern popular culture, it is widely recognized that "one is well so long as his neighbor is well," while our thinkers and writers have taught us that "those who go unpunished become insolent." Last but not least, we learned from the West itself that "it takes two to tango." My point here is that we cannot expect an individual or a group to expect to live in safety if their close neighbor is deprived of it.

How can one side of a conflict be deterred from committing injustice and tyranny when it enjoys unlimited external support? How can peace or coexistence arise if the stronger side in a conflict insists on refusing to acknowledge the existence of the other side and pursues the physical, demographic and geographic erasure of the other side to back its claim?

WARS always have unintended consequences. In the days leading up to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, European leaders fussed over the fate of Nord Stream 2 and the loss of natural gas transiting through Ukraine. Flash forward to today. Sanctions on Russian hydrocarbons have caused inflationary headaches as countries realize how much they relied on Russia's natural wealth, which it sold off at a cheap price.

At the same time, the importance of critical minerals needed to produce technology for the energy transition is increasing. Russia is rich in these too. Even if it can export more of them, they'll feed industries that threaten to upend the foundations of oil, gas, and hydrocarbon rents underpinning much of the Russian economy and fiscal system.

The launch of the Udokan mine in Russia's Far East would, in normal times, be a cause for global celebration. Udokan, one of the world's largest deposits of high-grade copper, is easily accessible thanks to the Baikal-Amur Mainline, a major railway line connecting Siberia with Russia's Far East. You would think a \$7 billion development project like this would get more attention, especially considering its potential to supply the sulfides and cathodes countries need for producing countless industrial goods and green products like batteries and solar panels. That it hasn't speaks to the uncertainty of Russia's future.

The invasion has exposed Moscow's reliance on hydrocarbons to prop up its economy. Despite the growing renewables sector, fossil fuels will dominate the global energy economy for a long time to come in terms of sheer volume. But as demand eventually dissipates, the complex system of subsidies, tax exemptions, and cartel arrangements between Russia's leading resource firms will become far more difficult to manage.

Any hope of extracting more critical minerals, as well as building more batteries, solar panels and other "green" technologies for European consumers has been dashed by Western sanctions, which have no chance of being lifted in the foreseeable future. Mines like Udokan still provide employment, tax income and anchor infrastructure in Russia's underdeveloped provincial regions.

Once at full capacity, Udokan will generate several billion dollars in export earnings annually. But the real prize lies in finding ways to use this copper cheaply and efficiently in new supply chains. Russian copper has increasingly flowed eastward since sanctions were

Nick Trickett

imposed. Chinese buyers can't resist the glut of cut-price copper this shift has left at their disposal. Given that China accounts for 40% of global copper imports, it is probable that Udokan will increase this share, especially since Russia lacks the domestic manufacturing capacity to use its reserves to its full advantage.

A little over one-quarter of every ton of copper products Russian firms sell will be used in clean energy technologies, including batteries for electric vehicles. That figure will grow to half of every ton in the next 15 years. Every ton of copper sold from Udokan will feed the battery and electric vehicle complex, beginning to reshape demand expectations for oil and products like gasoline and diesel. Over 37% of new car sales in China are fully electric or plug-in hybrids, which frequently get over 60 miles per gallon. Globally, similar models will account for upward of 18% of sales this year. These figures will only grow in the years ahead. China, more than any other economy, is positioned to flood the market with price-competitive electric vehicles, crushing oil demand linked to transportation.

For an economy at war and dependent on oil revenues, timing peak oil is less important than understanding the cumulative effect of plateauing demand. The energy transition creates successive waves of tug-of-war between commodities. Opening new copper mines in Russia will undercut long-term demand for oil and gas, which are the single largest sources of state revenue. Sanctions and limited investment in the past decade have closed the door for Russia to play a larger role in the metals markets in the future. Meanwhile, the war has brought the question of munitions production into focus. Russia has shown it is preparing to fight a long war.

News that Russia's 2024 budget includes a 70% increase in defense spending illustrates just how many resources are being thrown into the conflict. Defense spending is, however, underwritten by the oil & gas revenues structurally threatened by sanctions and the green industries Udokan's copper will supply.

The military-industrial race between Moscow and the West matters. But the global energy transition is also an industrial race - one that is taking place without Russia. In time, the US Inflation Reduction Act will mark a turning point for energy markets. The tax provisions written into the bill have unleashed a surge of interest from firms across Asia and Europe into US hydro-

gen, electric vehicles, and metals processing and refining projects. This interest extends to mines and refineries in countries with which Washington has free trade agreements. Whatever becomes of Russia after the war will happen in the shadow of hundreds of billions of dollars worth of investment into the production of green technology. Investment which Russia will have missed out on. Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has tasked the Finance Ministry with coming up with tax breaks and subsidies to support additional expansions of mining and processing capacity at Udokan, reflecting the high costs of development in Siberia. A similar approach was taken to supporting older oil-fields in the region, showing the Kremlin recognizes critical minerals may be as important to their economy as fossil fuels. But no amount of tax breaks can make Russia competitive with copper mines in Chile, nickel mines in Indonesia, or lithium mines in Australia where trade agreements, better geology, or more attractive conditions for foreign investors are drawing large volumes of investment. Russia-based projects will not yield "green premiums" no matter how much they slash emissions. They won't sign contracts to supply new factories on the world's leading growth markets for batteries or clean technologies.

The world is not ditching fossil fuels wholesale. Growing pains from sanctions highlighted how dependent countries had been on Russia's abundant natural reserves, forcing them to open new resource extraction projects. The huge premiums enjoyed by diesel in the wake of the EU's ban on Russian imports, as well as reductions in refinery capacity, falling investment into the oil & gas sector, and fluctuations in Chinese refined petroleum products exports speak to that. But these markets now operate in a world where reducing consumption is increasingly feasible and arguably imperative for making businesses resilient in the energy transition. The Udokan mine was supposed to prove that Russian mining could flourish under sanctions. Instead, it shows that whatever happens in the months - and possibly years - ahead in Ukraine, Moscow has lost its chance to take an active part in the decarbonization of the global economy. Even if similar large projects to extract critical minerals are developed, the technologies they feed will eat away at the demand for the fossil fuels that are the foundation of Russia's economy. The loss of these windfalls will overturn the consensus that supported state spending for the past 20 years.

How America's bloodthirsty journalism cheers on Israel's war on Gaza

IN a recent segment on how Hamas "frames the civilian casualties" of Israel's war on the Gaza Strip, CNN's Jake Tapper starts out by acknowledging that we "do know that innocent civilians in Gaza continue to be killed by Israeli strikes". It is impossible to "not be affected by these horrific images that we're seeing", he states, as the humanitarian crisis in the enclave grows "increasingly dire".

What is the solution, then? In Tapper's view, apparently, it is for Israel to continue killing innocent civilians and presiding over a humanitarian catastrophe, because it is all Hamas's fault anyway. Near the beginning of the segment, we are shown a clip of Queen Rania of Jordan responding to those who argue that a ceasefire will help Hamas - an argument she says amounts to "endorsing and justifying the death of thousands of civilians".

Then it is back to Tapper, who calls Queen Rania's remarks an "interesting turn of phrase" and goes on to wonder condescendingly whether it did not occur to Hamas, when the organisation undertook its operation on October 7, that Israel would "retaliate in a way that would cause innocent Palestinians in Gaza to die". To start with, the "interesting turn of phrase" is not so much "interesting" as a straightforward statement of fact. If you insist there should be no ceasefire in an Israeli onslaught that has now killed over 11,000 people in Gaza in just over a

month - well, yeah, you are straight up "endorsing and justifying" civilian deaths.

And you are especially endorsing and justifying them if - instead of blaming Israel for slaughtering men, women and children in Gaza with abandon - you blame Hamas for failing to foresee the unprecedentedly psychotic nature of Israel's "retaliation". Were the American media and political establishment not so firmly committed to transmitting a thoroughly decontextualised version of this war - and of Israel/Palestine in general - perhaps a news anchor would ask whether it never occurred to Israel that the Palestinians would ever "retaliate" for 75 years of ethnic cleansing, suffocating blockades and massacres. Tapper forges ahead with his assault on logic and humanity with the help of an arsenal of video clips, several of them courtesy of the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), itself an unofficial Zionist propaganda arm - although CNN and other US media outlets are doing a fine job in that respect, as well.

From these clips, featuring former Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal among others, Tapper draws three convenient conclusions, which he conveys with Orientalist smugness and disdain: that Hamas is totally content to have Palestinian civilians die; that Hamas does not care about protecting civilians and only cares about their own military tunnels; and that Hamas is determined to

keep attacking Israel for eternity. In case anyone remains unconvinced, he has also thrown in a clip of former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who is evidently unsatisfied with the quantity of blood she already has on her hands and requires more: "People who are calling for a ceasefire now do not understand Hamas. That is not possible. It would be such a gift to Hamas." Near the end of the segment, we are presented with the "point of view of Israel", as if that is not what we have been receiving this whole time: "They [the Israelis] hear all the calls for a ceasefire, What they do not hear is anyone in the international community proposing any way for them to get back their 240 hostages that Hamas kidnapped." This is funny, since, as NPR reported this month, a recent opinion poll in Israel found that almost two-thirds of the Israelis surveyed were in favour of a prisoner exchange - something Hamas has repeatedly offered - in which Israel would release its Palestinian detainees in exchange for the hostages held by Hamas. Why look to the "international community" when there is a solution right there?

It bears emphasising that prisoner exchanges are nothing new. In 2011, for example, Israel freed no fewer than 1,027 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for a single soldier held by Hamas since 2006 - chalk the ratio up to the superior value placed on Israeli lives. And, in 2008, Israel acquired the

remains of two Israeli soldiers in exchange for five Lebanese nationals and the remains of 199 Lebanese and Palestinian captives. As of the Hamas operation of October 7, there were over 5,000 Palestinians languishing in Israeli jails; two weeks later, the number had doubled, as Israel went about maniacally arresting people. But, hey, we are only supposed to see the "point of view of Israel". Proceeding in his defence of that viewpoint, Tapper laments that the Israelis "don't hear anyone proposing any way for Hamas to be removed from the leadership of Gaza." This is an "interesting turn of phrase", to borrow Tapper's own words, seeing as removing Hamas from leadership isn't really anyone else's business at all.

