

ECP rejects KP Bar's claim
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The ECP Thursday dismissed the KP Bar Council's claim about the reduction of seats in the National Assembly of KP, stating, "It is baseless, contradicts facts, and aims to create confusion among the public." An ECP spokesman in a statement clarified that, in 2018, the 25th constitutional amendment merged the former FATA into KP.



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Nawaz obtains papers
F.P. Report

LAHORE: PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif has received nomination papers from NA-130 constituency in Lahore to contest the February 8 general elections. PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif will also contest election from NA-123 constituency of Lahore and the provincial assembly seat. Maryam Nawaz Sharif will contest from NA-119, sources added.

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Privatization and Inter-Provincial Coordination Fawad Hassan Fawad called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Elahi to contest from many constituencies

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Former Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervez Elahi on Thursday officially announced his intention to contest upcoming elections from three national and three provincial assembly constituencies. During an informal conversation with the media following a court appearance, Elahi expressed his determination to participate in the electoral process.

Responding to a question about a level playing field, Elahi remarked that the field was not as level as it should be. When asked about any objections to the party chairman, he clarified that his election was unopposed. Addressing concerns about fair and impartial elections, Elahi, who is also the central president of Tehreek-e-Insaf, warned that a lack of fairness could lead to significant consequences for the country. He emphasized the importance of allowing elections to take place based on good thinking and work.

Elahi criticized the actions of political figures Nawaz and Shehbaz, accusing them of causing hardships for the poor. He highlighted recent increases in gas and electricity prices, expressing concern about the state of the country. Elahi also mentioned personal challenges, stating that he had experienced two attacks but was denied access to the hospital, questioning the prevailing law of the jungle. In a surprising turn, Elahi revealed his longstanding relationship with a prominent figure, Sheikh Sahib. He advocated for allocating NA-56 and 57 constituencies to Sheikh Sahib, engaging with senior leaders and seeking the founder of PTI's support for this proposal. Elahi pledged full efforts to ensure Sheikh Sahib's success. Acknowledging the plight of individuals such as Marwat Sahib and Gohar Sahib, Elahi commended their dedication and noted that the founder of PTI had appointed Gohar Sahib as the party president.

As the political landscape continues to evolve, Chaudhry Pervez Elahi positions himself as a formidable candidate, navigating the complexities of party dynamics and advocating for what he believes will lead to a more just and prosperous Pakistan.

Welfare of youth, top priority: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday, terming the young generation as the future of nation, said the welfare of the youth was the top priority of the government.

Chairing a meeting of the Prime Minister Youth Programme, he directed that the disbursement of loans under the Program should be done with utmost care and responsibility. He further directed that the youth of the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa should be given special attention in PM Youth schemes.

The prime minister ordered to evolve a special strategy to achieve the desired results of the skill development schemes. PM Kakar directed that training programmes should also be started for master trainers regarding skill development to increase their capacity and to impart quality training to others.

During the meeting, the prime minister was given a detailed briefing regarding the PM's Youth Programme. It was informed that 550,000 people had been trained under the PM Skill Development Program since 2013 while some 56,000 more people would be trained mostly in high-tech skills in the next phase. Additionally, it was informed that under PM Laptop Scheme, 500,000 laptops were distributed to the youth since 2013, while 100,000 more laptops would be distributed to the youth in current year.

The meeting was further informed that under the PM Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme, easy loans worth Rs 100.7 billion have been provided to the youth since 2013. Similarly, some 83,323 youths were given opportunities in badminton, football, squash, volleyball and other sports under PM Talent Hunt and Sports League.

The meeting was informed that schemes

worth Rs 80 billion have been earmarked in the PM Youth Development Package 2023-24. These schemes include Education Endowment Fund, Women Empowerment, Business and Agriculture Loan, Tube-Well Solarisation, Laptops Scheme, Sports Endowment Fund, Green Revolution, Digital Hub One Window. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Tourism and Youth Affairs Syed Wasi Shah and other concerned government officials participated in the meeting.

Fawad briefs PM about privatisation process of state-owned enterprises: Caretaker Minister for Privatisation and Inter-Provincial Coordination Fawad Hassan Fawad called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

The Caretaker Minister for Privatisation and Inter-Provincial Coordination briefed the Prime Minister about privatisation process of the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

Red Sea Saga and the Houthis

Comment

Jalil Afridi

LAST week, several times it popped up during press briefings at the White House and the State Department that the US is considering to designate, the Houthis as terrorist organization. I did realize that no concrete answer was given in this regard but for the US to consider doing something is also a serious issue. Another issue which popped up a lot was the Red Sea, the trade related to it and the growing need for a joint maritime force to protect that trade.

John Kirby, the spokesperson for the White House on national security matters and a former naval officer and a former State Department spokesperson, who has kept his looks very young despite being a pretty aged fellow, very nicely explained the national security importance of the Red Sea for the US and its allies and the growing naval force the US is creating to safeguard its national interests. Kirby did say that more

hardware will be seen in the Red Sea but he did seem confuse about who is supporting the Houthis and he did seem confused about how to treat or term Saudi Arabia.

Me personally being not too aware of the historic or current situations in Middle East and Africa, I can only make a guess from the questions asked, the answers given and the body language used by the officials. After twenty five years in journalism I feel like we can even tell how much rehearsals of certain words is done among spokespersons or politicians.

I feel like certain alliances or coalitions in the regions of Middle East and Africa has made Secretary Blinken job very difficult. I feel like defending Israel for its gross human rights violations is becoming more and more challenging

for the US I feel like the American public is asking its elected members why the US is silent over the killing of so many children. I also feel these images have left a profound effect on the heart and minds of the people of America.

Yesterday listening to Secretary Blinken at the State Department was very nice but he did seem a little sad and a little worried that the wars around the world are expanding. I didn't get the opportunity to ask a question but I did want to ask him that I expected better foreign policy from him and President Biden.

I also notice at times that the world does not have any influential media outlets which speak for the Muslim nations. Al Jazeera and Al Arabia both at times make me vomit but then times they are pretty reasonable.

Lastly, I feel that due to the trade effects of Red Sea on Israel, we might see a little calm. If not, I only see further sufferings and hate in this world.

IHC issues notice to FIA on Imran's plea

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday issued a notice to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on a petition moved by former prime minister Imran Khan challenging in-camera proceedings of the cipher trial at Adiala Jail. The former premier, in his plea filed a day ago, had challenged his trial in jail and subsequent developments, including the framing of charges and a gag order on the media.

The Special Court (Official Secrets Act) had begun the cipher trial afresh last week at the Adiala district jail after Imran and former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi were indicted for a second time in the case on Dec 13. The cipher case pertains to a diplomatic document that the Federal Investigation Agency's charge sheet alleges was never returned by Imran. The PTI has long held that the document contained a threat from the United States to oust Imran as prime minister.

The former premier and his aide Qureshi, who is also behind bars, were first indicted in the case on Oct 23. Both had pleaded not guilty. The trial was being held at Adiala Jail and four witnesses had already recorded their statements when the IHC termed the government's notification for a jail trial "erroneous" and scrapped the entire proceedings. The IHC had endorsed Imran's indictment, disposing of his plea against the same, but had also instructed the special court judge to ensure a "fair trial". On Dec 20, the IHC issued a detailed judgement explaining reasons for scrapping the earlier round of proceedings of the special court due to a lack of transparency and openness. The court linked the open court proceedings with the independence of the judicial system.

On Tuesday's hearing Imran's legal counsel Barrister Salman Akram Raja appeared in court as Justice Miangul Hasan Aurangzeb began hearing the petition. Additional Attorney General Munawar Iqbal Duggal also in attendance. At the outset, Raja contended that the prosecution had levelled a single allegation and did not provide any explanation to support their demand. He highlighted that the special court had rejected bail for former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in the cipher case and instructed that the trial be completed in for weeks. Here, Justice Aurangzeb questioned whether the stipulated four weeks were indeed granted for trial completion, seeking clarification from the additional attorney general. "We do not give a period of four weeks even in simple cases," the judge remarked.

Arrests of marchers flayed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators from Turbat to raise their voice against enforced disappearances in Rawalpindi and subsequently in Islamabad is condemned in the strangest terms. If the law enforcing agencies hoped to prevent their voice from reaching far and wide, it has miserably failed.

This was stated by Senator Farhatullah Babar, president human rights cell of the PPP after visiting the uprooted camp in front of the National Press Club Islamabad Thursday afternoon. The sight of a few frightened men and women crammed in the uprooted camp with no one from the government to put balm on their wounds will send shivers even among the coldest observers, he said. He said that the protestors did not expect that the march would result in the production of the disappeared nor they sought a show down.

Suspension of trial court verdict IHC dismisses Imran's plea

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In another blow for incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan ahead of the upcoming general elections, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday dismissed his plea seeking suspension of the trial court's verdict in the Toshakhana case.

The former prime minister had moved the IHC for rectification of its August 28 order, by way of suspension of the judgement on August 5 passed by the trial court. In August, Khan was sentenced to three years in prison and a fine of Rs100,000 by Additional District and Sessions Judge (ADSJ) Humayun Dilawar on August 5, 2023, after the judge found Khan guilty of graft in the Toshakhana case.

He has been convicted of misusing his position as prime minister to sell state gifts worth more than Rs140 million (\$490,000) that he received from foreign dignitaries during visits abroad. Following his conviction in the case, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) disqualified the former PM for five years. In a notification, the electoral watchdog stated that the PTI chief was disqualified after being found guilty of corrupt practices under Section 167 of the Elections Act, 2017 and his sentencing for three years.

"As a consequence, Mr Imran Ahmed Khan Niazi has become disqualified under Article 63(1)(h) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan read with Section 232 of the Elections Act, 2017," the notification added.

The IHC, however, on August 28, suspended the PTI supreme's sentence awarded to him in the Toshakhana case but his conviction and disqualification remain intact until the court decides on the main appeal.

The PTI chief moved the IHC seeking complete suspension of the trial court's verdict in the case. In a nine-page detailed verdict, a two-member

PHC orders ECP to decide on PTI intra-party polls case by today

Hamayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Shakeel Ahmad ordered Election Commission of Pakistan to decide Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) intra-party election as well as party's symbol today (on Friday) while dispose-of writ pleas in this regard, on Thursday.

PHC's Justice SM Attique Shah observed that we are aware about current situation in the country and remarked that Supreme Court of Pakistan had ordered for provision of equal playing field to all political parties for upcoming general election.

Why should PTI filed plea at Islamabad High Court in this regard and is PHC can issue writ to ECP located at Islamabad, Justice Shakeel Ahmad inquired. PTI's chairman Barrister Gohar argued that constitution had encloned 'Federation' word and added that all High Courts as well as Supreme Court can issue writ in this regard. He contended that Supreme Court of Pakistan 1968 judgement had provided foundation in this regard.

PTI's chairman Barrister Gohar Ali, Syed Sikandar Shah, Nauman-ul-Haq Kakakhel and Shah Faisal Ottomankhel 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 hold 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. PTI's lawyer asserted that ECP treating the party with discrimination despite all legal documentation had been completed for party certificate and allocating symbol for upcoming elections.

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 claimed while talking to media personnel after appearance before PHC and said that PTI had formulated plan-B if ECP withdrew party's symbol and created further hurdles.

bench of the IHC comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri stated: "In the instant case, no specific plea was raised and subsequent application has been made to cover up the omission. Even no extraordinary or exceptional circumstances were mentioned in the earlier application though they existed in the form of

the notification dated 08-08-2023 when the application for suspension of the sentence was filed."

The Toshakhana has been under a microscope ever since the emergence of the allegations that Khan purchased the gifts he received as prime minister at throwaway rates and sold them off in the open market for staggering profits.

Baloch demonstrators have 'right' to protest: IHC

F.P. Report

Responding to the question, the cop informed the court that there was no detail available of the listed individuals. "Let them protest who have come to protest, its their constitutional right," CJ Farooq remarked. The IG further stated that all the people nominated in the FIR registered at the Tarnol Police Station have been released, while those arrested in the FIR registered at Kohsar Police Station have been presented before the magistrate. "Some have been discharged, some have been [remanded] into judicial [custody], and some have been kept for identity parade," he added.

The IHC CJ then warned the IG against any one of his officers impeding the protests. After that, the court adjourned the hearing while seeking a report regarding the number of people detained, remanded in judicial custody, and released, by tomorrow (December 22). Earlier during the hearing, petitioners' counsel Mazari told the court that force was used against the protesters, who were also baton-charged.

"Peaceful protesters were also detained, which is illegal," Mazari said, adding that the protesters included women and children. Meanwhile, a district and sessions court in Islamabad ordered the release of 33 Baloch marchers on bail. Police presented the Baloch protesters before the court

of Judicial Magistrate Shabbir Bhatti, seeking permission for the identity parade of 25 marchers and physical remand for eight of them.

However, the court turned down police's request and ordered the protesters' release against surety bonds of Rs5,000. It said that the arrested protesters should be kept in judicial custody in Adiala jail till the submission of bonds. To address the grievances of the protesters who arrived in the capital city, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has also formed a five-member committee headed by Fawad Hasan Fawad, caretaker federal minister for privatisation, sources told media. The committee also comprises federal ministers Jamal Shah, Murtaza Solangi, Khali George, and Aneeq Ahmed, the sources added.

PM Kakar has instructed the committee members to meet the protesters and find out their issues. He has also said that those who do not seriously violate the law will also be released.

Meanwhile, reacting to the use of force against the protesters, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan earlier in the day strongly condemned the violent police crackdown on Baloch protesters in Islamabad, with women, children, and the elderly subjected to unwarranted force in the form of water cannons and use of batons.