Recall that, after Hamas won democratic elections in 2006, the US decided it was indeed their business, and helpfully sparked a civil war in Gaza - to Hamas's eventual advantage. Oops. Anyway, who needs a Palestinian civil war when you can just annihilate Gaza altogether? Tapper's segment received praise from various US media figures, with Brit Hume of Fox News lauding his "excellent analysis". It is an "analysis", of course, that is shared by President Joe Biden and across the US politico-media spectrum: That a ceasefire is off the table and Palestinians must continue to die. And as Tapper continues to audition for the role of Israeli military spokesperson, an immediate ceasefire needs to be called on bloodthirsty journalism.

Aljazeera

Kosovo remains in purgatory as tensions rise again

Yasar Yakis

SMALL problems are sometimes more difficult to solve than big ones. The formal recognition of Kosovo is one of them because Russia opposes it in the UN Security Council - or rather the disputed status of the Mitrovica district. When late President Josip Broz Tito ruled Yugoslavia after the Second World War, he must not have paid much attention to whether Mitrovica, a town in the north of the autonomous region of Kosovo, should belong to Serbia or to Kosovo. However, it has now become one of the bleeding wounds at the heart of the Balkans. Belgrade, which did not bother for decades that Mitrovica should be governed by Serbs, has woken up to the reality that this town is in Kosovar territory.

About 90 percent of Kosovo's population are Albanians. But the Christians - both Catholic and Orthodox - are opposed to Kosovo joining Albania because this would further tilt the balance in favor of the Muslim population. This article will focus on the problems between Serbia and Kosovo.

Kosovo has a population of about 2 million. It unilaterally proclaimed independence from Serbia in 2008. The UN General Assembly approved its independence and more than 100 countries now formally recognize Kosovo. The question of the recognition of Kosovo has not been tabled at the

UN Security Council because Russia would oppose it. The majority of Albanians are Sunni Muslim. Because former President Enver Hoxha ruled Albania with extremely oppressive measures, many Albanians deserted their homeland and were scattered almost all over the world, including Italy, Argentina, Greece, Romania, Croatia, Turkiye, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Germany and the US. Albanians have also settled in Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Belgium, the UK, New Zealand and the UAE. Though Kosovo is not part of Serbia, the Serbs consider it a historic city because, more than six centuries ago, in 1389, a wounded Serbian knight killed the Ottoman Sultan Murad I when he was inspecting the aftermath of a battle. This Battle of Kosovo marked the beginning of the implantation of the Ottomans in the Balkans. The Serbian knight's courage went on to become a symbol of bravery for Serbs throughout the centuries. Although Kosovo has never been a Serbian city, the fact the Turkish-Serbian war was fought there makes it a sacred city in the eyes of Serbs.

Several centuries later, Kosovo again became a bone of contention, this time between Serbs and Kosovars. A military conflict broke out in 1998 between Kosovo and Serbia and lasted almost a year and

a half. It was fought between the now-extinct Yugoslavia and an Albanian rebel group called the Kosovo Liberation Army. NATO forces intervened in favor of the Kosovars, carrying out airstrikes, and the Yugoslav forces had to withdraw from Kosovo. A Military Technical Agreement was signed on June 9, 1999, in Kumanovo, Macedonia, between NATO's Kosovo Force and Serbia. The Kosovo Force entered Kosovo on June 11, the day after the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1244 confirming that Serbia had to evacuate Kosovo. There have always been clashes between Serbs and Kosovars, the last major one being in 2020. The clashes restarted last month, especially in the Mitrovica area, leaving one Kosovar policeman and three Serbian gunmen dead. About 50,000 Serbs living in North Kosovo reject their Kosovar citizenship and continue to recognize Belgrade as their capital.

In the aftermath of the clashes, Belgrade and Pristina accused each other of starting the conflict. There are 4,500 NATO troops still stationed in Kosovo as a peace-keeping mission, but without a specific mandate from the alliance they may remain as distant as possible from this impending clash. White House spokesperson John Kirby said that Serbia was massing an "unprecedented" number of forces

along the border. The prospects of the situation stabilizing any time soon are not encouraging. Kosovo officials claim that those who were caught in Mitrovica were sent there by the Serbian authorities. They also claim that there are terrorists sent from Russia, but this claim does not seem to be convincing, as Moscow can hardly spare fighters to be sent to fight in Kosovo. Graffiti on the wall of a house in northern Mitrovica read: "Kosovo belongs to Serbia and Crimea to Russia." During last month's clashes, about 30 masked men opened fire on a Kosovar police patrol. The patrol responded with fire and the Serbs barricaded themselves in a Serbian monastery.

No matter what either side says, the tension remains high. The mutual trust is low and the positions of the two sides do not seem to be bridgeable. The EU and US are trying to strike a deal to normalize relations between Serbia and Kosovo. Russia blames the West for failing to protect Kosovo Serbs.

It may also try to turn the attention of the international community from the Ukrainian war to the Balkans. The Serbs and Kosovars lived side by side for centuries. These harmonious relations were unfortunately spoiled after the dismemberment of Yugoslavia. We may still hope that, with the help of unbiased international actors, calm will prevail in this adorable geography.

Conflict in Gaza expected to calm down soon

Ma Xiaolin

THE fresh military conflict between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas has left over 1,100 dead and thousands injured. Those affected included many civilians on both sides. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has declared war against Hamas.

The crisis, particularly the significant number of casualties and injuries, has undoubtedly affected Israel's societal security. The government of Benjamin Netanyahu faces scrutiny, particularly its intelligence and security apparatus. Questions arise about the effectiveness of Israel's past policies, which involved periodic confrontations with Hamas every few years. Israel's headline right-wing stance and its continuity are also subjects for consideration in Israeli society. During the crisis, internal unity in Israel may strengthen, and the coalition government is unlikely to dissolve in the short term, as no one else is perceived as being tougher than Netanyahu.

This conflict has undoubtedly had a significant impact on stability in the Middle East. Hamas, originating in the south just as the Hezbollah stems

from the north, launched a dual-front attack on Israel. Israel has not suffered such a severe loss in decades, prompting them to retaliate aggressively. This will heighten tensions in the Gaza Strip, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis there. It has also drawn the attention of major powers and regional countries for the time being. However, it should not be exaggerated as a conflict rising to the level of a regional war involving Israel and its neighboring countries.

Typically, conflicts in the Israeli-Palestinian context are addressed through mechanisms such as UN Security Council resolutions, diplomatic negotiations, and international pressure. Additionally, countries like Egypt and Jordan often mediate and facilitate discussions, with the possibility of the involvement of the United States, Europe, and even China through diplomatic channels.

However, given the ongoing hostilities from both sides, these mediation mechanisms may not yield immediate results. The opportunity for peace in the Middle East lies in recognizing that the Palestinian

issue remains at the core of the region's problems. Without a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, lasting and comprehensive security and peace in the Middle East will remain elusive. It's essential not to overlook the Palestinian problem, even as Israel normalizes relations with an increasing number of regional countries. Furthermore, the inability to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian issue could impact the recent reconciliation process between Saudi Arabia and Iran and, in turn, affect more countries' normalization of relations with Israel.

Strictly speaking, the conflict between Hamas and Israel is unlikely to have a lasting impact on relations between the major regional countries, as it remains fundamentally a Palestinian issue. These countries, including Turkiye, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, have already expressed their positions.

The situation is expected to calm down within days, or a few weeks. In the broader Middle East context, dialogue, reconciliation, and cooperation are prevailing trends that are unlikely to reverse in the short term.



PSX stayed bearish, loses 2,371 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 2,371.64 more points, a negative change of 3.64 percent, closing at 62,833.03 points against 65,204.68 points the previous trading day.

A total of 1,513,931,019 shares valuing Rs.29,099 billion were traded during the day as compared to 1,890,424,261 shares valuing Rs.24.595 billion the last day.

Some 386 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 31 of them recorded gains and 351 sustained losses,

whereas the share prices of 4 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 341,067,706 shares at Rs.5.30 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 176,027,711 shares at Rs.1.70 per share and Energyco PK with 131,716,935 shares at Rs.5.01 per share.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.150.00 per share price, closing at Rs.9,900.00, whereas the runner-up was Pakistan Services Limited with a Rs.44.63 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,126.63.

Unilever Pakistan Foods witnessed a maximum

decrease of Rs.725.00 per share closing at Rs21,550.00, followed by Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs.400.00 decline to close at Rs.8,100.00.

Steady recovery continues: Rupee gains 19 paise against Dollar

Pakistani Rupee on Tuesday witnessed the 6th consecutive recovery session as it gained 19 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs283.01 against the previous day's closing of Rs283.20.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market

stood at Rs283.5 and Rs286.2 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 05 paise to close at Rs309.30 against the last day's closing of Rs309.35, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen came down by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.96; whereas a decrease of Rs1.04 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs358.49 compared to the last closing of Rs359.53.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 05 paise each to close at Rs77.06 and Rs75.44 respectively.



ISLAMABAD: People purchasing fish from vendor in Weekly Bazaar at Peshawar Mor.

FBFC to become operational soon: Secretary Industries

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Business Facilitation Center (FBFC) will become operational very soon where 17 departments would provide "No Objection Certificates" (NOC) within a mandated time frame ranging from 10-30 days, said Ehsan Bhutta, provincial Secretary Industries, Commerce, Investment & Skill Development.

Addressing the business community in the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he discussed problems faced by the business community and said that 70% identified problems related to the federal, and 30% related to provincial departments and a few were linked to local governments.

He was optimistic that the FBFC would play a key role in resolving the imminent issues. He said that all Punjab chambers were consulted at the highest level to resolve their issues on a fast-track basis. "Seventeen departments including Housing, Local Government, FDA, WASA, TEPA, Forests, Tourism, Environment, Irrigation, Labour and Social Security etc would set up their desks in the center in addition to federal entities of gas and electricity. The intending investor will have to just file an application while the remaining process would be undertaken by the BFC staff," he added.

He said that the Industries Department had also uploaded a list of required documents and fee structure with a timeframe required under the rules for the issuance of the NOC. "It would save applicants from repeatedly visiting the BFC to complete the mandatory documentation", he said, adding that a well defined monitoring system had also been evolved while applicants could also pay the fee through E-Pay in addition to tracking their application through an online system. He said that applicants would receive an SMS mentioning the date for the collection of the required NOC.

Explaining the ecosystem for businesses, he said that it requires continuity of policies, law and order and availability of inputs including gas, electricity and raw material. "However, the mandated tasks of the industries department would be resolved on a priority basis", he said and added that smog had become a major threat to human health, but its main causes had been defined as vehicular emission, stubble burning and the industry.

Responding to a question, he said that all information uploaded on the server of the BFC would be linked with the provincial and then with the federal portal in a later phase. He said that some programmes had already been rolled out while the remaining were in the experimental stage. They would become part of the BFC very soon, he added.

About physical visits by different departments, he

said that all departments under the umbrella of the BFC would visit an industrial unit at the same time to save industrialists from repeated visits.

Earlier, acting President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad welcomed the guests and introduced Faisalabad as one of the major industrial hubs of Pakistan.

About the FCCI, he said that it represented 118 associations, sectors and sub-sectors and also plays a key role in bridging the gap between the government and the business community. He appreciated the establishment of the BFC and said that all mandatory NOCs could be issued under one roof.

He also stressed the need for uniformity and continuity of economic policies so that investors could start major projects with full confidence. He termed existing circumstances most discouraging and said that Faisalabad was known as the city of power looms but most of the units had been closed and looms were being sold at a throw-away price.

He said that exports and foreign remittances were also in declining mode as gas and electricity tariffs had been increased manifold. He paid tribute to the business community and said that despite daunting challenges, they were waging "Jihad" in the most critical situation.

He said, "Being Muslim, we are not disappointed but the people at the helms of affairs must carve out workable policies to put the

country on the growth trajectory."

Shafiq Hussain Shah, Kashif Zia, Mian Muhammad Tayyab, Sana Ullah Khan Niazi, Shakil Ansari, Rana Fayyaz Ahmed and Aftab Butt took part in the question-answer session.

Madam Saima of PBIT also participated in the meeting through online while a short documentary on the BFC was also screened.

Later, Dr. Sajjad Arshad presented an FCCI memento to Ehsan Bhutta whereas Mr. Bhutta also recorded his impressions in the FCCI visitors' book.

Gold rates up by Rs400

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 400 and was sold at Rs 217,600 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 217,200 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 343 to Rs 186,557 from Rs 186,214 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 171,011 from Rs 170,696, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and 10 gram silver remained stagnant at Rs 2,670 and 2,289.09 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$4 to \$2,047 from \$2,043, the Association reported.

UBL leads in home remittance market

F.P. Report

KARACHI: United Bank Limited (UBL) has once again proven its leadership in the banking industry by winning 'Highest Remittance Mobilizing Bank of Pakistan' at the Pakistan Remittance Summit 2023, held in Malaysia.

UBL's achievement is attributed to the success of UBL Tezraftaar, which has the highest market share for the home remittances business in the banking industry and caters to the diverse needs of both senders and recipients. The bank has

strategically positioned itself as a reliable partner for Pakistani expats by offering seamless and secure channels for remittance flows. This has made UBL Tezraftaar the No 1 Choice for Overseas Pakistanis.

The recognition of UBL as the top bank for mobilizing remittances highlights the bank's operational excellence and customer-centric approach.

UBL has consistently demonstrated a commitment to digital innovation, offering user-friendly solutions that have earned the trust of a broad range of

customers.

UBL's extensive network of branches and strategic partnerships with international financial institutions and exchange houses have further streamlined the remittance process and simplified the process of sending funds to beneficiaries in Pakistan.

UBL's success in the remittance sector emphasizes its commitment to providing exceptional financial services and contributing to the economic development of Pakistan through the inflow of foreign funds through legal channels.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Six ships namely, MSC Pamela, Maersk Brooklyn, Northern Javelin, Sakizaya Star, Al-Bida and Indigo Cefiro carrying Container, Canola Seed, LNG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Grain Terminal, Eleny Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Limra and Ejanan also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours to unload Petroleum Products respectively.

A total of nine ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a container ship 'MSC Pamela' left the port on today morning and another container ships 'Maersk Brooklyn' is expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 135,884 tonnes, comprising 86,936 tonnes imports cargo and 48,948 tonnes export cargo carried in 2,843 Containers (1,033 TEUs Imports and 1,810 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 08 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them four ships, Clean Sanctuary, Santa Valentina, Ejanan, and Limra & two more ships, Chem-Road Polaris and Maersk Kinloss scheduled to load/offload Fuel oil, Coal, LNG, LPG, Palm oil and Container are expected to take berths at

FOTCO, PQEPT, PGPCL, LCT and QICT respectively on today, while another Containership 'Clemens Schulte' is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Wednesday.

Tractor assembling grew by 55.58 per cent

ISLAMABAD (APP): Tractor assembling in the country during first four months of current financial year increased by 55.58 percent as compared the assembling of the corresponding period of last year.

During the period from July-October, 2023 about 17,259 tractors were locally produced as compared the production of 11,093 tractors of the same period of last year, according to the data of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) released by the

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

As compared to the corresponding month of last year, tractor production in the country during the month of October, 2023 grew by 80.74 percent as 5,536 tractors were locally assembled as against the assembling of 3,063 tractors of the same month of last year.

During the period under review, the overall output of LSMI in the country witnessed a negative growth of 0.44 percent as compared the production of the same

period of last year.

The output of the industries including food, beverages, wearing apparel, coke, petroleum products, chemicals, fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, non-metallic mineral products, machinery and equipment witnessed growth during the period under review.

Where as the output of tobacco, textile, iron & steel products, electrical equipment, automobiles, other transport equipment and furniture areas decreased during the period under review.

Tokyo stocks close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher on Tuesday as the yen slipped against the dollar after the Bank of Japan maintained its super-loose monetary policy.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index rose 1.41 percent, or 460.41 points, to 33,219.39, while the broader Topix index added 0.73 percent, or 16.95 points, to end at 2,333.81.

The Japanese market started with losses in cautious trade ahead of the BoJ policy decision, as speculation had been swirling for weeks that officials would shift away from negative interest rates and a tight grip on bond yields as inflation picks up.

The Nikkei strengthened in afternoon trade after the central bank announced it was sticking to its easy monetary policy during the midday trading break, Daiwa Securities said.

The yen slipped against the dollar after the announcement, the brokerage added.

The dollar fetched 143.46 yen in late Tokyo hours, up from 142.36 yen in early trade.

Looking ahead, traders were paying attention to Bank Governor Kazuo Ueda's press conference after the closing bell, analysts said.

Among major shares in Tokyo, Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing climbed 2.19 percent to 35,930 yen, chip-testing equipment maker Advantest soared 4.10 percent to 4,955 yen, and Honda advanced 1.47 percent to 1,445.5 yen.

Nippon Steel ended down 2.81 percent at 3,148 yen, after its announcement that it would buy US Steel Corp for \$14.1 billion, sparking criticism about the firm's ownership in an industry crucial to US national security.

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Established in 1999 as a visionary enterprise, Omni Group has evolved into one of Pakistan's leading industrial conglomerates, headquartered in Karachi, Sindh. Helmed by Chairman Khawaja Anver Majid, this privately-owned conglomerate operates across a spectrum of industries, including Rice, Sugar, Cement, Ethanol, Polypropylene bags, Power, Automation, and Aviation.

A journey of growth and diversification

From its humble beginnings with Omni Private Ltd., Omni Group's trajectory in Pakistan's industrial landscape has been marked by strategic expansions. The group's integration spans sectors such as Sugar, Rice, Automotive, Power, Distillery, Aviation, Polymer, and Gases. Over the years, it has diversified into packaging, printing, automotive, and energy, solidifying its position as a multi-industry conglomerate.

Industries & companies Omni Group's influence extends across various sectors, with key industries including Sugar, Rice, Automotive, Power, Distillery, Aviation, Polymer, and Gases. The conglomerate boasts an impressive portfolio of companies, including Ansari Sugar Mills, Bawany Sugar Mills, Omni Power, Dadu Energy, TCB Aviation, and many more.

Values and mission: Maximising impact

At the heart of Omni

Group's mission is the commitment to maximising value addition to people's lives and contributing significantly to the national economy. This commitment is actualised through profitable ventures, cost-effective product development, investment in cutting-edge technology, and a dedication to research and development. The company places emphasis on maintaining a motivated, trustworthy, and healthy work environment.

Diving into Omni's key industries 1. Sugar: With eight sugar mills in Sindh, Omni Group is a major player in Pakistan's sugar industry, boasting an aggregate crushing capacity of 51,100 TCD. The group's expansion from 2001 onwards, including acquisitions like Naudero Sugar Mills, positions it as the largest sugar mill operating group in the province.

2. Rice: The Shikarpur Rice Mills, a part of Omni Group, is a key player in the rice sector. Omni Private Ltd, the largest rice mill in terms of capacity, utilises advanced technology with humidity and temperature-controlled silos for optimal storage.

3. Ethanol: Pak Ethanol, established in 2010, stands as one of Pakistan's major ethanol producers and exporters. The distilleries owned by Pak Ethanol are recognised for their modern design and annual production capacity of 70,000 MT.

4. Polypropylene Bags: Omni Polymer Packaging,

in operation since 2005, manufactures bags catering to diverse industries. The company focuses on quality control through material inspection, process inspection, and final quality control.

5. Tractor: Entering the automotive sector in 2005, Omni Group manufactures agricultural tractors, mini trucks, and motorcycles. The tractor market in Pakistan is well-established, and Omni Group ensures high-quality and precise tractor parts.

6. Cement: Thatta Cement Company, a subsidiary of Omni Group, has been a key player in the cement industry since 1980. The plant, commissioned in 1982, operates on dry process technology with an installed capacity of 1,000 tons per day.

7. Power: Omni Group's power division is actively involved in developing and operating power generation projects in Pakistan. The company, in accordance with the New Captive Power Plant Policy, focuses on providing customised energy solutions to industrial clients.

8. National Gases: NGL, established in 1976, plays a crucial role in providing economical and environmentally friendly gas options. The company adheres to international standards for quality and service, contributing significantly to industrial, commercial, and healthcare sectors.

Leadership: A triumvirate guiding Omni's success

Khawaja Anver Majid, Khawaja Abdul Ghani Majid, and Khawaja Nimr Majid form a dynamic leadership team. With their wealth of experience, they steer Omni Group towards growth and success, ensuring strategic vision, industry expertise, and commitment to excellence.

Philanthropy: Bridging gaps for a better society

Omni Group extends its impact beyond business operations through philanthropic initiatives. From flood relief camps providing essential services to supporting education to employees of respective plants and organising free medical camps, the group is dedicated to improving the well-being of communities.