Masked local persons tried to hijack Baloch people's peaceful protest: Ministers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The government on Thursday pointed out that some unidentified masked local persons tried to hijack the peaceful protest of Baloch people which led to the unruly situation on Wednesday resulting into arrest of protesters. A peaceful protest was a right of every citizen and the people from Balochistan had been on a peaceful protest outside the National Press Club for the last 23 days but none of the law enforcement forces did not take any action against them, caretaker federal ministers Fawad Hassan Fawad, Murtaza Solangi and Jamal Shah told a joint press conference.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar formed a committee comprising Federal Minister for Privatization Fawad Hassan Fawad, Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi and Federal Minister

for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah to negotiate with the protesters.

Fawad said that the government had offered the protestors to stage their sit-in either at F-9 Park or in Sector H-9 keeping in view their security. However, the Baloch people camped outside the NPC to record their protest peacefully.

The minister said it was reported that some unidentified persons wearing masks were participating in the protest. As per intelligence reports, such people did not belong to Balochistan, rather they were locals. When the police on Wednesday took action against the masked people, they started pelting stones at the personnel, which had to arrest the protestors, he added.

The minister said after scrutiny, 90 percent of the innocent and peaceful protestors, including women and children, had been released while the unidentified men were still under detention. Information Minister Murtaza Solangi said Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-

Haq Kakar had formed the committee to address the issues of protesting Baloch people. The committee had held negotiations with the protestors and especially met children and women, he added. From the government side, he said, Fawad Hassan Fawad was leading the negotiations with the protesting Baloch. He said the committee had taken steps for resolving the existing situation and needful would be done to address their issues.

To a question, Solangi said there was no hurdle in holding the general elections in accordance with the schedule issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Culture Minister Jamal Shah said that the prime minister had entrusted them with the duty of negotiating with the protesters. He said that the issues of protestors had been resolved amicably. Some elements tried to take advantage of the current situation, but they would not be allowed to succeed, he added.

Dengue in Punjab: number of cases decreasing

LAHORE (APP): As many as 11 new cases of dengue were reported in the province on Thursday.

The latest health department data revealed a total of 15,113 confirmed dengue cases in Punjab this year. However, the battle against fever persists with Lahore leading a tally at 6,983 cases followed by Rawalpindi with 2,654, Gujranwala with 1,590, Multan with 1,457 and Faisalabad with 914 cases.

Lahore, with an additional seven cases, continues to grapple with the fever and Multan with new cases within 24 hours.

Currently, 11 patients are undergoing treatment in various hospitals across Punjab, with three of them in hospitals of Lahore.

Secretary Health Punjab Ali Jaan Khan issued a compelling plea to citizens, urging them to maintain clean and dry surroundings as a preventive measure against dengue fever.

He also called for cooperation with the health department teams that were working tirelessly to combat it. For those in need of dengue treatment, information, or wishing to register complaints, a free helpline is available through the health department at 1033.

PHC seals 1,013 illegal healthcare businesses

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Healthcare Commission (PHC) intensified its crackdown on quackery, closing down 1,013 illegal businesses following extensive raids on 4,623 treatment centres across the province in the last seven weeks. According to a PHC spokesperson on Thursday, out of the visited centres, 2,716 treatment centres are under continued surveillance, with 722 quack-operated establishments closed.

In addition, qualified physicians have taken over 151 centres previously reported to be run by quacks. Notably, Lahore saw the highest number of closures 88, followed by Rawalpindi 71, Faisalabad 69, and various other districts. Overall, the PHC sealed over 48,000 quackery centres through 175,000 raids, prompting 38,694 quacks to close their outlets in anticipation of regulatory action.

SECMC pays Rs12b royalty to Sindh govt since its inception: CM told

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) has deposited Rs 12 billion in royalty to the Sindh government accounts and paid Rs 8 billion to the shareholders of the company- which means the government and the displaced persons who are paid Rs100,000 annually.

This was disclosed in a meeting held under the chairmanship of Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar at the SECMC office, Islamabad on Thursday. The meeting was attended by Secretary Energy Rehan Baloch, Secretary Health Dr Mansoor Rizvi, Secretary Irrigation Niaz Abbasi, Chairman SECMC Commissioner Yousif Siddique.

According to an official statement issued by CM House spokesman, Justice (R) Maqbool Baqar said that he has witnessed the operation of two power plants: the 1320 MW Shinghai Power Plant at Thar Coal Block-I and 1320 MW the Sindh Engro Coal Power Plant at Thar Coal Block-II, producing and adding more than 2640 MW to the National Grid.

CEO of SECMC Yousif Siddique briefed the chief minister that Thar Coal Block-II has reservoirs of 175 billion tons of coals. The SECMC is exploiting 7.6 million tons of coal every year to produce clean and

cheap electricity. The CM was told that Thar Coal Block-II was producing 1320 MW. It was pointed out that 70 percent of the total employees of the plant and mine were local. The CEO told the CM that Thar Foundation was running 23 schools where 5000 students were receiving education, of them 33 percent were girls.

Thar Foundation has five health centers with a facility of mobile clinics that have provided medical treatment to more than 60,000 people in the area. Apart from health centers, the Thar Foundation has 17 RO plants in the Gorano area which provide drinking water to the people.

CEO Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company told the CM that the SECMC, in which the Sindh govt owns majority shares has deposited Rs 12 billion in royalty to the Sindh government accounts and paid Rs 8 billion to the shareholders of the company- the Sindh government and the displaced persons who are paid Rs100,000 annually and have been accommodated in a Model village. The chief minister, just after the meeting, visited the Thar Block-II mine and witnessed mining activity. He met with women dumper drivers, interacted with them, and encouraged them to work shoulder-to-shoulder with men.

“Films are not just stories; they are windows into the human experience” EDG DEMP

E.P. Report

KARACHI: To celebrate birth anniversary of Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Directorate of Electronic Media Publications Karachi (DEMP Karachi) in collaboration of Quaid e Azam Mazar Management Board (QMMB) organized an Inter University Documentary Competition on 21st December 2023 at Mazar e Quaid Karachi.

The event started with offering prayer and laying floral wreath at Mazar e Quaid by Chief Guest Caretaker Minister for Culture, Sports & Youth Affairs Mr. Syed Junaid Ali Shah, Executive Director General DEMP Mr. Arshad Muneer, Resident Engineer QMMB Mr. Abdul Aleem Shaikh and Secretary Mr. Munawar Ali Mahesar.

Mr. Abdul Aleem Shaikh, Resident Engineer QMMB, termed the event an opportunity for the film makers and inaugurated the session which was succeeded by screening of documentaries submitted by students of Greenwich University, University of Karachi, Sindh Madarsatul Islam University and Iqra University.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Sateesh Anand, a veteran filmmaker and a Judge in the competition, appreciated students for showing solidarity and positive image of Pakistan. Commenting on the subject, Ms.

Misbah Khalid, a veteran media personality and a Judge in the competition, lauded the efforts of the young filmmakers and advised them in bringing truth front through their lenses. Executive Director General DEMP Mr. Arshad Muneer lauded the efforts of the participants and organizers and termed such activities vital in showcasing the image of the countries. He said, “These are not stories but windows to the society”.

“These films has power to touch hearts and change perspectives”, he added further. While Speaking to the audience, Mr. Junaid Ali Shah deplored and said, “We have forgotten our history, culture, heroes and we don’t narrate their stories anymore, therefore, there is a dire need to narrate stories of our heroes through documentaries”. In connection to this, he briefed the audience about his Ministry’s pledge to make documentaries on the heritage sites and an online archives portal. Moreover, he announced that his ministry is going to present Sindh Awards to the heroes of the province, and arranging Sindh Games which was discontinued.

In the conclusion, documentaries Ittehad e Pakistan (University of Karachi), Imperfect (Iqra University), MMA in Pakistan (SMIU) were declared 1st, 2nd and third respectively.



LAHORE: Rear Admiral Javed Iqbal hands over Command Scroll of Commander Central Punjab to Rear Admiral Azhar Mahmood during change of command ceremony held at PN War College Lahore.

Indonesia, Pakistan to collaborate for improving distant learning programs

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation from the University of Terbuka, Indonesia’s leading open university, visited Higher Education Commission (HEC) on Thursday to foster collaboration and discuss opportunities and key challenges in the realm of distant learning programs. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, Executive Director HEC chaired the meeting. Led by its Rector Prof. Ojat Darajat, the University’s delegation included faculty members representing various departments and experts in distant learning programs.

Dr. Muhammad Latif Gondal, Executive Director (Planning and Monitoring) Allama Iqbal Open University, Awais Ahmed, Adviser Quality Assurance HEC and other divisional heads attended the meeting. The University of Terbuka is Indonesia’s prominent open university, providing accessible and flexible

education through distance learning. Established in 1984, the University’s programs cover a wide array of disciplines, offering degrees at various levels. The meeting aimed at enhancing HEC’s efforts advancing quality of higher education, fostering international cooperation, and addressing the evolving challenges faced by institutions in the field of distance learning.

Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum appreciated the University of Terbuka’s credibility by achieving a remarkable rate of access to higher education through its distant learning programs. He emphasized that by ensuring the quality of online education, particularly in terms of robust quality assurance measures, trust in the online mode of education can be developed and strengthened.

“The Government of Pakistan has been a staunch advocate of distance learning to improve access rates in

the country. HEC is supporting Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) to increase the number of students, particularly in tertiary education, aligning with the government’s vision for enhanced accessibility to higher education,” he said.

Both sides deliberated on strategies to create an environment conducive to the success and integration of students within the distant learning system. Various operational, auditing and implementation challenges in the distant learning programs also came under discussion. The meeting also discussed employability of Pakistani students in the University of Terbuka. The delegation shared the mechanism of Management Review Committee (MRC) with HEC officials, which aims to ensure that the academic programs remain aligned with contemporary educational needs and global standards.

Commissioner expresses satisfaction over provision, availability of urea fertilizer

LAHORE (APP): Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali Randhawa expressed satisfaction over provision and availability of urea fertilizer and directed the authorities concerned to launch crackdown if being sold at higher price.

He presided over a meeting on availability of urea and revenue targets here on Thursday. He said that a big


incident of urea hoarding took place, entire stock had been recovered and sold at official rate.

The Commissioner said that authorities should get urea supply declared by all dealers as it would be sold at government rate. He further said that fertilizer companies had started providing backlog of last three months to big dealers. Muhammad Ali

Randhawa said that there was clear direction of Punjab government to ensure provision of Urea to farmers at notified price. He said that on report of special branch crackdown against illegal profiteering and urea hoarding would continue.

It was told in the meeting

that huge quantity of urea was utilized during December and there was no shortage of Urea availability in Lahore division. The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners of all districts while feedback was taken from agriculture officers as well.

**PAF BASE, PESHAWAR**
PUBLIC AUCTION

1. The auction of Salvage /Scrap stores is going to be held on **17 January, 2024** at 1000 Hrs at PAF Base, Peshawar on “As is, where is” basis. The Salvage /Scrap stores includes auction of Retired Aircrafts converted into Scarp Aluminum. Demilitarization of retired Aircrafts (cutting into small pieces and de-shaped) by the firms / bidders, at their own expense, inside the PAF premises, is mandatory, prior to lifting after conduct of Public Auction.

2. **Visit of lots** : Will be allowed at 0830 Hrs

3. **Terms & conditions:**

(a) The lots will be presented for auction on “As is, where is” basis, without any guarantee or warranty. PAF Base Peshawar will never accept any levy for any fault or defect, after the auction.

(b) The bidder will appear in auction on basis of his own visitation.

(c) After the visit, the bidder will be responsible for any fault or defect in the lots

(d) PAF Base, Peshawar will never be responsible for any dues, levy or tax etc for successful bids.

(e) Authorities have the rights to accept or reject “partially or Fully” any bid, on technical grounds.

(f) PAF Base Peshawar will never be responsible for any advance payment, levy, tax etc for successful bids.

(g) 25% of total amount is to be deposited at the end of the Bid and remaining amount 75% to be deposited within 06 working days. In case of Non-payment of dues within due dates, 25% already paid amount will be forfeited.

(h) Tax will be charged according to the current Government Rules.

(j) The successful bidder will be responsible for clearance of lots from the vicinity of PAF Base, Peshawar, within 11 working days; otherwise will be levied, in accordance with law.

(k) Decision about all issues regarding auction will be final and acceptable for all the concerned and unchallengeable, at any forum.

(m) The auction will be conducted through Govt Auctioneer “Shahzeb Gull & Co (0349-9701996)”. For additional query or information, please contact on Tel Ext (091-9503861)

Note: Carrying Mobile phone, camera and arms is strictly prohibited.

OFFICER IN-CHARGE
LOGISTICS SQUADRON
PAF BASE, PESHAWAR

Javed Akram highlights importance of maternal, child health

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr Javed Akram stressed the role of ensuring health of mothers and children in preventing infectious diseases.

Speaking at the third International Maternity and Child Health Symposium as a chief guest at the Services Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS) here on Thursday, he commended the organizing committee for hosting an excellent international event.

Acknowledging Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi’s commitment to improving conditions in government hospitals, Dr Akram emphasized the positive impact of revamping these institutions.

He stated that addressing maternal and child mortality during childbirth is a crucial goal for Pakistan.

Underlining the significance of early child development, Dr Akram highlighted challenges faced by the medical profession. Guest speakers at the symposium, including Vice Chancellor King Edward Medical University Professor Dr Mahmood Ayaz, Principal SIMS Professor Dr Zohra Khanum, and Gynaecologist Professor Dr Tayyaba Wasim, shared their insights on maternal and child health.

The event attracted dignitaries and students from various institutions, making it a significant platform for discussions on advancing healthcare in the country.

Second phase of operation against water theft

KARACHI (APP): In a collaborative effort between Pakistan Rangers Sindh and the Water Board, a crackdown was launched against illegal water theft in Orangi Nullah, Nazimabad No. 1, part of the sprawling metropolis.