Omni Group of Companies Pakistan continues to fulfil its corporate social responsibility by providing free healthcare support to flood-hit areas across Pakistan's province of Sindh. A four-day free medical camp in the latter part of 2022 was set up near flood-hit areas of Ghotki district and other parts of Sindh to facilitate those affected by climate change. Free medical camps are regularly set up in rural regions of Sindh to provide quality and timely care to underprivileged communities.

Another noteworthy CSR accomplishment of Omni Group of Companies Pakistan includes providing employment opportunities to more than 15,000 deserving and qualified individuals by setting up

industries and other ancillary businesses in impoverished areas of Sindh. Through job opportunities, Omni Group of Companies Pakistan has made commendable efforts for the economic development and revival of the poorest regions of Sindh. These efforts continue to improve living conditions and the quality of life across the province of Sindh.

Contributions to careers and development

Omni Group not only drives economic development in Pakistan but also actively contributes to career development. Through various initiatives like job creation, training and development programs, skill enhancement, and internship programs, the group fosters growth and employment opportunities.

Certificates: Upholding quality standards

Omni Group ensures quality standards through certifications such as OAIL EDB & QA Certificates, ISO 9001-2008 for OPPPL, and ISO 2000-2005 for Pak Ethanol.

Omni Group's enduring legacy

Omni Group's journey from a visionary enterprise to a diversified industrial powerhouse reflects its resilience, adaptability, and commitment to excellence. With a dynamic leadership team, a broad portfolio of industries, and a focus on societal impact, Omni Group continues to play a pivotal role in shaping Pakistan's industrial landscape.

Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 337/1. Institution 16/11/2023 Date of hearing. 23/12/2023. Abnamia etc Vs. Halqa Patwari etc. Notice to no 6.Baroz Khan son of Palas Khan resident of Kalpani tehsel Gagra district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that, if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 23/12/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Senior Civil Judge /Guardian Judge/ Aala Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Application No. 55/5. Institution. 15/12/2023. Date of hearing. 21/12/2023. Mst. Samelzsy Bibi Vs. General Public. Notice to General Public. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants (General Public) cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore anyone concerned will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 21/12/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



In brief

Perfect relationship with Mbappe: Luis

POISSY (AFP): Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Enrique insists he has a "perfect" relationship with Kylian Mbappe, despite the France star forward's attitude during recent games raising questions about his happiness at the club. Mbappe appeared frustrated during last week's 1-1 Champions League draw with Borussia Dortmund in Germany, disappointed with his teammates for settling for a point when a win would have seen them finish top of their group. He again looked less than happy at times during Sunday's 1-1 draw at Lille in Ligue 1, a match in which he played through the middle of the attack, away from his usual preferred role on the left flank. "As always, a perfect relationship," Luis Enrique said when asked how he got on with Mbappe at a press conference on Tuesday, on the eve of PSG's final match of the year at home to Metz. "We are not a couple but that is mainly because he doesn't want us to be," the Spaniard joked. "I don't know why I keep getting asked this question. I am very close to most of my players." "Kylian is always making jokes and laughing," he added. Mbappe, who is out of contract at the end of this season, will celebrate his 25th birthday on Wednesday. "Twenty-five is so young. I hope he continues to have more success at PSG and that we are able to help him," Luis Enrique said. "He is fantastic. We are lucky to have him," he added of a player who has scored 19 goals in all competitions this season.

Amelia Kerr hails Pakistan

CHRISTCHURCH'S (Monitoring Desk): Star New Zealand all-rounder Amelia Kerr hailed Pakistan following the Girls in Green's historic win over her side in the third WODI at Hagley Oval. Pakistan beat New Zealand for the first time in Women's one-day cricket. The match was decided in the Super Over as the winners could not be decided in the 100 overs. In the Super Over, Pakistan managed 11-2 with Aliya Riaz scoring eight runs off Amelia Kerr's bowling. Sadia Iqbal's heroics saw New Zealand falling short by four runs. The spinner gave away eight runs and dismissed Amelia Kerr and Sophie Devine to seal a historic victory for the Girls in Green. Amelia Kerr, who was judged Player of the Series for her exceptional performances, lauded Pakistan for keeping its composure to win the game in the post-match press conference. "Credit to Pakistan for the way they have been on this tour and on the field as well," she said. "They were exceptional under pressure and took those catches. They were clean and stopped us from running twos and I think they just showed real composure and it got them across the line." It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan's tour of New Zealand has been a remarkable affair as the Girls in Green became the first Asian side to win a T20I series in New Zealand. Fatima Sana's side ended things on a high note as they beat the White Ferns for the first time in WODI history.

Pakistan name 17-member squad for NZ T20I series

LAHORE (PPI): Right-arm pacer Mohammad Abbas Afridi, wicket-keeper-batter Haseebullah and leg-spinner Usama Mir have earned their maiden call-ups to the T20I team following their commendable run during the domestic season. Sahibzada Farhan, who made his T20I debut for Pakistan in 2018, has also returned to the squad after he impressed with the bat in the National T20 Cup 2023-24. According to PCB information on Tuesday, Shaheen Shah Afridi will be leading the Pakistan squad for the first time. The series also marks the start of Pakistan's preparations for the ICC T20 World Cup 2024, which is scheduled to take place in June 2024. The national men's selection committee headed by Wahab Riaz assembled the 17-member squad for Pakistan's T20I tour of New Zealand, which will comprise five matches, to be played from 12 January to 21 January 2024, across four venues namely; Auckland, Hamilton, Dunedin and Christchurch. Pakistan will be touring New Zealand immediately after their Test tour of Australia, with the last match to be played from 3 to 7 January 2024 in Sydney. The squad will depart for New Zealand from Lahore on 3 January 2024, while players who are currently in Australia for the Test series, will join them on 8 January 2024. Mohammad Abbas Afridi, who represented Peshawar, was among the top wicket-takers of the National T20 Cup. The 22-year-old picked up 14 scalps at an average of 16.43 in nine matches during the tournament. Earlier during the domestic season, he ended as the joint-highest wicket-taker of the Pakistan Cup, bagging 15 scalps at an average of 15 from seven games. He was also named the

emerging player of HBL PSL 8.

Leg-spinner Usama Mir has earned his maiden T20I call-up, having made his ODI debut for Pakistan this year as well. He has featured in 12 games in the format thus far. Haseebullah earned his maiden call-up after impressing with the bat during the domestic season. He was declared player of the tournament during this year's Pakistan Cup for his remarkable performance with the bat and gloves; he made 326 runs in seven matches, including two centuries and a half-century, and had 10 dismissals behind the stumps.

Peshawar's top-order batter, Sahibzada Farhan, amassed 492 runs from 12 games in the National T20 Cup. The right-handed batter smashed a century and four half-centuries, and had the highest individual boundary count (55 fours and 29 sixes) in the Cup. Uncapped Abrar Ahmed returns to the squad as well. Azam Khan, who last featured for Pakistan against Afghanistan in March 2023, has also been named in the squad.

Considering the conditions in New Zealand, Pakistan has opted for six pace bowling options; Amir Jamal, Zaman Khan, Haris Rauf, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Abbas Afridi and Shaheen. Naseem Shah, Ihsanullah and Shadab Khan will not be part of the squad due to injuries. Shan Masood, Mohammad Haris and Faheem Ashraf, who were part of Pakistan's squad during the last bilateral series, miss out on the tour.

The players named in the squad will be assembling for a training camp, ahead of their departure. The camp will take place 28 December 2023 to 3 January 2024 in Lahore. Nine additional players have been called up to the camp: Mohammad

Haris, Arif Yaqoob, Mohammad Imran, Mohammad Amir Khan, Sajjad Ali Jnr, Shahab Khan, Ahmed Shehzad, Kamran Ghulam and Omair Bin Yousuf.

Full squad: Shaheen Shah Afridi (captain), Aamir Jamal, Abbas Afridi, Azam Khan (wicket-keeper), Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah (wicket-keeper), Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan (wicket-keeper), Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Usama Mir and Zaman Khan.

Wahab Riaz, chief selector men's cricket team, said: "It is very important for us to nurture our young talent as they have to represent Pakistan going forward. This is the best pool of players but we also want to build back-ups. We have to explore our new talent and see what kind of performances they are capable of producing. Going forward, we need to understand our back-up options in our player pool and promote domestic performers.

"Mohammad Haris has been rested during this series. We are well aware of his capabilities and he is part of our plans going forward. Shan Masood is also part of our plans and likewise has been rested for this series. We will call him up if we require him to fill any gaps in the team."

Full schedule:
1st T20 – 12 January 2024 at Eden Park, Auckland
2nd T20 – 14 January 2024 at Seddon Park, Hamilton
3rd T20 – 17 January 2024 at University Oval, Dunedin
4th T20 – 19 January 2024 at Hagley Oval, Christchurch
5th T20 – 21 January 2024 at Hagley Oval, Christchurch.

Pakistan baseball team makes big leap in world rankings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan baseball team continues to excel as it has surged an impressive 11 spots in the WBSC/KONAMI Men's Baseball World Rankings to capture the 38th position, according to the latest ranking update. "This achievement follows our fifth-place finish in the recently-held the XXX BFA Asian Championship, showcasing the extraordinary talent and dedication of our players," President of Pakistan Federation Baseball (PFB) Syed, Fakhar Ali Shah said on Tuesday.

In a statement, he

thanked the baseball fans and the nation for supporting and believing in the national outfit. "Your unwavering encouragement has been instrumental in this success. This achievement underscores the potential within Pakistan's baseball community," he said.

"With continued support and investment, including the vision for a dedicated baseball stadium, we aim to propel our team even further. I firmly believe that with the right resources, Pakistan Federation Baseball is destined for Olympic greatness in the future. Let's celebrate this

milestone together and continue to build a brighter future for baseball in Pakistan," he added.

Meanwhile, Olympic champions Japan maintained its grip on the No.1 position. Japan's points tally has increased by 225 points to 5,797 following their win in the Asian Championship. The ranking update also includes the results of the WBSC U-15 Baseball World Cup Oceania Qualifier. The top 26 men's baseball programmes maintained their positions in the ranking with Mexico (4,764) in second place and the United States (4,492) No. 3.

Kaliwal Zalmi League Season 3 embarked on its journey

F.P. Report

PESHWAR: Kaliwal Zalmi League Season 3 embarked on its journey with an exhilarating Phase 1 that commenced on December 7th across all 34 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This inaugural stage witnessed the spirited participation of over 800 teams hailing from diverse regions such as Peshawar 129 teams, Kohat 72 teams, DI Khan 58 teams, Mardan 46 teams, Hazara 102 teams, Waziristan, Bannu 97 teams, Nowshera, Shangla, Charsada, Peshawar, Khyber Agency, Dir, Swat 72 teams, Mohmand, Swabi, Bajaur, and Abbottabad, Malakand Division 238 teams, lakki Marwat 32 teams.