According to a Sindh Rangers spokesperson, the ongoing second phase of operations specifically targets fresh water theft camouflaged as sub-soil boring.

The operation successfully dismantled six illegal 8-inch connections, leading to the arrest of three suspects. Seized items included heavy-duty motors,

pump stations, and wires used for water theft.

Approximately 48 lakh gallons per day of water supply was reinstated following the operation, ending an annual loss of around Rs. 350 millions to the national exchequer caused by the theft.

Moreover, an illegal electric substation involved in stealing monthly electricity worth 3.5 millions was discovered during the operation. The stolen water from the Water Board’s 33-inch line was utilized to power a large ice house.

**حکومت پاکستان**
وزارت داخلہ

**NADRA**
REGISTRATION

نیشنل ڈیٹا بیس اینڈ رجسٹریشن
اتھارٹی (نادرا)

نوٹس بوجہ غیر حاضری

آپ کی شناخت (رجسٹرڈ) کی تصدیق کے لیے ضروری ہے۔ **70495** (پیدائشی شناختی نمبر) کا نمبر ملے گا۔ **03-Oct-2023** سے اپنی شناختی کارڈ پر درج شدہ معلومات کو اپ ڈیٹ کرنے کے لیے ضروری ہے۔

RHO/NADRA/Disp/08/HR/70495/First Notice

Dated : 27-Oct-2023

آپ کی شناختی کارڈ پر درج شدہ معلومات کو اپ ڈیٹ کرنے کے لیے ضروری ہے۔ **70495** (پیدائشی شناختی نمبر) کا نمبر ملے گا۔ **03-Oct-2023** سے اپنی شناختی کارڈ پر درج شدہ معلومات کو اپ ڈیٹ کرنے کے لیے ضروری ہے۔


RHO/NADRA/Disp/08/HR/70495/Second Notice Dated: 20-Nov-2023


آپ کی شناختی کارڈ پر درج شدہ معلومات کو اپ ڈیٹ کرنے کے لیے ضروری ہے۔ **70495** (پیدائشی شناختی نمبر) کا نمبر ملے گا۔ **03-Oct-2023** سے اپنی شناختی کارڈ پر درج شدہ معلومات کو اپ ڈیٹ کرنے کے لیے ضروری ہے۔

PID(1) 3786/23

ڈائریکٹر جنرل راجز آفیس

فون نمبر: 091-9217840

**Pakistan Forest Institute, Peshawar**
Forest Education Division



TENDER NOTICE

Forest Education Division Pakistan Forest Institute (PFI) invites sealed tenders for the supply of Uniform items for forestry students from firms/suppliers having valid registration/NTN and GST number. The tender document can be obtained from the office the undersigned on payment of **Rs. 1000** (non-refundable) during office hours up to **08/01/2024**. The bids shall be received under “Single Stage Two Envelopes Procedure.” Sealed tender addressed to the Charman Uniform COMMITTEE Should reach this office on or before **08/01/2024 by 12:00 noon** which will be opened on the same day at **2.30 pm** in the presence of all bidders or their representatives. List of Uniform items is given in the tender documents.

Terms and Conditions:

- All Specifications, terms and conditions are mentioned in the tender document.
- The bidder can participate for whole or any item(s) in the tender document.
- A call deposit equal to 2% of the tender price (refundable) must be submitted with tender in the form of pay order / demand draft in favour of Director Forest Education Division PFI, Peshawar.
- All taxes shall be charged as per Government rules.
- Incomplete tenders shall not be entertained.
- DFE may reject all bids / tenders at any time prior to the acceptance of bid/tender DFE shall upon request communicate to the bidders the ground for rejection of bids/tenders as per rule 47 of KPPRARules 2014.
- Sample of the tender items should be provided by the bidder on tender opening day to the Uniform Purchase Committee. In case of failure the bid/ tender will not be considered.
- The bidder will be bound to ensure the supply within 45 days on receipt of supply order.

Chairman, Uniform Purchase Committee
Forest Education Division

INF(P):
3061-2023

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PUBLIC NOTICE</



Social, economic development: Governor highlights importance of rule of law

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali Thursday said that supremacy of rule of law is prerequisite for economic development of a country and establishing society on firm foundations.

He was addressing a ceremony in Centre for Learning Law and Business (CLLB). The ceremony was also attended by Advocate General, Amir Javaid, Secretary Higher Education Regulatory Authority, Sajid Inam, lawyers, students and faculty members.

On the occasion, governor was informed that the



center is affiliated with University of London and students of CLLB would be issued degree from University of London.

Addressing the ceremony, governor highlighted significance of rule of law and said that it is prerequisite

site for social and economic development. He said that role of lawyers community in our judicial system could not be undermined and added that law students should also be informed about their role in existing judicial system.

He urged students to further hone their abilities and skills and play role to improve status of country among world nations. He said that youngsters are assets of the country, and they must work in cohesion with a purpose for country's development.

KP Governor said that justice, peace, knowledge and conscious are factors that derive strength from justice and supremacy of law in a society.

He also lauded administration of CLLB for co-curricular activities and his assured cooperation to faculty members.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chairing a meeting of Task Force on Technical Education and Skills Development.

Authorities directed to remove obstacles

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Newly Merged Districts Affairs Dr. Aamer Abdullah has directed the concerned authorities to immediately remove the obstacles in the establishment of new small industrial estate in Abbottabad under the Small Industries Development Board.

He further directed the local district administration, revenue, SIDB and other concerned departments to fulfill their responsibilities in this regard on an emergency basis so that the work of demarcation of the said industry can start as soon as possible.

He issued these instructions at his office in Peshawar while presiding over a meeting to review the issues faced in the construction work of the new industrial estate in Havelian here on Thursday.

The meeting was attended by MD SIDB Ghazanfar Ali, DC Abbottabad Khalid Iqbal, Deputy MD Nauman Fayyaz and relevant officers of Revenue Department.

The minister was given a detailed briefing regarding the project and he was informed about the illegal encroachment and some issues in the construction of this important industrial estate pertaining to laying of electricity transmission lines.

He was told that the government has acquired the land for the said project, but due to some obstacles, the demarcation work has not been started yet, for which immediate and effective measures are needed.

Faiq calls for strengthening democracy

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party called for joint efforts and consultation to strengthen democracy, electoral reforms and transparency.

When all institutions would be on a single platform then tug of war for power, corruption, politics based on inheritance and personal interests would automatically eliminate, Shah made these remarks while speaking to a group of senior jurists and lawyers here at the party's central secretariat on Thursday.

Our party has always given due respect to the legal fraternity and urged them to support ATP movement for electoral reforms and making it transparent and impartial, he added.

Minister reviews Tourism Dept plans

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A review meeting was held at the office of the Secretary of Tourism, chaired by the Caretaker Minister for Information, Culture, Tourism, Archaeology, and Museum, Barrister Firoze Jamal Shah Kakakhel. The meeting focused on evaluating the performance of the Tourism Department, ongoing projects, and the roadmap for future endeavors.

During the meeting, Secretary of the Tourism Department, Mutahir Zeb, delivered a detailed briefing, shedding light on the progress of Integrated Tourism Zones and the identification and development of new tourist destinations within the province. Emphasis was placed on ongoing efforts to enhance infrastructure, ensuring



improved tourism facilities for visitors. Secretary Mutahir Zeb highlighted the commitment to the welfare of artists, announcing plans to revise the Artist Welfare Endowment Fund Act Rules.

The proposed amendments seek to address challenges faced by artists in the province more effectively. The meeting revealed that the amendments, once approved by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cabinet, would significantly enhance support mechanisms for artists encountering financial difficulties.

Senior officials from the Tourism Department participated in the discussions. Minister Firoze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, presiding over the meeting, underscored the urgency of completing the amendments for the welfare of artists.

He directed officials to expedite the process and ensure readiness for Cabinet approval. Minister Kakakhel emphasized the crucial role of these amendments in providing timely and improved support to artists contributing to the field of art.

3rd Achievement Award registration kicks off

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 3rd Bint-e-Hawa Achievement Awards and a prestigious event aims to honor and recognize the remarkable achievements of women across Pakistan. Entrepreneurs, Social Workers, Doctors, Education, Sportswomen, Science and Technology, Art and Designing, Performing Arts, Media and Journalists, Healthcare.

Building on the success of the previous two editions, the 3rd Bint-e-Hawa Achievement Awards promises to be a celebration

of women's excellence and empowerment.

The event aims to highlight the invaluable contributions of women from diverse fields who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and dedication.

Alamzeb, a representative of the Bint-e-Hawa Forum, expressed his optimism for the upcoming awards, stating, "we are excited to launch the 3rd Bint-e-Hawa Achievement Awards and look forward to receiving nominations from talented and inspiring women across Pakistan." Interested candidates

can submit their nominations through the official website of the Bint-e-Hawa Achievement Awards at www.binte-hawaawards.com. The nomination process is open until January 31, 2024.

The Bint-e-Hawa Achievement Awards were established to recognize and celebrate the outstanding achievements of women who have made significant contributions to their respective fields.

The awards aim to inspire future generations of women to pursue excellence and create a positive impact on society.

Czech Republic's envoy visits Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Ladislav Steinhübel, the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Pakistan, along with his spouse, embarked on a captivating journey to Peshawar, leaving an indelible mark on their Thursday visit.

The purpose of their visit was to delve into the rich cultural heritage of Peshawar. Their sojourn in the city allowed them to explore various historical and cultural landmarks, encompassing significant sites such as Masjid Mahabat Khan, the famed antiques market at Asamai Gate adjacent to Sarafa Bazaar, Qissa Khwani Bazar, Tehsil Gor Gathri, and Sethi House.

As guests of the Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, His Excellency Ladislav Steinhübel and his wife expressed immense delight in immersing themselves in the rich history and heritage of Peshawar. Their visit to Masjid Mahabat Khan included a warm reception by Son of Maulana Tayyab Qureshi, the caretaker of the mosque. Here, they were presented with a bouquet of flowers and savored the local hospitality with a refreshing cup of green tea, a cherished tradition among the people of Peshawar.

The Ambassador and his spouse were enchanted by the antique jewelry displayed at Sarafa Bazaar. A special cultural exchange involved the presentation of traditional caps and rings to both the Ambassador and his spouse. Their excursion continued with a delightful visit to the renowned Taj Soda Water shop, Peshawar's oldest soda water shop, where



they indulged in the city's vibrant offerings.

During his visit to Tehsil Gor Gathri, the Ambassador explored the historical fire fighter wagons and visited the Tehsil Gor Gathri Museum, along with a captivating tour of the British-era museum. The esteemed guests also had the privilege of meeting Wajeh Sethi, the current custodian of Sethi House, an esteemed historical site in Peshawar, fostering cultural exchange and admiration for the region's architectural marvels.

The culinary journey was an equally delightful experience, as the Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa graciously treated their distinguished guests to "Sobat" (Penda), a traditional dish of the Marwat Tribes, showcasing the flavors of the region.

This cultural amalgamation was made possible through the initiatives of

Barrister Assad Saifullah Khan, the Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Established in 2018, the Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic has been instrumental in fostering friendly relations between the Czech Republic and the people of KP. Under Barrister Assad Saifullah Khan's leadership, the consulate has been pivotal in promoting trade and addressing issues, marking a significant milestone in Pakistan's relations with the Czech Republic.

The visit underscored the robust bond between Pakistan and the Czech Republic, demonstrating their commitment to fostering cultural exchanges and strengthening relations.

The exploration of Peshawar's cultural heritage by the Czech envoy showcased the city's historical significance and vibrant traditions, leaving a lasting impression on the visitors.

IAP, SDPO agreed to take joint steps to facilitate business community



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Industrialists Association Peshawar (IAP) president Ayub Zakori and Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Hayatabad Peshawar, ASP Nayab Moiz agreed to take joint steps to improve security

situation in the estate and resolution other issues, besides provision of facilities to the business community through PAL on priority basis.

According to details, the SDPO Hayatabad Peshawar, ASP Nayab Moiz held a meeting with IAP presi-

dent Ayub Zakori in the association office, said in a press release here on Thursday.

The meeting was attended by IAP executive member Malik Niaz, Zarak Khan, Adeel Rauf, Haris Mufti, Shayan Imtiaz, secretary general Muqtasid Ahsan and member Saad Khan Zahid.

The Estate Manager KPEZDMC and SHO Hayatabad were also present in the meeting.

Participants of the meeting thoroughly discussed overall security measures in the estate, especially progress on setting up of a dedicated police station, shifting of drug addicts to rehab centres, regular police patrolling, vigilance, additional force deployment of entry and exit points and provision of facilities to the business

community through PAL on priority grounds.

Earlier, the association chief Ayub Zakori while speaking on the occasion emphasized the case of a dedicated police station should be taken up with police high ups and provision of all resources to be ensured in this regard.

He urged police to actively engage with ANF in formalising a plan for drug addicts.

The IAP chief said regular police mobile, Ababeel force and Traffic beat patrolling to be ensured in industrial estate Hayatabad.

Ayub Zakori urged the SDPO to immediately deploy police on all entry and exit points; police pickets of industrial estate Hayatabad. Similarly, he asked SDPO to ensure enhanced and priority based facilitation to industries through the PAL office.

Later, the SDPO Hayatabad Peshawar ASP Nayab Moiz agreed with all proposals of the IAP president Ayub Zakori and members with regard to improvement in the security situation.

The police officials assured to take steps for meeting all security requirements in IEP, facilities to the business community and prompt resolution of their issues.

Mayor inaugurates computer lab

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali on Thursday visited Saint John Vian Boys School Kohati Gate and inaugurated computer laboratory for students.

He was accompanied by Assistant Commissioner, Syeda Zainab Naqvi and minority community member, Pervaiz Iqbal.

Mayor also visited various section of the school and said that problems of minority community would be resolved on priority basis. He said that furniture and needed facilities would be ensured for the computer lab.

Congratulating Christian community of Christmas, mayor also assured cooperation to address sense of depriations of minorities.

Hashoo Foundation, UNHCR's collaborative initiative for refugees



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Hashoo Foundation, in collaboration with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'s LIVE HMT project, orchestrated a groundbreaking event, "Hospitality Connect: Employer's Meetup & Job Fair," at Serena Hotel in Peshawar. The event garnered significant attention and participation, serving as a pivotal platform for approximately 30 Afghan beneficiaries specializing in the hospitality sector.

This remarkable event facilitated interactive discussions between the beneficiaries and industry experts, fostering a mutually enriching experience and offering unparalleled opportunities for engagement. Distinguished guests and officials from various organizations, including United Nations agencies, government offices, and renowned industry leaders, graced the occasion.

The event received esteemed attendees such as Iqbal Sarwar, Director of KP Board of Investment

and Trade KP-BOIT, Mr. Faiq Khan from Commissionerate of Afghan Refugees (CAR) office Peshawar, Ms. Anila Khalid, Vice President of Women Chambers of Commerce (WCC), representatives from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP), Secours Islamique France (SIF), and Mr. Wahab Afridi, the esteemed President of the Hotel Association Peshawar.

The Chief Guest, Mr. Shah Jehan Afridi, Chief Executive Officer of Afridi Medical Complex, delivered valuable insights into the prospects of Afghan beneficiaries.

His announcement of extending job offers to certified beneficiaries marked a significant outcome of the event, providing concrete support for their journey toward employment and success within the hospitality sector.

The event garnered immense praise for its efforts, acknowledging the monumental aspiration it provided for all involved. The diverse participation and meaningful discussions taken forward during the event represent a significant stride toward fostering opportunities and collaboration in the hospitality industry for Afghan refugees.

Training program for employment of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa youth launched

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The inauguration ceremony of the DECODE program, Women and Youth E-commerce and Digital Skills Training Programme, an initiative in digital skills training was held on Thursday at NIC Peshawar, marking a significant step in empowering over 200 young individuals from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Funded by Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) initiative through Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and managed by Adam Smith International, DECODE aims to revolutionize digital empowerment for youth and women. The program is a collabora-

orative venture of Change Mechanics Pvt Ltd and LMKT Pvt Ltd. Both of the organizations are serving as the ground implementing partners.

The pilot project is dedicated to equipping participants with the skills necessary to capitalize on opportunities in the freelance and e-commerce sectors. This initiative is not just about imparting skills but also enhancing employability and fostering sustainable economic growth in the region. The aim is to provide participants particularly KP women and youth with the digital skills and knowledge necessary for a profitable & sustainable source of income.

The event was attended by diverse group of emi-

nent participants representing academia, industry, government and the development sector.

Asim Ishaq Khan, Director NIC, emphasized the importance of innovative digital skills including the ever so growing demand for e-commerce and online freelancing income generation.

He stressed the need for bridging the gap between the academia and the industry with the most innovative and constructive approaches. The KP province being the fastest growing in terms of population growth is the hub of young graduates & nomad entrepreneurs.

Sayed Ahmad Masud, CEO Change Mechanics Pvt Ltd, highlighted that

the purpose of these training is not limited to the training period alone but also in practical the impact it provides in the employment opportunities and income generation for the trainees afterwards.

Taimur Khan, Institutional Development Advisor SEED (Adam Smith Intl, specifically pointed out the inclusion of women of KP in the program to tailor the program components to the maximum to their needs.

Abu Bakr Alvi sb emphasised the need of learning new technologies and update their skills with the fast growing world. Mr. Usman Arshad Khan, Lead Consultant E-Commerce while addressing through media link emphasized the

students to take this as the opportunity to generate success stories and try to transform themselves into successful entrepreneurs by taking these trainings.

Dr. Akif Khan, Director Technical KP IT Board iterated that way forward is by training youth especially women in KP in different IT and innovative digital skills to provide them with real time sustainable sources of income generation.

The DECODE program will offer specialized training in key areas such as Cloud Computing, Data Analytics, App Development, and E-commerce. It promises a comprehensive curriculum designed in consultation with industry experts, ensuring relevance and practicality.



In brief

5 killed as car falls into ditch

DUKI (INP): At least five people women and a child were killed while eight children injured when a car fell into a ditch here on Thursday. According to details, a car with 13 people onboard en route to Barkhan for attended a wedding party skidded off road due to over speeding. The car fell into a ditch by roadside near Duki district in Balochistan. Two women and a child among five people were killed in the accident while eight children sustained injuries. Rescue personnel and local volunteers shifted the bodies and injured to hospital.

ROs take oath for elections

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: District Returning Officer for General Election 2024 in district Shangla took oath from the returning and Assistant returning officers of the election staff at his office. District returning officer and deputy commissioner Zia-ur-Rehman Khattak Administers the oath to the ROs and AROs in the noon. After that an introductory meeting was held in which he said, that we have been elected Ameen for a great national cause, so we should do our duty with utmost honesty, integrity and ensure the conduct of fair and transparent election. DRO said, that we have to live up the trust that the election commission has placed on us and keep our oath. He said, we should work with full dedication and coordination.

Man killed by wife, son-in-law

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A man was brutally killed by his wife, son, daughter-in-law and brother-in-law over domestic issues in the limits of Sadar Police Station in Mardan on Thursday. The heart-wrenching incident took place in Aslamabad area where a man named Haider had filed a report of disappearance of his father deceased Abdul Rehman. The police found body of the deceased in the waters of Munsif Canal, floating near the police station after nine days and arrested the accused. According to the police, the reason is said to be domestic violence. The police have started further investigation of the arrested accused, from which more important revelations are expected.

Man killed, two injured

B A H A W A L P U R (INP): One person was killed while two women injured when an over speeding passenger bus hit a motorcycle in Ahmedpur Sharqia, police said on Thursday. According to details, the accident took place near Jhangra Interchange where a reckless driven passenger bus knocked down a motorcycle carrying three people. As a result of accident, one person was killed on the spot while two women were injured. Bus driver fled the scene. The body and injured were shifted to hospital. The police impounded the vehicle and after registering a case against driver at large started raids for his arrest.

Anti-polio drive from Jan 8

FAISALABAD (INP): Deputy Commissioner Abdullah Nawayar Sheikh has said the next anti-polio campaign in the district will be observed from January 8 to 14. A total of 4,869 teams will be on duty to administer vaccine to more than 1,536,000 children up to five years of age.

Newly formed BoG meeting held at MTI Swabi



F.P. Report

SWABI: The newly formed Board of Governors of Bacha Khan Medical Complex and Gajju Khan Medical College (GKMC/BKMC-MTI), Swabi convened its inaugural and overall 17th meeting today at the College conference room. The meeting was chaired by Prof. Dr. Ejaz Hassan Khan. The Board of Governors comprised esteemed members such as Prof. Muhammad Ishaq Khattak, Prof. Sajjad Muhammad Khan, Prof. Dr. Noor Jehan, Dr. Iqbal

Begum, Mr. Arbab Sher Bahadur, and Mr. Muhammad Irfan.

The GKMC/BKMC-MTI management welcomed the new Board of Governors (BOG), which includes Dean/CEO Prof. Dr. Shams-Ur-Rehman, Hospital Director Dr. Amjad Mahboob, Medical Director Prof. Dr. Shahid Nisar Khalid, Nursing Director Mr. Mehran Khan, and Director of Finance Mr. Akhtar Zeb.

The Board appreciated the efforts of the former BOG in improving health facilities for patients and commended the ongoing

initiatives and existing facilities.

The newly formed BOG members assured their commitment to enhancing and expanding treatment facilities to ensure better care for the patients at BKMC. Chairman Board of Governors, Dr. Ejaz Hassan Khan, reviewed the performance of the previous board and acknowledged the efforts made to improve healthcare facilities. The new BOG members assured the board's cooperation in promptly addressing the financial and administrative challenges faced by the hospital and college.

Kashmir settlement under UN resolutions stressed

RAWALAKOT (INP): The speakers addressing a seminar have stressed the settlement of the lingering Kashmir dispute according to the United Nations resolutions.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the seminar was organized by Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir at Poonch Medical College in Rawalakot on Thursday. The speakers said the Indian government was using the worst military force to suppress the freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people and the citizens, demanding freedom, rights and justice under the oppressive black laws like Armed Forces Special Powers Act, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and Public Safety Act, were being martyred in fake encounters or sent to jails.

They said in occupied Kashmir, the agencies under the influence of

Indian National Investigation Agency and New Delhi-controlled State Investigation Agency were occupying the lands of the Kashmiri citizens, besides demolishing their properties and taking them into custody.

The speakers deplored the United Nations have passed several resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, however, it has failed to implement them. The Kashmiri people have been struggling continuously for the last over seven decades for freedom from Indian military oppression and would continue it till taking it to its logical conclusion, they added.

The speakers demanded of the United Nations and Organization of Islamic Cooperation to help stop the Indian brutalities in the occupied territory. They also urged the government of Azad Kashmir to

announce an anti-India protest movement regarding the Indian Supreme Court's recent verdict on Kashmir's special status.

The speakers also termed the Israeli aggression on Palestine as a big challenge for the Muslim Ummah and appealed it to play a practical role in the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. The speakers included Principal of the college Professor Dr. Chaudhry Muhammad Shabbir, Chairman of Pasban-e-Hurriyat Uzair Ahmed Ghazali, Professor Rukhsana Firdous, Professor Shakeel Sadiq, Liaquat Ali Rana, Muhammad Fayyaz Khan and Usman. After the seminar, professors, students and staff of the college took a symbolic walk to demand the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people and prayed for the martyrs of Kashmir and Palestine.

Nowshera Press Club elects new cabinet

Syed Wali Ullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Nowshera Press Club (NPC) elected Haji Mushtaq Ahmad Paracha and Syed Wali Ullah Shah as president and general secretary respectively for 2024 session, on Thursday.

The newly elected cabinet comprising of vice president Syed Sakim Shah, Joint Secretary Haji Zahoor Ahmad, Joint Secretary Nasir Khan and Finance Secretary Haji Zahoor Ahmad.

Dispute Resolution Council (DRC) Information department



chairman Arshad Aziz Malik along M Riaz and Haji Jahanzeb Khattak supervised the election which had ended different among NPC members.

NPC cabinet paid thanks to DRC members and election commission for holding transparent polling which is accepted by all participants.

Civil Secretariat officers observe token strike

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Civil Secretariat Officers Welfare Association observed token strike in support of its demands and organised a protest meeting in the lawn outside the office of Chief Secretary Balochistan in Balochistan Civil Secretariat here on Thursday.

Addressing the protest demonstration, speakers said caretaker provincial government had stopped issuing notification for field entry of Balochistan Secretariat Services (BSS) cadre officers while on the other hand illegal adjustments of Balochistan Civil Service (BCS) cadre officers against the posts of BSS cadre were being issued.

They said that share distribution for posting in field between BCS and

BSS cadres had been approved by the competent authority, but it was not known as to why notification regarding share distribution between BCS and BSS was not being issued, adding that the induction of Assistant Executive Officer (AEO) cadre officers into BSS and BCS had been declared illegal by the Honourable High Court of Balochistan in its decision passed on October 01, 2022, but A.E.O. cadre officers were still serving against the posts reserved for BSS cadre officers.

They said that posting of junior non-cadre grade-18 officer against the post of Director General, Industries (B-20), Balochistan was illegal, adding that posting of junior most Sub Divisional Officer (SDO) against the post of Deputy

Secretary (B-18), Public Health Engineering Department, Government of Balochistan was the gift of incumbent provincial government.

They said protest movement of Balochistan Civil Secretariat Officers Welfare Association would continue till the acceptance of all genuine demands of Balochistan Civil Secretariat Officers Welfare Association. Meeting was addressed by Abdul Malik Kakar,

President, BCSOWA, Zaheer Baloch, General Secretary, Najeeb Sarpara, Finance Secretary, Muhammad Essa Hazara, Secretary Information, Shujaat Ali Khosa, Additional Secretary, Finance Department, Aftab Jabal, Section Officer, Finance Department, Syed Nadeem Shah Bukhari and others.

Iranian petrol seized in Mardan

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Police seized 40 thousand liters of petrol and 08 thousand liters of diesel worth crore of rupees Iranian and arrested three alleged culprits, on Thursday.

According to the details, under the supervision of SP Headquarters Wisal Ahmed, Sadar police station SHO Abdul Salam Khan and mobile officer Ataullah on a secret tip carried out a successful operation against non-custom paid Iranian diesel and petrol in 02 tankers 40,000 Liters of petrol and 08 thousand liters of diesel smugglers.03 accused Nimat, Qadratullah sons of Bor Muhammad resident of Balochistan and Ifthikhar son of Amirzada resident of Janabad Mardan were arrested and all the non-customs paid oil was handed over to the higher customs authorities after necessary action as per the orders of the officers.

Students visit special educational complex: Students and staff members of Army Public School (Aziz Bhatti Shaheed) Mardan visited Special Education Complex Mardan. He visited all the sections of the complex and distributed food items to the special students studying in the special education complex. He appreciated the commitment and dedication of the staff towards the noble cause of free education, rehabilitation and training of students with special needs.

On behalf of the staff and students, Deputy Director Aneeq Ahsan thanked the staff and students of APS Mardan for their love and efforts for special students. He said that this visit is also a way to create awareness among the general public regarding students with special needs.

RTS key for accountability

F.P. Report

BUNER: Right to Public Services Commission (RTS) arranged awareness session regarding delivery of public services within stipulated timeframe.

District Monitoring Officer RTS Suhail Khan held meeting with journalists in the Buner Press club and briefed them. He shared RTS was serving public to make sure facilities within minimum possible time adding 13 departments 81 services were monitoring in larger public interests.