A resounding success, Phase 1 brought together a staggering 12,000 cricket enthusiasts who showcased their passion and prowess on the field. The tournament unfolded as a vibrant tapestry, weaving together



the rich cricketing tapestry of the entire KPK region.

As the dust settled on Phase 1, the focus now shifts to the highly anticipated Phase 2. This stage will see the clash of titans as the 34 district champion teams vie for supremacy.

Only the top eight divisional champions emerging from this intense competition will earn the coveted opportunity to advance to the Grand Finale of Kaliwal Zalmi League Season 3.

The journey thus far has been a testament to the

unbridled enthusiasm and talent that permeates the cricketing landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Kaliwal Zalmi League Season 3 has not only united cricket aficionados from diverse backgrounds but has also served as a platform for the region's emerging stars to shine.

As the league progresses into its culminating phases, the anticipation and excitement continue to mount, promising a spectacular climax to this cricketing spectacle.

Sidra soars in ICC women's ODI player rankings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Opener Sidra Ameen has reached a career-best 14th position in the MRF Tyres ICC Women's ODI Player Rankings while attaining the fourth-highest rating points for a Pakistan woman batter after notching 105 in the first match of the ICC Women's Championship series against New Zealand in Queenstown.

According to latest ranking update issued on Tuesday, Sidra has gained six positions and is now on 578 rating points, with only Javeria Khan (632), Bismah Maroof (628) and Nahida Khan (604) having registered higher points from among Pakistan women batters.

New Zealand batter Suzie Bates, who smashed a 104-ball 108 in the first match, is another one to gain, advancing five slots to reach 18th position. All-rounder Amelia Kerr, player of the series with 164 runs and five wickets, has gained one slot to reach ninth position among bat-



ters after helping her team to a 2-1 win.

Sadia Iqbal (up 11 places to 21st among bowlers), Fatima Sana (up two places to 27th among bowlers) and Ghulam Fatima (up 12 places to 44th among bowlers) are other Pakistan players to move up, while Maddy Green (up nine places to 23rd among batters), Hannah Rowe (up four places to 22nd among bowlers) and Fran Jonas (up 11 places to 47th among bowlers) are the New Zealand players to gain after the latest weekly update.

South Africa star

Marizanne Kapp, who missed the first match of their ICC Women's Championship series against Bangladesh in East London, now shares the top position in the ranking for all-rounders with Ash Gardner, as the Australian caught up with her at 377 rating points.

Murshida Khatun's unbeaten 91, that helped Bangladesh score a 119-run win over South Africa in East London, has moved up 23 places to 52nd position while left-arm spinner Nahida Akter's three-wicket haul lifted her two places to 12th position.

Wenger says Fifa's expanded Club WC will help make football 'global'



LONDON (Agencies): Arsene Wenger says Fifa's expanded Club World Cup can make football "really global" and should not just be looked at from a European perspective.

The 32-team event will begin in 2025 with 12 European clubs, including Manchester City and Chelsea.

World players' union Fifpro and City boss Pep Guardiola have expressed concern at the plans.

However, Wenger, Fifa's chief of global football development, says it is "a chance for other clubs to progress". Having championed the idea of a biennial World Cup, only for it to be dropped amid fierce opposition, the Frenchman wants to find ways of making all the confederations as strong as Europe's Uefa.

"The positive impact this will have on clubs is going to be huge, because it will increase resources for clubs all over the world to develop and to compete," said the former Arsenal manager. "In Europe we are lucky, but it's important that we

make football really global and this creates a chance for other clubs to progress. It will give more opportunities to more players all over the world to compete at the highest level.

"I accept that the football calendar is a busy one, but this is a competition that is going to take place every four years and of course the rest period during the competition and afterwards has to be respected."

The final of the event in the United States in 2025 will take place on 13 July. Under normal circumstances that would be four weeks before the start of the 2025-26 Premier League season.

At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, European club competitions were completed after the end of all domestic football, with the quarter-finals onwards staged in this August period.

As a result, the Premier League gave Manchester City and Manchester United the opening week of the 2020-21 season off to allow their players extra rest time. Wenger believes a solution can be found this time and pointed to the improved treatment of players as evidence their workload is being managed far better.

"The welfare of the players in the last 20 years has increased dramatically when you look at injury prevention, recovery work,

nutrition and advances in medical technology," he added. "Also VAR has helped with the protection of players, as players know they cannot escape from making bad tackles that cause injury.

"We see players receiving world awards, the likes of Messi, Ronaldo, Benzema, all over the age of 35. And it is not unusual to see international careers lasting over 20 years. "Not so long ago, that was not possible."

Lack of recovery time 'really, really tough' for players

Manchester City manager Guardiola says he is concerned by the scheduling of tournaments in the middle of the summer, limiting the time off players have between seasons. "I am not against the new competitions. I am against the lack of time to recover from year to year," Guardiola said.

"But it is really tough to finish the season and then in three weeks restart again and go to Asia, to be financially stable, or the States. That is really, really tough, for ourselves and especially for the players. For myself, things should change.

"But how do you change when [after] you finish the season, you go to the United States to play another competition? This is the problem." Manchester City midfielder Bernardo Silva says the

Australia's Starc, Cummins set salary records at IPL auction

DUBAI (AFP): Australian fast bowlers Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins became the most expensive players in Indian Premier League history Tuesday, with franchises dishing out millions of dollars for their services at the glitzy Twenty20 tournament.

Starc, who last played in the IPL eight years ago, made a smashing comeback when he was snapped up by Kolkata Knight Riders for 247.5 million rupees (\$2.98 million), setting an all-time IPL auction record.

"We won, Mr Starc!" the franchise posted on X, formerly Twitter.

Starc, 33, broke the record set by Cummins earlier in the day when Sunrisers Hyderabad paid 205 million rupees (\$2.47 million) for the World Cup-winning skipper. Before Tuesday, England all-rounder Sam Curran was the most expensive player after being bought for \$2.23 million last year by Punjab Kings.

"Pumped to be joining SRH for the upcoming IPL season," Cummins, who skipped this year's IPL because of a packed calendar, said in a video posted by the franchise on social media.

"I have played in Hyderabad a few times and always loved it so can't wait to get started." Hyderabad beat Royal Challengers Bangalore in a fervent bidding session for Cummins, to claps and cheers from other franchises participating in the auction, held this year in Dubai.

Both Australians were key members of the team that led Australia to ODI World Cup victory in November, beating hosts India in the final at Ahmedabad. Cummins had silenced a crowd of nearly 100,000 when he bowled out star batsman Virat Kohli, and was widely lauded for leading Australia to the title. The 30-year-old made a previous auction record of \$2.17 million when he signed with the Kolkata Knight Riders in 2019. Both Starc and Cummins had entered this auction with a base price of \$240,000, the top tier at which players can start the bidding for their services.

New Zealand all-rounder Daryl Mitchell was the third-top player at the auction, grabbed by Chennai Super Kings for \$1.6 million.

Mitchell, 32, was also one of the breakout stars at the World Cup, scoring two centuries against India -- in the group stage and in the semi-final.

Bumper salaries

Chennai coach Stephen Fleming said Mitchell's performances over the last 18-24 months had "warranted this type of a price". "He is an unfashionable player, often goes under the radar. With his ability to play spin he is competitive and he is also a handy bowler."

West Indies star Rovman Powell went to Rajasthan Royals for \$890,000 and Travis Head of Australia will play alongside Cummins for Hyderabad after being

sold for \$818,000. South African paceman Gerald Coetzee was sold to Mumbai Indians for \$602,000.

But up-and-coming New Zealand all-rounder Rachin Ravindra failed to arouse much interest, with Chennai paying an underwhelming \$216,000 for his services. Former Australia skipper Steve Smith went unsold in the first round, along with fellow wicketkeeper Josh Inglis.

More than 300 players were up for grabs at Tuesday's auction for the cash-rich tournament, likely to be held from March next year.

The IPL is a huge earner for Indian cricket and the tournament makes more than \$11 billion for the economy each year, according to pre-pandemic estimates. Last June, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) sold the broadcast rights for the next five IPL seasons to global media giants for an eye-watering \$6.2 billion. Mumbai Indians are the richest and most successful side in IPL history, with five titles to their name.

Attracting some of world cricket's top stars with bumper salaries, the pioneering IPL helped make Twenty20 hugely popular, attracting hundreds of millions of viewers and spawning copycat events worldwide. This year, the BCCI staged its inaugural women's edition of the T20 tournament, earning nearly \$700 million in combined franchise and media rights.

Dakar Rally Saudi Arabia gears up for its 5th edition

JEDDAH (Agencies): Over 1,000 race cars and equipment arrived at Yanbu after the two vessels carrying them berthed at King Fahd Industrial Port as preparations for Dakar Rally's fifth edition in Saudi Arabia are underway.

The vessels sailed toward the Kingdom from Barcelona, and once the offloading process is completed, rally cars and equipment are poised to proceed to the rally's launch site, according to a media statement on Tuesday.

Participants of the 46th edition of Dakar Rally, the motorsport world's most famous and challenging rally, are preparing to embark on a new challenge across Saudi Arabia's picturesque landscapes and explore its distinctive geographical diversity between Jan. 5 and 19, 2024.

The two vessels were loaded with 864 vehicles,

five helicopters, and 39 containers, along with support, media, and event organizer vehicles. The Kingdom is fully hosting the event for the fifth consecutive year, with 778 drivers and co-drivers participating.

This year's rally course consists of a prologue stage and 12 special stages, beginning with a preliminary journey from AlUla's desert camp before venturing through Al-Henakiyah, Al-Duwadimi, Al-Salamiya, Al-Hofuf, Shubaytah, Riyadh, Hail, and Yanbu.

Participants are expected to start arriving in the Kingdom on Dec. 29 and 30, 2023, with the scrutineering of the participating vehicles scheduled for Jan. 3 and 4, 2024, at the AlUla camp.

The opening ceremony is set for Jan. 4, the prologue stage for Jan. 5, and the first stage of the rally starts on Jan. 6, 2024.