DPO shared public awareness campaign was launched at schools, colleges, universities, civil societies, press club and bar associations to well educate public through opinion leaders. He hoped the media interaction would help increase public awareness by making it wide circulated in the print electronic and social media as well.

Two killed in road mishaps

OKARA (INP): Two people died and another injured in separate road accidents in different localities of Okara, rescue sources said on Thursday.

According to details, an over speeding truck knocked down a motorcycle on Faisalabad Road killing a woman identified as Sobia and injuring another person. In suburban village 22 GD, a reckless driven crushed to death 12-year-old body. Truck driver fled the scene.

Political parties urged to ensure women participation in elections



F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Speakers at a seminar held at Timergara have asked political leaders and area elders to ensure women participation in the next general elections. The Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen) Caravan Malakand division arranged the function at a local hotel in Timergara here on Thursday. The Fafen divisional programme officer Syed Jamal Shah was chief guest on the occasion. The nominated candidates of political parties and representatives of local government attended the seminar. Speaking on the occasion Mr Jamal Shah said that conduction of free and fair election was the need of the hour.

He said that it was the responsibility of the election commission of Pakistan to ensure free, fair and transparent elections in the country. He said that women constituted half of the total population and they had the right to vote. He asked the political parties, local leadership and area elders to end all barriers of banning women of their basic right to vote. He

said the polls' result would be declared null and void in constituencies where the ratio of women enfranchisement was not up to the mark. The speakers also urged parties to avoid conflicts, tussles and hatred speeches during the electioneering and especially on polls' day.

Meanwhile the MQM Pakistan nominated Malik Mehtab Khan as its candidate for NA 7 Lower Dir. Speaking at a news conference at the Timergara press club the MQM Pakistan provincial chief Arifullah said that the party would field its candidates in other constituencies as well. He said that Mr Fazal Karim was elected as senior vice president, Mian Abdul Hanan as general secretary, Muhammad Rauf as vice president, Abdur Razaq as coordination secretary, Zahid Shah as finance secretary and Himayat Syed as press secretary for the MQM Pakistan in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Nursing college: Former provincial minister finance and nominated candidate of the PTI-P for PK 16 Muzafar Syed advocate

has lauded the role of nurses and said they play a key role in protecting human lives. He was addressing a function organized by the Mercy College of Nursing at Saddo Timergara on opening of classes at the college as chief guest here the other day. The function was attended by nurses, doctors, paramedics and area elders. The Al-Khidmat Foundation central assistant general secretary Fazal Mahmood, Principal of the College Abdur Rehman, chief executive of the United College of Nursing Swat Dr Fazal Rabi, political activist Zulfiqar Ali, Khaista Rehman and others.

The former minister asked the undergraduate nurses to acquire the best knowledge in the field of nursing and then serve the ailing people. He said that nurses were respected across the globe for their profession as they played a key role in protecting the lives of the ailing people. He said that knowledge of modern technology was also important for professional graduates so the students should focus on technology as well.

15 candidates to contest polls in Shahdadkot

F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: In connection with the next election to be held during the February 2024 election in district Qamber, Shahdadkot, the two famous organizations of the country, Pakistan People's Party and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam, are competing among strong candidates for NA-196 from Shahdadkot, Pakistan. 15 candidates on NA-196 including Nasir Khalid Mahmood Soomro on behalf of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam and on PS-14 former MPA of Pakistan Peoples Party Nadir Magasi, former taluk

chairman Mir Mithal Khan Mughiri, Javed 14 candidates including Khan Chandio have received the nomination forms.

After the announcement of the General Election 2024 by the Election Commission of Pakistan, like the whole country, the process of receiving nomination forms has been going on rapidly since December 20 in Shahdadkot, where PS On 14th, 15 candidates, including Mir Mithal Mughiri, former MPA Nader Magasi, independent candidates Javed Khan Chandio and Abdul Aziz Barro, Muzaffar Ali Brohi of PPP, Dr. Forms were received from Saeed Khan Naveed

Ali Kahokhar, Asif Ali Laghari, President of Pakistan People's Party Taluk, received the form from Chairman of Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for the seat of MNA on NA-196 from the Returning Office in Shahdadkot.

At least 15 candidates including Nasir Khalid Mahmood Soomro from Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam, Madam Naheed Kahawar, Sohail Nasir Magasi, Dr. Abdul Sattar Gopang, Muhammad Ibrahim Dayo of Jamaat-e-Islami, Laila Ameer Khawar from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf have received forms to participate in the election.

Returning Officers take oath for general elections

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: In order to ensure holding of free, fair and transparent election, a meeting of Returning, Assistant Returning Officers of different constituencies of the district Hafizabad held at district complex. DC/District Returning Officer Sundas Irshad presided over the meeting. District Police Officer Dr. Faisal Gulzar and officers of different departments attended the meeting.

District Returning Officer/DC took oath from Returning and Assistant Returning Officers in the meeting. Addressing the meeting Sundas Irshad directed the ROs and officers of all departments to

ensure implementation on directions issued by the election commission and all necessary facilities be provided at all buildings selected for establishing polling stations on priority basis. She said that candidates started to submit their nomination papers with concerned Returning Officers in peaceful atmosphere.

District Election Officer Khalid Rasheed gave briefing in the meeting regarding establishment of polling stations and numbers of registered voters in the district. Law and order situation also discussed in the meeting in view of holding of general elections in the district.

Martyr laid to rest: Punjab Emergency Service

Rescue 1122 observed martyred day. In this connection, District Emergency Officer Engineer Muhammad Adnan Nawaz laid flexural wreath at martyred momentum of Rescue 1122 and accorded guard of honour to martyred who rendered their lives in line with duty.

Father and other family members of martyred Nouman Abbas rescuer Hafizabad was also present on the occasion. DEO Muhammad Adnan Nawaz said on the occasion that 20, December observe as Rescue 1122 martyred to remember martyred particularly those martyred who rendered their lives to overcome fire in Ghakhar Plaza Rawalpindi.

CPDI calls for widely discussing budgetary proposals by key stakeholders

F.P. Report

TANK: Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), a non-governmental organization in its fourth annual report released here on Thursday on the "State of budget transparency in Pakistan, International Best Practices" called for budget proposals to be widely discussed with civic groups, government agencies and key stakeholders.

The report was aimed to present findings and facilitates dialogue – between governments, civil society, and the citizens at large. It recommended launching of a centralized digital platform dedicated to fostering citizen participation. The report also recommended separate budget statements for women, minorities, children, and

PWDs, outlining specific allocations and strategies tailored to each group's unique needs and challenges.

The report urged the Governments to ensure availability of budget data in widely accepted machine-readable formats like Excel and CSV. It said that 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 Inayat Ullah Khan 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.

He said that the 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.



EU reaches agreement to overhaul migration system, tighten asylum rules

BRUSSELS: The European Union has reached an agreement on reforms designed to share the cost of hosting migrants and refugees, and limit the numbers of people coming in to the bloc after years of discussion on how to overhaul its outdated asylum rules.

Envoys from member countries, the EU parliament and the executive branch, the European Commission, "reached a deal on the core political elements" of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, the EU's Spanish presidency said in a statement after a night of negotiations. Dozens of refugee rights groups have said the deal will create a "cruel system" that is unworkable and will cause what would amount to prison camps at the EU's borders.

The reform includes speedier vetting of irregular arrivals, creating border detention centres, accelerated deportation for rejected asylum applicants and a solidarity mechanism to take pressure off southern countries experiencing big inflows of migrants. Amnesty International said the agreement "will set back European asylum law for decades" and its "likely outcome is a surge in suffering on every step of a person's journey to seek asylum in the EU" as it is "designed to make it harder for people to access safety".

The accord still needs to be formally approved by the European Council, representing the 27 member nations, and the European Parliament, before it enters the bloc's lawbooks, likely in 2024. "The EU reached a landmark agreement on a new set of rules to manage migration and asylum," Roberta Metsola, president of the European Parliament, said on X. European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said "migration is a common European challenge - today's decision will allow us to manage it together".

Migrant arrivals in the EU are way down from the 2015 peak of more than one million people, but have steadily crept up from a 2020 low to



255,000 in the year to November, with more than half crossing the Mediterranean from Africa to Italy or Malta. Previous efforts to share the responsibility for hosting migrants and refugees have floundered because eastern EU members in particular were unwilling to take in people who had arrived in Greece, Italy and other countries. Under the new system, countries not at the border will have a choice between accepting asylum seekers or paying into an EU fund. An accelerated filtering and vetting system will be put in place so those deemed ineligible can be quickly sent back to their home country or country of transit.

People whose asylum applications have a low chance of success, such as those from India, Tunisia or Turkey, can be prevented from entering the bloc and held in detention centres at the border, as can people who are seen as representing a threat to security. Dozens of charities that help migrants and refugees - including Amnesty International, Oxfam, Caritas and Save the Children - have criticised the pact, saying in an open letter (PDF) that the package will "mirror the failed

approaches of the past and worsen their consequences". "If adopted in its current format, it will normalise the arbitrary use of immigration detention, including for children and families, increase racial profiling, use 'crisis' procedures to enable pushbacks, and return individuals to so called 'safe third countries' where they are at risk of violence, torture, and arbitrary imprisonment," the letter by 56 NGOs said. "We should strengthen, not weaken, our reception and asylum systems and provide mechanisms to fairly share responsibility between European states," it added.

Amnesty also noted that the agreement reinforces the EU's dependence on states beyond its borders to manage migration, building on recent deals with Albania, Libya, Tunisia and Turkey. "Rather than investing in dignified reception within the EU and expanding safe and regular pathways to allow people to reach protection in Europe without relying on dangerous journeys, this amounts to a further step towards externalising border control and evading Europe's refugee protection responsibilities," it said. — Aljazeera

Russian billionaire loses legal challenge

BRUSSELS (Reuters): Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich lost a legal challenge aimed at overturning European Union sanctions imposed on him in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. After President Vladimir Putin ordered Russian troops into Ukraine in February 2022, the EU sanctioned Russian officials and a host of Russian businessmen, such as Abramovich, while freezing hundreds of billions of dollars of Russian assets.

Abramovich had filed a legal challenge against this. The EU court in Brussels rejected the challenge and also dismissed his claims for compensation, noting his role in the Russian steel company Evraz and the fact that steel provided a major source of revenue to the Russian government. "The General Court dismisses the action brought by Mr Abramovich, thereby upholding the restrictive measures taken against him," it said in its ruling. "The (European) Council did not in fact err in its assessment by deciding to include, then maintain, Mr Abramovich's name on the lists at issue, in the light of his role in the Evraz group and, in particular, its parent company," it added, referring to the sanctions lists. Abramovich, who also holds Israeli citizenship and is a former owner of British Premier League soccer club Chelsea, became one of the world's most powerful businessmen after the 1991 break-up of the Soviet Union. Forbes estimates his net worth at \$9.2 billion. In a statement issued on his behalf, Abramovich said he was disappointed by the ruling. He said the court had not considered some of the arguments used by the EU Council, including the proposition that Abramovich had benefited from the Russian government - which he said was a false suggestion. "Mr Abramovich does not have the ability to influence the decision-making of any government, including Russia, and has in no way benefited from the (Ukraine) war," the statement said. "The court's decision to maintain the sanctions against Mr Abramovich was based purely on the court defining Mr Abramovich as a 'Russian businessman' which under today's very broad EU regulations is sufficient to remain sanctioned, even if you are just a passive shareholder in a business sector with no connection to the war."

Zelenskiy for prisoner exchanges with Russia

KYIV (Reuters): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said that a recent slowdown in prisoner swaps with Moscow was due to unspecified "reasons" on the Russian side, but expressed hope that the swaps could soon resume. The two sides held a number of prisoner swaps from the early months of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and into this year. But their intensity slowed in 2023 and the last one took place in early August.

"It has indeed slowed down due to the Russian Federation's own reasons, but these are very specific reasons. The track will open," Zelenskiy told a press conference in Kyiv, without citing Russia's reasons. He added that Ukraine was currently working on the exchange of "a good enough number of our boys" and expressed hope the swap would be successful. Last month, Ukraine's human rights commissioner Dmytro Lubinets said Russian prisoners in Ukraine had expressed a wish to be exchanged but Moscow was not interested in taking them back. Moscow did not comment on that assertion. In November, the Ukrainian government said it had recorded 3,574 Ukrainian military and 763 civilians taken into Russian or Moscow-backed separatists' captivity since 2014. That figure included those who have already returned to Ukraine, it said, but likely did not reflect all the current prisoners.

Putin ratchets up military pressure on Ukraine

MOSOW (AP): After blunting Ukraine's counteroffensive from the summer, Russia is building up its resources for a new stage of the war over the winter, which could involve trying to extend its gains in the east and deal significant blows to the country's vital infrastructure. Russian President Vladimir Putin seems to be hoping that relentless military pressure, combined with changing Western political dynamics and a global focus on the Israeli-Hamas war, will drain support for Ukraine in the nearly 2-year-old war and force Kyiv to yield to Moscow's demands.

"As far as the Russian leadership is concerned, the confrontation with the West has reached a turning point: The Ukrainian counteroffensive has failed, Russia is more confident than ever, and the cracks in Western solidarity are spreading," said Tatiana Stanovaya, senior fellow with Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, in a recent analysis. An aid package for Ukraine has stalled in the US Congress as Republicans insist on linking any more money to US-Mexico border security changes opposed by Democrats. The European Union last week failed to agree on a \$54 billion package in financial help that Ukraine desperately needs. Amid these signs of fraying Western support, Russia has ramped up its pressure on Ukrainian forces on several parts of the more than 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line.