The Dakar Rally 2024 Saudi Arabia will feature 434 vehicles, including 137 motorbikes, 72 race cars, 46 trucks, 42 T3 and 36 T4 lightweight vehicles, alongside 10 quad bikes, 66 classic cars, and 14 classic trucks. Additionally, 10 vehicles will compete in the Dakar Future -- Mission 1000 category, comprising one car, one truck, two T3 category vehicles, and six motorbikes.

The Dakar Rally stands as one of the oldest races in motorsports, recognized for its extensive scale, variety of events, and the intense thrill and passion it consistently delivers. It is organized by the Amaury Sport Organization in collaboration with the Saudi Motorsport Co., which operates under the umbrella of the Saudi Automobile and Motorcycle Federation, in coordination with other local authorities.

118 tons of fresh fruit exported

KANDAHAR (Ariana News): A total of 118,000 tons of fresh fruit has been exported from Kandahar province this year, and more than \$55 million earned from the exports, local officials said. Exported fruits included watermelons, grapes, pomegranates, and figs among others. According to officials from the Kandahar Chamber of Commerce, this year Kandahar's waters were managed properly and natural pests were less, so the yield of fresh fruit in Kandahar increased.

Expansion of trade discussed

HERAT (BNA): Afghanistan and Turkmen delegations met in Herat province, led by their foreign ministers, to discuss the expansion of the TAPI project from Afghan soil, the development of the Turghundi Railway Station, bilateral trade facilitation, transit, and transport, and increasing capacity of the province's Noor-ul-Jihad power station. Governor of Herat, Sheikh Mawlana Islam Jaar and acting deputy governor of Herat, Mawlawi Muhajir Farahi, participated in discussions

Americans warned against traveling to Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The US Department of State urged its citizens to refrain from traveling to Afghanistan "due to terrorism, risk of wrongful detention, kidnapping and crime."

"US citizens should not travel to Afghanistan for any reason," the State department said in statement.

Since the political change in August 2021, the US Embassy in Kabul has suspended operations, and the US government is not able to provide "any emergency consular services to US citizens in Afghanistan."

"Multiple terrorist groups are active in country

and US citizens are targets of kidnapping and wrongful detentions," the statement said. "The Department has assessed that there is a risk of wrongful detention of US citizens by the Taliban."

The statement claims that the "Taliban have harassed and detained aid and humanitarian workers."

It also added that the activities of foreigners may be viewed with suspicion, and reasons for detention may be unclear.

"Even if you are registered with the appropriate authorities to conduct business, the risk of detention is high," the statement added.

The Department of State also urged US citizens who

are in Afghanistan to depart immediately via commercial means "if possible."

The Islamic Emirate's spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said that such statements are based on incorrect information and that Afghanistan is safe and there is no threat to foreign nationals.

"The Taliban do not regularly permit the United States to conduct welfare checks on US citizens in detention, including by phone," it said. "Detention can be lengthy and while in detention, US citizens have limited or no access to medical attention and may be subject to physical abuse."

'Relations with China improved'

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, the Acting Minister of National Defense, stated in a meeting with China's Charge d'Affaires that, with the return of the Islamic Emirate, bilateral relations with China are strengthening with each passing day.

According to a Ministry statement, Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, the Acting Minister of National Defense, met and discussed today in his office with Zhao Haihan, China's Charge d'Affaires.

During the discussion, the Acting Minister of National Defense emphasized the positive relations and cooperation with China, which grows stronger by each passing day, particularly with the return of the Islamic Emirate.

Zhao Haihan expressed optimism about the establishment of complete security and stability in Afghanistan and emphasized China's continued assistance and cooperation with the people of Afghanistan in economic and commercial fields.

In the conclusion, both sides emphasized the continuation of positive relations between the two neighboring nations.

Afghanistan good relations with neighboring countries



KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi said in a meeting with the British Chargé d'Affaires for Afghanistan that the country is progressing in various fields, has good relations with neighboring countries and beyond, and has kept the doors for engagement open.

According to a state-

ment released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Tuesday, Muttaqi said that most of the points in the UN special coordinator's report on Afghanistan were positive, but added that the suggestion to appoint a new special representative for Afghanistan is not appropriate.

He also emphasized the need for the expansion of

bilateral relations with Britain, especially in the trade sector, and mentioned the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding consular services in the UK.

Based on the statement, Robert Dickson, Chargé d'Affaires of the British Embassy for Afghanistan, considered the existing conditions as an opportunity for advancing political

Kabul facilitating transfer of Afghan businesses

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate declared that it is providing facilities to Afghan businesses in Pakistan who are seeking to transfer their assets to Afghanistan.

The Islamic Emirate's spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, told TOLONews that all aspects of the transfer of businessmen's capital, including land distribution, obtaining permits and property transfer have been provided for in the country.

"The committee is responsible for providing investment facilities for the immigrants who come from there under the leadership of the country's Minister of Commerce. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan considers it one of its obligations that the immigrants who invest and come to

Afghanistan should be given land according to their specifications, and facilities should be created for them in obtaining permits and transferring their property and money," Mujahid said.

Meanwhile, the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI), said that it is necessary for the Islamic Emirate to reach an agreement with the interim government of Pakistan so that all assets of Afghan investors are transferred from Pakistan to the country.

"Afghans made up over 35% of Pakistan's economy. We had hundreds of carpet factories, as well as hotels, buildings, and transportation there," said Khanjan Alkozi, a member

of ACCI.

Some economists consider the transfer of businessmen's capital in the country to be beneficial in providing work opportunities and reducing economic challenges.

"The higher the investment in the country, the higher the employment rate. This can create an effective demand in the market. Therefore, the transfer of some companies from foreign countries to the country can be considered a very valuable step," said Abdul Zuhor Mudaber, an economist.

Earlier, the Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce Nooruddin Azizi, said that they will exempt five years of taxes for businessmen who return to the country.

US provides \$2m to help journalists

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United States Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has announced that the US Department of State has provided \$2 million in support for Afghan journalists.

According to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, this program, titled "Safe Reporting in Afghanistan", focuses on human rights and the work of the State Department of this country.

On Monday, SIGAR outlined on its page that the newly launched program is designed with a focus on achieving four key objectives.

SIGAR has described the purpose of this aid as "emergency support for journalists at risk, enhancing the security of journalists, supporting the media to produce and disseminate content that benefits the public, working against misinformation and following up on censorship."

This comes at a time when media support organizations have recently expressed concern about the "increase in violence" against journalists in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Media Support Organization (Nai) has published a statement emphasizing that "in the first six months of the current solar year, at least 75 incidents of violations of journalists' and media freedom have been recorded, including 33 arrests and 42 instances of threats."

It is worth mentioning that according to a report by the United States Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), the United States has sent \$11.11 billion to Afghanistan following the withdrawal of its troops from the country.

Ministry of Energy and Water seeking to increase solar power

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Energy and Water is trying to increase the amount of solar electricity production to solve the challenges of electricity shortage in the country.

The spokesman for the Ministry of Energy of Islamic Emirate, Matiullah Abid, said that a five-year plan is being considered that includes two electricity projects with a capacity of 150 megawatts of solar power.

Meanwhile, the former head of DABS said that Afghanistan has the capacity to produce solar electricity up to 220,000 megawatts, which will solve the electricity shortage in the country by investing in this sector.

The Ministry of Energy and Water said that the problem of electricity shortage in the country will be solved with the implementation of the five-year solar electricity plan.

The ministry said that the five-year solar electricity plan covers the provinces of Herat, Farah, Nangarhar, Paktia, Paktika, and Nimroz.

"100 megawatt solar power projects are still planned in Herat province and 50 megawatts in Nimroz province. In the solar power sector, including 77 Turkish companies, memorandums have been signed with various domestic and foreign companies," said Matiullah Abed, the spokesman of Energy and Water.

"There are two projects, one of which is a 20 MW project in Surubi and we talked with Donor and we are in the process of talking with them so that we can start this project.

Similarly, there is another 40 MW solar project which is being discussed

with an investor," said the spokesman for DABS, Hekmatullah Maiwandi.

According to the Ministry of Energy and Water, Afghanistan can now produce more than 220,000 megawatts of solar electricity, but no necessary investments have been made in this field.

"Afghanistan has the capacity to produce 222,000 megawatts of electricity from solar energy, but there are also problems in this field, for example: the lack of flat land where there are electricity production facilities, or if there is flat land, there is no substitution," said Amanullah Ghaleb, former head of Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS).

In the meantime, some economic experts consider Afghanistan to be a good base for the production of solar electricity and called

for more investments in this sector.

"Afghanistan has 300 sunny days throughout the year and this is a good resource and a good opportunity to generate electricity from solar energy. If we can use solar energy in the country's plains to produce electricity and have 300 sunny days, this issue can definitely help us in the area of electricity shortage in the country," said Mohammad Bashir Shabiri, an economic analyst.

Earlier, the Ministry of Energy and Water has said that it will implement two hundred projects worth nearly \$4 billion dollars in the electricity sector in the next five years.

Afghanistan is one of the countries in the world that is still not self-sufficient in electricity and buys imported electricity from various countries.

EU contributes \$26.6m to WFP operation



KABUL (Ariana News): The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) announced that the European Union has contributed EUR 25 million for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan.

This funding will help WFP deliver food assistance to hungry families – including displaced families – across the country.

It will also support WFP in preventing and treating malnutrition in young children and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and help the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) in the air, WFP said in a statement.

"One in three Afghans do not know where their

next meal will come from and communities are facing a harsh winter at times when the country reels from a battered economy, devastating earthquakes and most recently forced returns from Pakistan," said François Goemans, head of EU humanitarian aid operations in Afghanistan. "The European Union stands with the people of Afghanistan who need lifesaving assistance for survival."

Severe drought conditions in the country have led to below average harvests for three years in a row, and the economic crisis forces countless families to adopt negative coping strategies to survive. In

rural areas, families have sold their last remaining assets – seeds, cattle, and farming tools. In cities, one in three families has no livelihood opportunities and is desperate for jobs, according to WFP.

"Needs in Afghanistan before winter are high and hunger affects one third of the people amid high levels of malnutrition," said Hsiao-Wei Lee, WFP Country Director in Afghanistan. "This contribution from the European Union humanitarian aid comes at a critical moment when we still have a window of opportunity to reach the most vulnerable families before snow and ice cut off entire communities."

Kabul calls on host nations to not use Afghan refugees politically

KABUL (TOLONews): Coinciding with International Migrants Day, the senior officials of the Islamic Emirate on Monday in a ceremony asked the countries not to use Afghan immigrants as a political tool.