"The Russian military since October has been trying to seize initiative across the front in a couple of areas," said Michael Kofman, a military expert with the Carnegie Endowment. Ukraine's military needs to reconstitute and regenerate its combat effectiveness after a grueling five-month counteroffensive, he said. "Ukrainian forces, while motivated, are exhausted," Kofman said in

a recent podcast. "They've lost a lot of units of action. They've lost a lot of assault capable troops." One area where Russia has maintained steady pressure is the northeastern city of Kupiansk, a strategically important rail hub that Moscow captured early in the war and then lost in a Ukrainian counteroffensive in September 2022. While Russian forces have failed to make any significant gains in the area, Ukraine has had to maintain a significant force to protect the city. Starting in early October, Russian troops also have launched an offensive around Avdiivka, a town near Donetsk, the center of the region that was seized by Moscow-backed rebels in 2014 and illegally annexed by Russia in 2022 with three other Ukrainian regions.

Ukraine has built multiple defenses in Avdiivka, complete with concrete fortifications and a web of underground tunnels, allowing them to repel fierce Russian attacks. Despite massive losses, Russian troops have inched forward steadily, seeking to envelop Avdiivka and cut Ukrainian supply lines. That battle has evolved into a gruesome grind for both parties and has been compared to the fighting for Bakhmut, the war's longest and bloodiest battle that ended with Russia capturing it in May. The Kremlin and the Russian Defense Ministry are silent about specific plans, but some Russian war bloggers say Moscow could launch a massive offensive of its own to forge deep into Ukrainian territory. Others warn, however, that the Russian military lacks resources for any such big push, saying that would require many more troops and weapons, exposing it to the same risks that doomed initial Russian attempts to capture Kyiv and other cities in the northeast at the start of the war. In that botched attack, Russian

armored convoys stretched along highways leading to the capital, becoming easy prey for Ukrainian drones and artillery. Such setbacks forced the Kremlin to switch to a defensive strategy along the front line.

Putin is eager to show battlefield gains as he faces reelection in March. He said last week that Russia has 617,000 fighters in Ukraine, a number that many war bloggers see as far short of the kind of massive force needed to strike deep into Ukraine. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says his ground forces number about 600,000. Western observers are emphasizing the need for Ukraine to build fortified defenses like Russia has done to counter any potential big offensive by Moscow. "Ukrainians have painfully few reserves," warned Mark Galeotti, head of Mayak Intelligence consultancy and a senior associate fellow at Royal United Services Institute in London. If Moscow manages to break through Ukraine's defensive lines, "Russian forces could then really wreak havoc on lines of communication, lines of supply, rear supply bases," he said.

"In that context, it does make sense to allow fortification to make up for the lack of reserves," Galeotti said in a recent podcast. In recent months, the Russian military has reduced the use of its long-range air- and sea-launched cruise missiles in what has been widely interpreted as a sign of Moscow's effort to build up stockpiles of such weapons to strike Ukraine's power grid and other key infrastructure in winter, when it is most vulnerable due to high consumption. At the same time, Russia has stepped up attacks on Kyiv and other regions with waves of Iranian-made Shahed exploding drones, in an apparent effort to deplete Ukrainian air defenses.

Ireland to launch legal action against UK

BELFAST: Ireland says it will mount a legal challenge against the United Kingdom over a new law that gives some immunity from prosecution for offences committed during three decades of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland.

Irish Deputy Prime Minister Micheal Martin said that "after much thought and careful consideration", his government is launching a legal challenge against the Legacy and Reconciliation Bill, which critics say shuts down access to justice for victims and survivors. The law, passed in September, stops most prosecutions for alleged killings by armed groups and British soldiers during the Troubles, the three decades of violence in which more than 3,500 people died.

Many groups on the island of Ireland are vehemently opposed to the new law, including victims' families, human rights organizations and all major political parties. Martin said

Britain had not properly engaged with people affected by the law before passing it. "The British government enacted this legislation on September 18, 2023, shutting off any possibility of political resolution," Martin said. "We now find ourselves in a space where our only recourse is to pursue a legal path." Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said the case would be taken to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. Ireland plans to argue that aspects of the law are incompatible with the UK's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights. The United Nations and the Council of Europe have backed Ireland's position, Varadkar said. "It is something that we're genuinely doing with a sense of regret and would prefer not to be in this position, but we did make a commitment to survivors in Northern Ireland and to the families of victims that we would stand by them," he said. The

Troubles - a conflict over British rule in Northern Ireland - pitted Irish nationalist armed groups seeking a united Ireland against pro-British "loyalist" paramilitaries and the British military. It eventually came to an end in 1998 through a peace deal. About 1,200 deaths from that time remain under investigation, according to the UK government. Victims' families have already been challenging the new law in the Northern Ireland courts. Amnesty International Northern Ireland Deputy Director Grainne Teggart said the Irish government's pushback is essential. "The U.K. government doggedly pursued this legislation which shields perpetrators of serious human rights violations from being held accountable. It's important that the Irish government takes this stand," she said. "This challenge is vital for victims here and around the world who face the prospect of similar state-gifted impunity," Teggart said. — Aljazeera

Love or country: UK families caught up in Sunak's plan to cut migration

DURSLEY, England (Reuters): In early December Rebecca Kaya was celebrating after she and her Kurdish husband Baran finally hit their savings goal to qualify for a British visa so the couple could move from Icmeler in Turkey to Britain.

A few days later Prime Minister Rishi Sunak hiked the amount a British person must earn in order to sponsor a foreign partner to move to Britain - raising their fears that the savings threshold will also jump and their nest egg will not be enough. The new policy came days after official data put legal net migration to Britain at a record high of 745,000 in 2022, prompting the government to announce a raft of measures to make it harder for people to move to the country.

Public concerns over high levels of migration have dominated Britain's political landscape for more than a decade, playing a key role in the country's vote to leave the European Union and prompting Sunak to try to send those who arrive illegally to Rwanda to act as a deterrent. Targeting those who arrive on spousal visas - some 65,000 in the year ending September - the government has more than doubled the annual salary a British person must earn to sponsor a foreign partner's visa, to 38,700 pounds

(\$49,170) from 18,600 pounds. According to the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, nearly 70% of British employees in the UK do not earn enough to qualify for the higher level in 2023.

It said Britain had one of the highest income requirements in the world, as many other countries base their levels around the minimum wage. For the Kayas, they had pursued an alternative way of securing a visa, by building up personal savings from Baran's work in the family business in the hospitality trade, Rebecca's online jewellery company and inheritance money from her father. They had just put the required 62,500 pounds into a UK account, where it would need to be for six months to gain a visa. While the government has not said if the savings threshold will also rise, immigration lawyers expect it will. Immigration advice websites suggest it too could more than double, if the same calculation is applied as on income. "We're doing everything that they're asking and ... just as we're at the final hurdle, they changed the requirements," Rebecca Kaya said on a visit to a family member's home in a small town outside Gloucester, England.

Britain's Home Office, the interior ministry responsible for migration

strategy, has said the new policies will not be applied retrospectively and until the immigration rules are amended the minimum income threshold will remain the same. "We are establishing the specifics of the policy, including how it will apply to those renewing visas, and will confirm more details in due course," a spokesperson said. The new policy, which will come into force in April, has been announced with very few details, spreading alarm not just through couples hoping to move to Britain, but those already present who need to renew their visas. Josephine Whitaker-Yilmaz, policy expert at migrants' charity Praxis, said the change was "strikingly at odds with the government's claim to be the party of families". Paige Ballmi, 29, and her husband Tom, 29 who is from Albania, fear their domestic set up will be turned on its head too.

Under the rules, a first spousal visa depends on the income of the British national, but a couple's combined income will be considered for future visa renewals. In their case, Tom, earning 32,000 pounds as a self-employed carpenter, is the main provider while Paige cares for their two-year-old daughter. He will be eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain in April as his second spousal visa

expires, but she fears he may have to leave if they do not meet the 38,700 requirement. "(This) is totally unfair on my child," she told Reuters in her home in Enfield, London. "She has a right to have both her parents here." While there is support for Sunak's migration policies among parts of his party and the public, any heavy-handed move to tighten numbers also draws criticism, from businesses who say it will harm the economy, and from those who accuse the government of dictating who they can and cannot love. On its own, a tightening of spousal rules is unlikely to hit the economy but critics have warned that some of those on the spousal system first came to Britain for post-graduate degrees, the type of skilled worker the government should want to retain.

Alexandra Kimmons, 29, hoped she would live in Britain with her husband, Ben Fong, when he completes his studies in the United States. But earning 35,000 pounds in the non-profit sector she is now considering asking family for help with savings, taking an extra job, or moving to the United States. "Would you look at two thirds of people on the street and say you don't have the right to fall in love with somebody who lives outside the UK?" she said.

EUs naval force says a cargo ship hijacked last week

CAPE TOWN (AP): A Maltese-flagged merchant ship that was hijacked last week in the Arabian Sea with 18 crew on board is now off the coast of Somalia, the European Union's maritime security force said. One crew member has been evacuated for medical care. The bulk carrier Ruen remains under the control of the hijackers, whose identity and demands are unknown, the EU Naval Force said in a statement. It did not give details on the condition of the crew member who was taken off the vessel and moved to an Indian navy ship that has been shadowing the Ruen.

An Indian maritime patrol plane spotted the Ruen a day after its hijacking last Thursday and made radio contact with the crew, who had locked

themselves in a safe room. The hijackers broke into the safe room and "extracted the crew" hours later, the EU Naval Force said. The Ruen, which is managed by Bulgarian shipping company NaviBulgar, was off the Yemeni island of Socotra near the Horn of Africa when it was boarded, the private intelligence firm Ambrey and the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations said. Bulgarian authorities said the ship's crew were Angolan, Bulgarian and Myanmar nationals. The 185-meter (606-foot) Ruen was carrying a cargo of metals from the port of Gwangyang in South Korea, the EU Naval Force said. It had been headed to the Turkish port of Gemlik. The captain confirmed the hijacking by

sending a mayday alert to the EU Naval Force's command center. The vessel has now moved southwest toward the coast of Somalia, according to the EU force. Suspicion has fallen on Somali pirates, whose attacks have decreased markedly in recent years.

They may be more active again. The Pentagon has said that five armed assailants who seized a commercial ship near Yemen late last month were likely Somali nationals and not Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, who were first suspected to be responsible. The Yemen-based Houthi rebels have escalated their attacks on ships passing through the Red Sea during the Israel-Hamas war, impacting global trade. The US said that it and a host of other

nations are creating a force to protect ships transiting the Red Sea that have come under attack from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

But Somalia's maritime police have also intensified their patrols in recent weeks following the Pentagon's assessment of last month's attempted hijacking as fears grow of a resurgence of piracy by Somali nationals. A Spanish frigate from the EU Naval Force and a Japanese naval vessel that is under the multinational Combined Maritime Forces command have moved to the vicinity of the hijacked Ruen to join the Indian navy vessel. It is being "continuously monitored" by the ships and a 5-meter-long (16-foot) drone used by the EU force.

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Rising Hindu majoritarianism in India

ACCORDING to the media, at least 200 people have been killed in ethnic violence in Manipur, India's northeastern state since fighting broke out between the predominantly Hindu majority and Christian minority in May 2023. The central government of India finally managed the burial of 87 people killed during bitter violence over the past eight months, as the rival militias set up blockades to keep out members of the opposing community, while families of the deceased were not able to travel for months to collect the bodies of their relatives.

India is witnessing a sharp rise in Hindu extremism that has squeezed the Indian soil for religious and ethnic minorities from Kashmir to Nagaland and Punjab to Manipur. Indian minorities including Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Dillats, and others are primary victims of RSS-led Hindu extremist gangs, who have a so-called plan for the creation of Maha Bharat by expelling Indian minorities out of their country or perishing their lives through violence and massacres. According to human rights groups, local leaders often exacerbate ethnic divisions for political gain. Currently, Hindu monks' agenda is resonating with increasingly encouraged vigilante groups, while Muslims and Christians are their primary targets. The vigilantes commonly beat the people accused of disrespecting cows, dragged couples out of trains, cafes, and homes on suspicion that Hindu women might be seduced by Muslim men; and burst into religious gatherings where they suspect Hindu people are being converted to Muslim or Christian.

Historically, minority rights in India is a long-held issue that emerged in the Hindu-majority nation just after getting independence from British colonial rule in August 1947. Besides, state suppression in Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir, Juna gadh, and Gurdaspur, the Muslims faced hate crime, communal violence, and prejudice at the hands of the Hindu majority due to their perceived bifurcation of Akund Bharat after Pakistan got independence. However, these faultlines became more visible and deeper after the Modi-led pro-RSS BJP regime came to power nearly a decade ago. Modi government not only encouraged Hindu gangs' violence for political purposes but further buttressed religious and ethnic polarization in Indian society by introducing discriminatory legislation such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). These policies not only sparked protests but adversely affected minority communities, particularly Muslims.

The calls for anti-Muslim violence even genocide across India are moving from the fringes to mainstream Indian society, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his top aides keep silent on the situation. Meanwhile, New Delhi's slackness in resolving the Hindu-Christian conflict in Mani Pur further exposes India's biased conduct toward its minorities.

The situation is complex, and the treatment of minorities under the Modi regime is a globally recognized issue. Worship places including mosques and Churches are regularly being attacked by the organized mob, while hundreds of mosques have been enlisted to the hit list of Hindu fascist organizations, on the ungrounded claims that those mosques were built on temples. Although, human rights organizations regularly highlight gross human rights abuses in India, while US International Religious Freedom Institute has recently urged the Biden administration to designate India as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) due to its poor record. It is high time, that the global community plays its role and takes decisive actions against the Modi government, so the religious and ethnic minorities get some relief amid growing Hindu majoritarianism comes to a halt.