Criticizing the deportation of Afghan immigrants by some neighboring countries, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, deputy prime minister for economic affairs, asked these countries to deal legally with Afghan immigrants.

International Migrants Day has arrived while Afghanistan witnessed the deportation of thousands of

migrants from Pakistan, Iran and other countries in recent months.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, said: "The expulsion of our Muslim brothers by the countries is an illegal decision and against fairness and good neighborliness. The perpetrators failed to achieve the goals that were behind this persecution [expulsion]."

Second Deputy Prime Minister, Abdul Salam Hanafi, who was present at the ceremony at the Government Media and Information Center (GMIC), said: "A large number of our brothers and sisters

returned to their homeland from different countries, the number of them reaches more than 700,000, who came to Afghanistan in a short time and by force."

The IEA's Prime Minister, Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, in a message on the occasion of International Migrants Day, asked international institutions to support the rights of Afghan immigrants.

Khalil Rahman Haqqani, the acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, discussed the causes of illegal migrations in the country during the commemoration of the International

Bayat Foundation helps needy with blankets, clothes and food

KABUL (Ariana News): Bayat Foundation distributed winter aid, including food packages, to hundreds of needy families in Kabul this week.

As part of the foundation's ongoing campaign to assist needy families across the country, food and non-food packages were given out to families in the eastern parts of the capital.

Officials from the foundation said they were prioritizing families who desperately needed help – especially as temperatures continue to drop across the country.

This comes amid an ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country, where the vast majority of Afghans are unable to cover basic living expenses.

Aid packages distributed by the foundation in the east of Kabul included flour, cooking oil, rice and warm clothes and blankets, officials said.

Haji Mohammad Ismail Shah Samand, deputy head of Bayat Foundation, said: "In continuation of Bayat Foundation's donations, which are made every year during the winter or during the earthquake and during

the holy month of Ramadan, this year we have started our winter donations and we continue to distribute them in the provinces. Today, we came to Kabul and distributed materials to a number of deserving people, including flour, cooking oil, and rice, as well as winter clothes, blankets, jackets, and socks."

Families who received the aid were very grateful but called on other aid organizations to also help the needy.

They said many Afghans are dealing with severe financial difficulties.

"We are grateful to Bayat Foundation, many things like flour, rice and even blankets, jackets and socks are included in the aid [packages], and with this aid, problema of some families will be solved," said one recipient.

Another recipient said: "In this winter and cold weather and while we are facing many problems, Bayat Foundation helped us and we thank them."

Bayat Foundation officials still say these donations will continue until the end of winter in Kabul and in other provinces around the country.

Displaced women in Herat hold handmade products exhibition

HERAT (TOLONews): A two-day exhibition of handmade products was held by displaced women in the province of Herat.

Around 40 women and girls who make handmade products under the UN High Commissioner for Refugees participated in the exhibition.

The exhibition was held to draw attention to and find a market for the handmade products of women and girls.

"They will find a market for their products. They will find goods... they are to stand on their own feet, and this is what the program is for," said Yahya Ahmadzai, an organizer of the exhibition.

The handmade products displayed include carpets, miniature art pieces and paintings.

"I hope the women will be supported more through holding these exhibitions... I hope our problems will be solved," said Malina Hotak, a participant.

Many of these women in an interview with TOLONews called on the interim government to help them.

"We have been weaving for the past three months and then when we receive money, we should pay for our expenses. I hope to make further progress," said Anisa Rasuli, a participant.

"We are the breadwinners for the family and



while we do not have access to work, what should we do then?" said Shireen Gul Obaidi, a participant.

The organizers of the exhibition said that efforts are underway to pave the way for the export of the products.



ISLAMABAD: Senior Member Federal Public Service Commission, Akbar Hussain Durrani presenting annual report-2022 of FPSC to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Israeli strikes hit Rafah houses, 20 killed

GAZA/MANAMA/JERUSALEM: Israeli missiles and air strikes on the Rafah area in southern Gaza struck three houses killing at least 20 Palestinians, Gaza health officials said on Tuesday. Tens of thousands of displaced Palestinians have crammed into Rafah on Gaza's border with Egypt to escape Israeli bombardments further north, despite fears that they will also not be safe there.

Early on Tuesday residents in Khan Younis, a city also in southern Gaza, reported fierce gunbattles between militant Hamas fighters and Israeli forces. Israeli tanks and planes bombed areas near the city center, residents said. A World Health Organization official said on Monday that the Kamal Adwan hospital in northern Gaza that Israeli troops raided last week is no longer functioning and patients including babies have been evacuated. "We cannot afford to lose any hospitals," said Richard Peeperkorn, WHO representative for Gaza.

Peeperkorn also said about 4,000 displaced people taking refuge in the grounds of the Nasser medical complex in Khan Younis were at risk as Israel pursues military operations there. The Gaza health min-

istry said on Monday that 19,453 Palestinians had been killed and 52,286 wounded in the Israeli assault on the Hamas-ruled enclave in more than two months of warfare.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to achieve total victory over Hamas, whose fighters killed 1,200 people and took 240 hostages in a surprise Oct. 7 raid into Israel, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's intensifying retaliation against Hamas has increased concern among governments and international organizations over the civilian death toll, hunger and homelessness. Father-of-four Raed, 45, who has moved his family twice, said Gazans were exhausted trying to stay alive.

"Money has lost its value, most of the items are not available. We rose from our beds after surviving a night of bombardment to tour the streets searching for food, we got tired," he said in the Rafah area. "We want peace, truce, ceasefire, whatever they call it, but please stop the war." Meanwhile, the head of the CIA jetted to Europe for talks with Israeli and Qatari officials Monday, sounding out the potential for a deal on a new cease-fire and the

release of hostages in Gaza, as the US defense secretary spoke to Israeli military leaders about scaling back major combat operations against Hamas.

Still, there was no sign that a shift in the war was imminent after more than two months of devastating bombardment and fighting. Fierce battles raged in northern Gaza, where residents said rescue workers were searching for the dead and the living under buildings flattened by Israeli strikes. Pressure is growing, as France, the UK and Germany — some of Israel's closest allies — joined global calls for a cease-fire over the weekend. Israeli protesters have demanded the government relaunch talks with Hamas on releasing more hostages after three were mistakenly killed by Israeli troops while waving a white flag.

US officials have repeatedly expressed concern about the large number of civilian deaths in Gaza. But after talks with Israeli officials Monday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said, "This is Israel's operation. I'm not here to dictate timelines or terms." The US has vetoed calls for a cease-fire at the UN and has rushed munitions to Israel. — Arab News

PHC extends status quo till 21st in PTI intra-party case

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah extended status quo till 21st December by stopping Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) from final decision in Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) intra-party election for chairmanship, on Tuesday.

PTI's chairman Barrister Gohar Ali, Syed Sikandar Shah, Nauman-ul-Haq Kakakhel, Shah Faisal Ottomankhel and ECP's lawyer Mohsin Kamran Sadiq appeared before court during the hearing. Barrister Gohar Ali argued that PTI intra-party election was held on 2nd December in which he was elected as chairman unopposed at Peshawar. He added that

Akbar S Babar had challenged PTI's intra-party election despite he isn't the party's member.

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

PTI had victimized in every case it may be in foreign funding case, jail trial or any other case by ECP. ECP didn't issued certificate to PTI after submission intra-party's result which necessary before election schedule, the writ pleaded.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice SM

Attique Shah and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah ordered extended status quo in this regard and ordered ECP for provision of copy to petitioner of reply within while adjourned further till 21th December.

Meanwhile, PTI chairman claimed if ECP had withdrew party's symbol "Bat" then horse-trading will be initiated across the country and independent candidates will be forced to join particular party in formation of government which will ultimately used for blackmailing of treasury. This he said while talking to media personnel after hearing at PHC and argued Supreme Court of Pakistan for intervention to ensure free and fair elections. He added that PTI is hopeful from courts for dissemination of justice and claimed ECP didn't submitted reply in this regard.

President for promoting virtual education in varsities

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday stressed that every university should start virtual education to promote higher and skilled based education across the country.

Addressing the 13th convocation of Virtual University, the president said that keeping in mind the evolving technology trends, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) had also prepared a policy that was still waiting for final approval, under which all universities would be allowed to impart 30% virtual education to its students.

Dr Arif Alvi said the international educational institutions were rapidly

shifting from traditional Brick and Mortar University system to the virtual education system. In the United States, he said more than 50% of the courses in every university were now virtual and they were also improving quality.

The president said he had always been the proponent of online education and had been stressing that the online education should be promoted to disseminate knowledge in remote areas of the country. He said the reason behind less development in most of the Muslim countries was that there was still resistance in adopting the new technology.

"The change will be possible only after ensuring

timely adoption of the evolving technology," he remarked. Giving the regional statistics, the president said in Pakistan after only 10% students managed to enroll in higher degrees, while in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the ratio was at least 25%.

He regretted that around 28 million children were out of school in Pakistan. However in the regional countries, there was almost 100% enrollment in primary classes. President Alvi maintained that the reason behind low literacy rate in Pakistan was the lack of leadership and lack of preparedness. Further, he said role of every citizen was also important in this regard.

SC dismisses another plea to delay elections

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Tuesday dismissed another plea challenging the delimitations in Balochistan. On Monday, the SC annulled the Balochistan High Court's order about delimitations.

Last week, Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan suspended a Lahore High Court (LHC) order on the appointment of returning officers (ROs) and district returning officers (DROs) from the bureaucracy, which cast uncertainty over the holding of general polls. A three-member bench headed by Acting CJP, Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and comprising Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Athar Minallah took up the plea against delimitation in PB-12 Balochistan.

Applicant Ameer Khan challenged the delimitation process in PB-12, Balochistan, and termed it "wrong" in his plea filed with the SC. At the outset of the hearing, Acting CJP Justice Tariq Masood said stability is back in the country after the announcement of the general elections date. "Don't you want to see stability in the country," he asked the applicant.

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, another member of the SC bench, in his remarks said, following the release of the election program, constituencies cannot be changed. "We will not disturb the election date on such pleas", he added. The SC declared that the electoral constituencies cannot be changed after the election schedule is released.