Drug abuse in Pakistan

THE use and smuggling of drugs have shaped into a serious problem that impacts various aspects of society, including public health, safety, and socioeconomic well-being of the public. Pakistan is a major transit route for narcotics trafficking due to its geographical location between major drug-producing regions and consumer markets that spread across the globe. The country faces challenges in combating drug smuggling, as organized criminal networks engage in the trafficking of heroin, opium, cannabis, and other illicit substances. These activities not only pose health risks but also contribute to social insecurity, corruption, crime, and instability. The drug trafficking industry is also responsible for human trafficking particularly women and children for sexual abuse and exploitation.

Recently, Kohat Police has uncovered a vast inter-province ice smuggling network that was involved in supplying and transnational smuggling of drugs from across the Durand line. Meanwhile, the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) busted a nine-member gang and seized one metric ton of drugs worth millions of rupees in two separate operations during the last week. Currently, drug addiction is seriously hurting Pakistani society with millions of drug users causing multiple issues ranging from health crises, social disintegration, economic challenges, a rise in crimes, and law and order problems. On the other hand, the drug trade is a significant source of income for organized crimes including terrorism, and fuels corruption in politics and governmental affairs. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Pakistan has 6.7 million drug users. Almost 2 million of those are addicts, amongst the highest numbers for any country in the world. The menace of drug abuse has spread all over Pakistan while youth clubs, schools, and universities are prime targets of the drug dealers that pose a grave risk to our society.

Although government agencies including Poice and Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) are working to curb the use and supply of drugs, but their performances are not at par because of institutional corruption, a lack of resources, and public cooperation. The government is using all possible means including law enforcement operations, border controls, awareness campaigns, and international cooperation to disrupt drug smuggling networks. But, the problem persists due to the complex nature of the illicit drug trade and its connections to transnational criminal networks. There is a dire need for enhanced law enforcement, community engagement, rehabilitation programs, and regional cooperation to effectively tackle the use and illegal transportation of drug, to achieve the goal of a drug-free Pakistan.

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Is America sleepwalking into dictatorship?

Dr. Amal Mudallali

THE 2024 American election campaign is shaping up to be a referendum on the future of democracy in the country. The Democrats are making it a referendum on the constitution and on what they describe as the threat of a dictator, in former President Donald Trump, even if it is only for one day, as Trump has promised.

The question on people's minds is whether America is really heading toward authoritarianism or dictatorship, as politicians and the media are warning. Trump is leading in the Republican primary polls and against President Joe Biden, the Democratic candidate. But the prospect of a second Trump term is driving a panic campaign from his opponents, independents and serious politicians and scholars, who warn that America might be voting for a dictator if it votes for Trump. Former congresswoman Liz Cheney, the vice chairwoman of the panel that investigated the Jan. 6 attack on Congress following the 2020 election, warned this month that the US was "sleepwalking into dictatorship" ahead of the 2024 vote.

The problem for the US is that Trump's dictator threat or promise - depending on how one feels about him - is not a figment of the country's imagination. Candidate Trump himself is fueling the anxiety with his rhetoric and statements. Whether he is joking, as his aides claim, or if he is serious is something the Americans might find out to their detriment after the election, should he win.

Concerns about the former president's authoritarian streak are not new and he has been vocal about going after those who opposed him or are prosecuting him. During a campaign speech in Bedminster, New Jersey, earlier this year he announced that he would "appoint a real special prosecutor to go after the most corrupt president in the history of America, Joe Biden, and the entire Biden crime family." He doubled down by saying: "I will totally obliterate the deep state.

We know who they are. I know exactly who they are." This sounds like he is threatening revenge.

Trump's opponents warn that, if he becomes president again, he will be dangerous to the country and the constitution because he will rule with more executive power, use the military domestically, use the judiciary to go after his opponents and critics, including the media, and upend America's foreign policy. The New York Times wrote in July that Trump and his allies "are planning a sweeping expansion of presidential power over the machinery of government," including centralizing "more power in the Oval Office and his hands."

Trump was quoted as saying in South Dakota in September: "If I win and someone wants to run against me, I call my attorney general and say 'listen, indict him. If he has not done anything wrong, indict him on tax evasion. You'll figure it out.'" And in an interview with Univision last month, he said: "If I happen to be president and I see somebody who's doing well and beating me badly, I say 'go down and indict him.' They will be out of business; they'll be out of the election."

Trump has also threatened on many occasions to use the military to quell protests and violence in American cities or to secure the border, which would violate the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 that prohibits using the military domestically.

There have also been reports that he plans to invoke the Insurrection Act, which grants the president the authority to use the military in case of an insurrection, upon the request of a state government. The thing that Trump's opponents fear most is the possibility of him using the president's sweeping powers to change the US Constitution.

They point to his refusal to accept the result of the 2020 election as a warning sign. They point to a post on his Truth Social account last year, in which he called for "the termination of all rules, regulations, and arti-

cles, even those found in the constitution," and say that the country should not discount this possibility.

Former Immigration and Customs Enforcement chief Thomas Homan told Fox News that, if Trump is reelected, he sees "historic" deportations taking place. After the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7, Trump said he wanted to revoke the student visas of those who, according to him, have anti-American and antisemitic views. He added that he wants to put in place "ideological screenings" for immigrants. On foreign policy, the fear that a future president Trump might withdraw the US from NATO led Congress to act and it last week passed a measure preventing any president from doing so without the approval of the Senate.

Trump says it is Biden who is a threat to the country and not him. The former president points to the multiple indictments he is facing and accuses the White House of weaponizing the Justice Department and the courts and using them against him. The former president's campaign and supporters discount the allegations against him and dismiss the fears that he will be a dictator as unfounded. Trump's provocative statements are described by his allies as mere jokes or that they were meant to provoke the left and the media. But the country is not laughing. His comments have created an uproar, with a media and pundit frenzy crying "dictatorship."

One of his staunchest supporters, Fox News talk show host Sean Hannity, gave Trump a chance to defend himself when he interviewed him at a town hall event in Iowa this month. Hannity asked Trump if he would "abuse power as retribution against anybody." When reenacting their exchange, Trump said: "We love this guy (Hannity). He says, 'you're not going to be a dictator, are you?' I said: 'No, No, No, other than day one. We are closing the border. And we're drilling, drilling, drilling. After that, I'm not a dictator.'" Many Americans are confident that their country's constitution, the

separation of powers and the strength of US institutions can guard against any president's authoritarian tendencies and prevent an elected official becoming a dictator or accumulating too much power. However, Cheney does not trust that these institutions can stop Trump. She said on National Public Radio that the stakes "couldn't be higher" for the country.

Trump may be leading in the polls, but he is also facing a myriad of indictments and legal woes, which are due before the election. He has been indicted in four cases, but a conviction does not mean he cannot still run for president and assume office. The US Constitution does not bar him from doing so, although some experts argue the 14th Amendment, which disqualifies any candidate who has engaged in insurrection, could prevent him holding office again. The Colorado Supreme Court cited the 14th Amendment this week to remove Trump from the state's Republican primary ballot. His campaign will appeal the ruling and it could go to the Supreme Court, as the battle continues over bringing historic firsts in America. Will he become a dictator, even for one day, and change the country?

Hillary Clinton, the former secretary of state and presidential candidate who ran against him in 2016, said voters should "take him at his word." It seems that Americans do believe him. A new poll by Harvard CAPS-Harris found that 56 percent of voters surveyed at least somewhat agree that Trump will act like a dictator if he is elected. But 59 percent believe Democrats are unfairly trying to scare voters over Trump by saying he wants to be a dictator, according to The Hill newspaper.

Half of the voters in the poll also believe Trump is engaged in ongoing talks with Saudi Arabia and Iraq for the sale of its Rafale jet and the UAE and Qatar are currently taking delivery of their own. Safran, the second-largest manufacturer of aircraft in the world, signed deals worth more than \$1.2 billion with Emirates airline at last month's Dubai Airshow, following a deal it

France's regional influence on the rise

Zaid M. Belbagi

JOINTLY organized by Baghdad and Paris, the Baghdad Summit of August 2021 was aimed at fostering regional and international support for Iraq, while simultaneously building France's influence in the Middle East. The guest list included the presidents of Egypt and Iraq, the prime minister of the UAE and the emir of Qatar, reflecting the growing influence of France in a region hitherto to the preserve of Anglo-American strategic interests. As French relationships have grown across the region, it is clear that this summit and its successors are only one facet of Paris' growing Middle Eastern ambitions.

Iraq has always been a linchpin of French regional policy. In 2003, it famously opposed the US invasion partly owing to the significant business interests of French oil companies Total and Elf Aquitaine in the country. Having inked a further \$27 billion of energy and water deals in 2021, Iraq is once again of critical importance to France. To that end, Paris has been the second-largest contributor to the missions to support Iraq's fight against Daesh (both Operation Inherent Resolve and NATO Mission Iraq) and an important foreign investor in a country that has struggled to attract financing.

With Jordan having hosted the last summit, much to the chagrin of Iraq, Baghdad did its utmost to organize the third meeting in November under a theme of "Economic Integration and Regional Stability." With the previous summit having resulted in the Iraqi-French strategic partnership agreement, signed in January 2023, followed by Qatar's plan to buy a 30 percent stake in Total's projects in Iraq, last month's planned meeting was an important moment for Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani and French President Emmanuel Macron. They had hoped to extend partnerships in the water, energy, transportation and defense sectors, but the outbreak of conflict between Israel and Hamas has indefinitely postponed these plans.

The delay of the meeting has not, however, tempered France's ambitions elsewhere in the region. Despite Macron initially having a characteristically pro-Israel stance, he has recently tempered French support for Israel while simultaneously backing Qatari efforts at a truce and using the recent COP28 meeting in Dubai to further diplomatic initiatives. These efforts are part of nothing short of a boom, as French companies continue to ink deals in the region worth billions of dollars. French defense giant Airbus has been successful in both the UAE and Saudi Arabia with recent orders of civilian aircraft, Dassault is engaged in ongoing talks with Saudi Arabia and Iraq for the sale of its Rafale jet and the UAE and Qatar are currently taking delivery of their own.

Safran, the second-largest manufacturer of aircraft in the world, signed deals worth more than \$1.2 billion with Emirates airline at last month's Dubai Airshow, following a deal it

signed separately with Saudi Arabian Military Industries.

These defense and aerospace sales are echoed in other sectors. The UAE has collaborated with France in the energy space and, in July 2022, TotalEnergies and the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company signed an energy supply agreement amid the insecurity of energy supply due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

France also enjoys strong ties with Saudi Arabia, with which it shares strategic interests in the region and where French advisers have been key in shaping the Kingdom's Vision 2030 plans, particularly in terms of building domestic space sector capabilities, alongside agreements on energy cooperation and the development of renewable energy. France and Qatar continue to collaborate, built on the central role of TotalEnergies in the development of the Gulf state. Qatar has also benefited from French assistance in the field of economic diversification. Earlier this year, it agreed to provide TotalEnergies with liquefied natural gas for the next 27 years, underlining the cooperation between the two countries.

France's cooperation in the corporate world is mirrored by its development of the cultural space around the region. French soft power is symbolized in the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the world's first museum to be born of a bilateral diplomatic agreement and which is now "France's largest cultural project abroad." These efforts have been replicated in Qatar, where France has sought to support cultural initiatives, and especially in Saudi Arabia, where Paris has entered into an agreement for the development of AlUla. The open-air museum and other cultural and heritage attractions planned by the project are being led by French presidential envoy for the initiative Gerard Mestrallet, alongside the French Agency for Alula Development.

The uptick in French diplomatic activity is, therefore, unlikely to be derailed by the postponed Baghdad Summit, which is more central to the international legitimacy of the Iraqi leadership and Jordan's future prosperity.

There is no doubt that political and societal instability at home and eight armed coups in French-speaking Africa have hurt France's ability to project power overseas. In North Africa, as the youth in traditionally Francophone Algeria and Morocco are increasingly favoring the English language over French, the Francophonie itself is seen as a limited prism with which France can influence the wider world. However, Macron's efforts to cultivate ties in the Gulf and wider Middle East during a period when the UK has been occupied with domestic challenges and the US has been focused on Russia and China has seen a significant increase in French influence. Within this context, a rescheduled Baghdad Summit will merely be another political victory for a president seeking to sustain France's influence and its international convening power.

Arab News

Will anyone have the courage to sanction Israel?

Daoud Kuttab

journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

Nevertheless, the Israeli army, under pressure from its public, held an initial investigation into this incident and came out with an important conclusion: The soldiers who shot at surrendering individuals violated the Israeli army's standing orders. No one believed that this was the case for 70 days, while Israel was shelling innocent civilians without even expressing remorse or admitting that maybe some were killed by accident.

This leads all of us to believe that the killing of civilians and the destruction of hospitals, churches, mosques, schools and bakeries was done on purpose and on the orders of the very top military and political leaders. Proof. No one has yet been held responsible for the massacre.

But if the incident with

the surrendering Israeli soldiers being killed because they were thought to be Palestinians was a turning point, the very next day the killing continued. This time, two women who had taken refuge in a Catholic church in Gaza were shot dead by a sniper.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem called the killings an assassination and Pope Francis mentioned the two Palestinian Christian women in his weekly Sunday homily. Media reports state that the Vatican has been in constant touch with the White House, whose resident, President Joe Biden, is a devout Catholic. Reports from Gaza now hint at a slight easing of the danger, as the people in the area surrounding the church have been told they can move around until 4 p.m. each day.

Regardless of what hap-

pened to the Israeli soldiers and the women at the church, there is now publicly documented proof that Israel is committing war crimes in Gaza. The continuation of the war and Washington's refusal to allow the UN Security Council to call for an immediate ceasefire are contributing directly to this human catastrophe. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has explicitly stated that the gap between Israeli leaders' promises of avoiding harm to civilians and their actions on the ground is huge.