Fawad demands open trial in jail

ISLAMABAD (INP): Imprisoned former Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry has ignited controversy by filing an application for an open trial in Adiala Jail for his ongoing contempt of court case against the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Chaudhry, currently detained following his arrest in April, submitted the petition through his lawyer Faisal Chaudhry. In the application, he argues for unrestricted access to the courtroom for both local and international media, citing concerns about transparency and due process. "The jail hearing should be opened for transparency," Chaudhry stated in the application. "I am not being allowed to meet my family and lawyers freely, and conducting the trial without media presence raises serious questions about its fairness."

The petition's central demand is for the court to grant permission for journalists to cover the proceedings, which, if approved, would mark a significant departure from conventional practice in Pakistan, where jail trials are typically closed to the public. Chaudhry's request comes amidst heightened political tensions in Pakistan, with his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), engaged in a bitter standoff with the ruling coalition government. Critics of the former minister have dismissed his request as a publicity stunt, accusing him of attempting to use the judicial process for political gain.

However, Chaudhry's supporters have rallied behind his call for an open trial, viewing it as a crucial step towards ensuring a fair and impartial hearing. They argue that transparency is essential to uphold the rule of law and prevent any potential manipulation of the legal proceedings.

PSM removed from govt privatization list

ISLAMABAD (INP): The caretaker government has removed the Pakistan Steel Mills from its privatization list of the state-owned entities, says in media reports.

The government has issued a new list of the state-owned entities (SoEs) that will be handed over to the private sector under its privatization programme. Overall, 26 SoE will be privatized under the ongoing government programme including four institutions each in financial and real estate sectors. In the new list of privatization, maximum 14 state institutions belong to the country's ailing energy sector.

Launching skill development classes KP cabinet authorizes depts to transfer their buildings

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Cabinet on Tuesday authorized different provincial departments to transfer their buildings in spare times for launching classes of skill development among the youth under the Khushala Pakhtunkhwa Program.

These departments include Elementary and Secondary Education, Technical Education, Industries and Labor, Health and other line departments. The special meeting of the provincial cabinet was held under the chairmanship of Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Rtd.) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah was also attended by provincial ministers, Chief Secretary and administrative secretaries.

It was revealed at the meeting that recently South Korea had demanded over one hundred thousand skilled workers in response to which Pakistan could only provide 16000 skilled workers from all over the country because the country had no skilled labor force to be employed in the outside world. It was also learnt that more than 500 thousand youth from all over the province will be imparted different training in information technology, computer, para medics, nursing, trade etc. so that they could earn livelihood

for their families both inside and outside the country.

Addressing the meeting the Chief Minister said though the caretaker government was to facilitate fair and impartial elections but in view of the increasing unemployment and poverty in the province, the youth cannot be left in desperation to become nurseries for the terrorists. He said that the government cannot wait and has to contribute to the welfare of the people at large. "All Mighty Allah might have provided us an opportunity to serve the people this way at this point of time therefore we must come forward to play our role" he said. The Chief Minister had already formed a task force comprising different ministers, secretaries and heads of different organizations which is meeting on a daily basis to make the said program a success. The program will be on the ground within days, it was revealed at the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Provincial cabinet unanimously endorsed the stance of the Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa taken in his meeting with the Federal Minister Finance yesterday (Monday) to shift financial responsibilities, including co-financing of BISP expenditures, the subsidy

for Agriculture tube wells and fertilizers, Higher Education Commission expenditures and the transfer of PSDP projects to provincial ADP. It was pointed out that the province faces substantial constraints in initiating new programs particularly when such initiatives will require the imposition of more taxes on the people at large which also seems to be out of the mandate of the caretaker government. The provincial caretaker cabinet emphasized on the importance of adhering to constitutional provisions and acknowledging financial realities, for a prudent and measured approach in decision-making processes related to financial matters between the Federal and Provincial Governments.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Federal Government through a series of deliberations with the provincial government had proposed to transfer financial responsibilities of the BISP, HEC and subsidies to the provincial governments concerned. Taking a tough response during a meeting held between Caretaker Federal and Caretaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government, the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa refused to approve any such proposal where financial burden is transferred towards the provincial government.

126 dead in China quake

BEIJING (AFP): Rescuers in remote villages of north-west China dug through the rubble of collapsed homes on Tuesday after the country's deadliest earthquake in years killed at least 126 people and injured hundreds more.

State media said the shallow tremor just before midnight had caused the deaths of at least 113 and injured more than 530 in impoverished Gansu province, as of Tuesday afternoon. A further 13 died, 182 were injured and 20 were missing in Haidong in neighbouring Qinghai province, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

The quake damaged more than 155,000 buildings, according to CCTV, and sent residents running into the freezing streets for safety. At a village near the epicentre, AFP reporters

saw huge cracks running through the exterior and interior walls of a brick home, and the roof of a building that had caved in completely.

"I am 70 and I have never experienced such a powerful quake in my life," resident Ma Wenchang told AFP. "I can't live (in this house) anymore because it's too dangerous. My relatives have been relocated somewhere else." At another location, the top of a mosque had collapsed askew, and another building was reduced to mere rubble.

The roads were full of emergency and military vehicles, and the AFP team saw trucks covered in red banners reading "earthquake relief supplies". The quake was China's deadliest since 2014, when more than 600 people died in southwestern Yunnan

province. China's western hinterland carries the scars of frequent seismic activity, and a huge quake in Sichuan province in 2008 left more than 87,000 people dead or missing, including 5,335 schoolchildren.

The US Geological Survey said on Monday night's magnitude-5.9 quake struck at a shallow depth at 11:59 pm local time (1559 GMT) with an epicentre around 100 kilometres (60 miles) from Gansu's provincial capital, Lanzhou. China's state news agency Xinhua reported the magnitude as 6.2 and said the shaking was felt as far away as the major city of Xi'an, about 570 kilometres away. Dozens of smaller aftershocks followed, and officials warned that tremors with a magnitude of more than 5.0 were possible in the next few days.



BEIJING: Rescuers carry an injured person in Dahe village in northwest China's Gansu province.

Properly educated people

(Continued from Page 1)

along with their families, displaced and migrated," he observed. The prime minister said Pakistan had been a generous host country and for almost five decades hosted about 4 to 5 million Afghans on its soil though they were not signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. He said there were Afghans whom the European Union and Western countries wanted to settle them on their respective lands and the government was temporary facilitating them in that regard.

The prime minister highlighted that the policy of repatriation related to non-documented Afghans who had no valid reason to reside here and were abusing the system. Pakistan had its own issues like crimes, terrorism, and resources limitation, he added.

He emphasized that they had introduced the policy to repatriate illegal Afghans but it was not a not a perpetual ban as they could

return after obtaining valid travel documents from their home country, for getting jobs, doing business and seeking education in Pakistan. It was a regulated regime being in practice throughout the world, he stressed. The prime minister further said that terrorism was a matter of deep concern for them. Terrorists of TTP were launching attacks on police, security forces and the people of Pakistan.

He said that they considered Afghanistan as a sovereign and independent country, but the rules and regulations for the movement of Afghan people as employed throughout the world should be enforced. "Rest assure, we will not touch those valid migrants who are productive people in our society," he added.

Meanwhile, addressing a press conference, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that the government had taken multiple initiatives to bring about reforms in bureaucracy in order to improve overall governance struc-

ture of Balochistan province.

He said the province had some chronic and complex issues which ought to be resolved by deputing a blend of upright and hard-working bureaucrats from civil service as well as from the provincial structure. "Our issues are linked with the bad governance, that had been badly affecting the performance of the province for the last few decades," he said. On the request of the Balochistan government, he deputed a competent bureaucrat Shakeel Qadir Khan along with a team, to ensure meritocracy and to streamline the overall structure of bureaucracy.

He said he specifically instructed the team to fully support the Chief Minister and the provincial government in this regard. PM Kakar said there was an axis of some corrupt bureaucrats and other stakeholders who had crumpled the whole province, thus adversely affecting the national economy.

Repatriation of illegal Afghans continues

ISLAMABAD (INP): The process of repatriation for irregular Afghans residing in Pakistan is ongoing, with another 1,586 individuals returning to their home country on December 18th. This brings the total number of repatriated Afghans to over 438,000 since the initiative began.

The breakdown of those who returned on December 18th highlights the family nature of the movement, with 365 men, 298 women, and 923 children crossing the border. This trend reflects broader concerns about irregular migration's impact on vulnerable populations, particularly women and children.

It's important to note that even before the official repatriation process commenced, many irregular Afghans were already choosing to return home due to fears of potential arrest. This indicates a complex interplay of factors influencing migration patterns, including economic hardship, security concerns, and family reunification desires.

While the repatriation exercise is ongoing across Pakistan, Karachi stands out as a city with a historically large irregular population. The presence of undocumented individuals has been linked to challenges like smuggling and extortion in the city, prompting local authorities to focus on facilitating returns and promoting border security measures.

Khaqan says won't contest in election

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has said he won't contest the election. In a media interaction in Islamabad, Shahid Khaqan, a stalwart of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), ducked questions with regard to forming a new political party or quitting the PML-N. On a question estranged PML-N leader said, neither Nawaz Sharif contacted him, "nor I felt any need of it".

"General elections will be held definitely on February 08," replying another question he said. On a question former prime minister said that the conditions of level playing field are similar, which were in the past when the PTI was came to power. "What is level playing, it is the constitution and the law," he further said. On a question about "malicious intent" in Toshakhana and Al-Qadir cases, he said there are same courts and the judicial system, justice will be served if not now, after five to six years. "I am facing cases in NAB courts for four years over attending a meeting," Shahid Khaqan said.

"Present NAB chairman is unaware that the people's lives are being destroyed, who will be accountable for this injustice in the country," he questioned. Earlier reports suggested that the former premier will formally announce his decision to part ways with the PML-N in coming days. The veteran politician had earlier asserted that he would not contest in the general elections, terming the upcoming polls as 'pointless'.

LHC halts action against Khadija

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court on Tuesday has granted temporary relief to Khadija Shah, barring the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) from taking any disciplinary action against her in an ongoing money laundering inquiry. Justice Ali Baqir Najafi heard the petition filed by Shah's lawyer, Sameer Khosa, and issued the stay order until the next hearing on December 22nd. Khosa argued that the inquiry against Shah was initiated without a formal complaint or FIR, and based solely on "sumoto" action taken by the FIA. He highlighted five irregularities in the proceedings, including the lack of a complainant and Shah's repeated arrests in multiple cases. He asserted that the ongoing inquiry was "malicious" and exceeded the legal grounds for initiating a money laundering investigation. The court acknowledged the concerns raised by Khosa and ordered a temporary halt to any disciplinary action against Shah in relation to the FIA inquiry.