This is diplomatic talk for saying that the Israelis have lied to their American patrons. Yet, despite the killing of civilians and the lying, the Americans are reportedly giving Israel until the end of the year to wind down their intensive attacks. This is unacceptable. The so-called leaders of the free world, who have clearly discarded any

adherence to basic human rights and humanity, are giving the lying Israelis two more weeks to continue violating international law and their own standing orders when it comes to how they deal with Palestinians.

International law has become a laughing stock and America, which proclaims that it adheres to its human rights responsibilities, has been exposed for its double standards. Israel is not only committing war crimes and crimes against Palestinian humanity, it is also violating its own standing orders. What started out as dehumanizing rhetoric is ending as a clear case of genocide. Will anyone have the courage to sanction such a state and force it to adhere to the basic principles set out in the Genocide Convention, which Israel and its neighboring countries have signed?

Israel’s ‘Plan B’ for Gaza Strip

Lorenzo Kamel

IT has been more than two months now since the Israeli authorities launched a war on Gaza in response to Hamas's attack on its southern territories, which resulted in the killing of about 1,200 people, mostly Israeli civilians. Relentless Israeli bombardment and ground attacks have flattened entire neighbourhoods and killed close to 20,000 Palestinians, more than a third of them children.

The declared goal of the Israeli onslaught has been the "eradication" of Hamas from the enclave, but the viability of that being achieved has been increasingly questioned by foreign officials and analysts. Instead, the large-scale destruction wrought on Gaza as well as internal communications point to another aim the Israeli authorities may be pursuing. A document produced by Israel's Ministry of Intelligence leaked to the Israeli press in late October outlined the forcible and permanent transfer of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinian residents to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

The document was reportedly created for an organisation called The Unit for Settlement - Gaza Strip, which seeks to recolonise the Gaza Strip 18 years after Israeli troops and settlers withdrew from it. Yet, we are not living in 1948. Today, it is much more difficult to wipe out cities and villages as was done 75 years ago during the expulsion of a large percentage of the Palestinian population from its homeland by Israeli militias, when, among other things, the reach of the media was far less extensive than it is now. The Israeli authorities have therefore turned to what we might term "the plan B": that is, to make the Gaza Strip unliveable, by dropping tens of thousands of tonnes of bombs.

The new strategy is implemented by targeting civilian infrastructure that supports life in the strip, including schools, universities, hospitals, bakeries, shops, farmland and greenhouses, water stations, sewage systems, power stations, solar panels, and generators.

This is carried out in parallel with a full siege on Gaza, whereby food, water, electricity and medicine have been cut off. The Israeli army lets in a few trucks a day, if at all, which humanitarian organisations have said does not meet at all the needs of the Palestinian population, 1.8 million of whom have been internally displaced. This has resulted in what has interchangeably been called humanitarian "disaster", "catastrophe", "graveyard" and "hell". The Palestinians of Gaza have been pushed to the brink of survival, while widespread epidemics are perceived by some as a desired goal. As former head of the Israeli National Security Council Giora Eiland has claimed: "Severe epidemics in the south of the Gaza Strip will bring victory closer."

Once the Gaza Strip is rendered unliveable and the population has no choice but to leave voluntarily, the next step is to ensure that neighbouring countries, Egypt first and foremost, are ready to "absorb them". This has been made clear by several prominent figures in Israel, including former deputy director of its national intelligence agency Mossad, Ram Ben Barak. In a tweet in Hebrew, Ben Barak expressed the need "to build a coalition of countries and international funding that will allow Gazans who want to leave to be absorbed [in those countries] through the acquisition of a citizenship". Back on November 12, 1914, US President Woodrow Wilson wrote to racial equality advocate William Monroe Trotter that "Segregation is not humiliating but a benefit, and ought to be so regarded by you gentleman". More than 100 years later, Israel's plan - which has less to do with segregation and more with ethnic cleansing - is presented in similar terms. The expulsion, in Ben Barak's words, is an "opportunity [for Gaza residents] to escape the reign of fear of Hamas, which uses them as human shields". The irony, of course, is that Palestinian civilians are often used as "human shields" by the Israeli army itself.

But beyond that, along with the emphasis on "voluntary" departure in this "benevolent approach", the forced resettlement is also made more palatable for the international community with claims that the Palestinians are really just Arabs, and therefore can easily relocate to other Arab countries.

Israel has long called the 156,000 Palestinians (and their descendants) who managed to remain within its borders after 1948 "Arabs", denying them their Palestinian identity. As Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu once claimed, "The Arab citizens [of Israel] have 22 nation states. They don't need another one." It is important here to stress that referring to the local populations, from the Strait of Gibraltar to the Strait of Hormuz, as "the Arabs" would be like calling people from South Africa, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and Britain, regardless of their origin, "the English". They share the language but show very clear peculiar histories, traditions and identities. More than 1,000 years ago, Jerusalemite geographer al-Muqaddasi (946-1000) explained in clear terms that he perceived himself as a Palestinian: "I mentioned to them [workers in Shiraz] about the construction in Palestine and I discussed with them these matters. The master stonemason asked me: Are you Egyptian? I replied: No, I am Palestinian."

Centuries later, on September 3, 1921, an editorial published in the Arabic-language newspaper Falastin pointed out: "We are Palestinians first, and Arabs second." These are just two examples, among many others, of written sources where "Palestinian" is clearly used as an identity marker. That Palestinians are not simply "Arabs" appears further evident if we look at the years in which the West Bank was occupied (1948-1967) by Jordan: an occupation which was opposed by the local population at the time, most of all by Fatah fighters, to the point that King Hussein felt obliged to impose martial law.

In Gaza, which was under Egyptian control during the same period, Palestinians faced harsh repression, were denied citizenship, and had very little control over local administration. Most of them lived in very poor conditions, largely in refugee camps, having been expelled by Israeli militias from villages around the Gaza Strip, including Huj, Najd, Abu Sitta, Majdal, al-Jura, Yibna, and Bayt Daras. These last three villages, in particular, are the ones from where the three founders of Hamas - Ahmed Yassin, Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi and Ibrahim al-Yazuri - were expelled with their families when they were children. Today, not only the Palestinians are struggling against their mass expulsion from Gaza and possibly the West Bank, but the neighbouring countries which Israel is pressuring to host them are also viciously resisting. Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has repeatedly and clearly rejected the "displacement of Palestinians from their land". He, like his predecessors, sees the Palestinians as a security risk. If they were to be expelled to the Sinai, he fears the peninsula would become a base of operations for Palestinian fighters, which could drag Egypt into another war.

Jordan is also worried about the expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank to its territory and King Abdullah and his government have made their opposition clear. As Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi has argued: "Do whatever you [Israeli authorities] want. Go, destroy Gaza. No one is stopping you and once you are done, we [will not] clean up your mess." Israel's ability to carry out its "Plan B" is indeed in question. Back in 1950, the United Nations suggested resettling thousands of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to the Sinai Peninsula. The proposal encountered harsh resistance from the refugees themselves and was eventually abandoned. Today, the resistance is fiercer than ever. Palestinians know what "temporary" means - that there is no "right of return" for them - and are keen to remain on their land.

Global progress is in peril

Angus Deaton

IT has been 10 years since I wrote "The Great Escape," which tells the story of how human life improved over the past 250 years, particularly in terms of longevity and material living standards. But the past decade has been unkind to my overwhelmingly positive account. My observation that "life is better now than at any time in history" may have been true in 2013, but it probably is not today, even for the typical person. The question is whether this reversal will be temporary or whether it is only the beginning of worse to come. Do recent events demand that the basic story be retold?

It is all too easy to focus on current threats, while ignoring the past and discounting the longer-run forces that prevailed even in the face of terrible setbacks. But one must remember that we have an enormous accumulation of useful knowledge - more than any of our predecessors. It will not allow us to solve every urgent problem, but it is neither easily lost nor forgotten.

We should also remember how and why things got better in the past; how the desire to escape from poverty, disease and death brought steady improvements. Solutions were rarely immediate, but after the Enlightenment the triumph of reason over unthinking obedience and dogma increasingly produced reliable answers to questions old and new.

Still, while the long-term trends of progress are clear, history offers no support for blind optimism. Improvements in human well-being have repeatedly confronted reversals, many of them lengthy, and some characterized by unimaginable devastation.

Most recently, the World Health Organization estimates that COVID-19 has killed close to 7 million people - and possibly multiples of that number - many of them in rich countries, including nearly 1.2 million Americans. The pandemic arrested economic growth in many countries and almost certainly halted the ongoing reduction in global poverty. Typically, after such catastrophes, progress eventually resumes, with the subsequent recoveries delivering health and wealth outcomes that exceed their previous highs. True, this historical fact offers no comfort to those who died or lost relatives and friends. Progress does not expunge previous horrors. But it does hold out the hope of better lives for the survivors and for subsequent generations.

A thousand years from now, or perhaps much sooner, the last 250 years may be seen as a bygone golden age, a flash in history's panorama, an exception to the normal state of misery and early death. Recent events present a depressing catalog: slow or negative growth; rising global temperatures; resurgent infectious diseases; antidemocratic and right-wing populist politics; stalling globalization; stagnant life expectancy; and increased geopolitical tensions, particularly between the world's two largest economies, the US and China. Are we returning to a pre-Enlightenment world ruled by priests and warlords or is today's darker outlook just another temporary setback that will be overcome in time? The single biggest threat to continued progress is climate change. Though we know what needs to be done, and though the required technologies are rapidly improving and becoming more affordable, national and international politics have not supported the necessary action. Opportunistic politicians can advance their own careers by opposing such a costly and sweeping adjustment and there are vast war chests - especially in the fossil fuel industries - committed to preserving the status quo. Even in the face of frightening weather patterns that are almost impossible to explain without reference to anthropogenic climate change, there is a real possibility that not enough will be done before it is too late.

Health threats will also remain central to the story of progress and its reversals. On the one hand, the positive story to emerge from the pandemic is about resilience. After developing vaccines with incredible

speed, we achieved a relatively rapid economic rebound. Beyond the death toll and the still unclear effects of "long COVID," the most obvious lasting damage was confined to schoolchildren, many of whom lost out on years of education. On the other hand, the negative story of the pandemic is that it was merely a preview of what awaits us. I do not know whether to believe the positive or the negative account. Instead, I would simply stress the possibility that the future may have more morbidity and mortality than we have grown accustomed to.

Meanwhile, over the past quarter-century, national and international political arrangements have undergone profound changes, with right-wing populism spreading in rich democracies and threatening domestic and international institutions. Globalization, especially, has become a source of dis-

have been falling, owing to declines in the prevalence of smoking and various medical and scientific advances. This positive trend appears to have some room to run, not least because the new knowledge is transferable between countries, several of which have participated in creating the science that is driving it. My guess is that "normal" progress in life expectancy will eventually resume, probably at a slower rate and with all the necessary caveats about pandemics and climate change. As populism has risen in the US, China has gone from being a partner to an apparent threat. The growing hostility between the two countries has now reached a point that threatens international stability - and even international peace. Meanwhile, economic growth in China has weakened, partly because of COVID-19, but more importantly because of domestic policies and demographic factors. The scope for serious

Even in the face of frightening weather patterns that are almost impossible to explain without reference to anthropogenic climate change, there is a real possibility that not enough will be done before it is too late. Health threats will also remain central to the story of progress and its reversals. On the one hand, the positive story to emerge from the pandemic is about resilience. After developing vaccines with incredible speed, we achieved a relatively rapid economic rebound. Beyond the death toll and the still unclear effects of "long COVID," the most obvious lasting damage was confined to schoolchildren, many of whom lost out on years of education. On the other hand, the negative story of the pandemic is that it was merely a preview of what awaits us. I do not know whether to believe the positive or the negative account. Instead, I would simply stress the possibility that the future may have more morbidity and mortality than we have grown accustomed to.

content. The fact that it helped bring about an unprecedented reduction in poverty has not assuaged domestic discontent in the rich world; it has inflamed it. To many working people in the US and Europe, the world population's great escape from destitution is seen as having come at their expense, by eliminating their jobs and hollowing out their communities. Even if the world overall is better off, the beneficiaries cannot vote in rich countries, leaving only those who have been hurt to complain that they did not sign up for such involuntary foreign aid. Similarly, while immigration from poorer to richer countries has helped millions leave poverty, many domestic workers in rich countries see it as a threat to their own livelihoods and status.

Whether such perceptions are inaccurate or overblown is beside the point. What matters, politically, is that the current great escape is not particularly popular in rich countries. A significant share of voters regard immigration and globalization as favoring a minority of well-educated, cosmopolitan elites. Working people who believe they have been harmed by such policies are thus tempted to abandon democratic arrangements that seem to be working for international business and domestic elites, but not for them. The risk now is that these side effects of the great escape will become so severe as to slow or reverse it. In the US, a half-century of wage and income stagnation for the working class has been accompanied by a slow reversal of progress against mortality. Although Americans with a college education continue to enjoy reduced mortality, those without it have been losing years of life since 2010.

On a more positive note, since drug epidemics have come and gone throughout history, it is reasonable to hope that the opioid crisis will eventually recede, too. Moreover, after two decades of stagnation from 1970 to 1990, cancer rates

miscalculation in the Sino-American rivalry has risen, along with counterproductive saber-rattling in both countries. America's valid complaints against China have been exaggerated by politicians playing to populist sentiment. Notwithstanding the cynical politics, we clearly cannot and should not seek a return to the era of hyper-globalization. We urgently need a new global economic order that can preserve and extend the great escape, but with greater care for domestic politics and for the well-being of non-wealthy, less-educated majorities in wealthy countries. To its credit, the current US administration's policy agenda is directed toward this end and much now depends on its long-term success.

In retrospect, the 2008 financial crisis has had much longer-lasting negative effects than I anticipated. In the US, much of the population has lost confidence in capitalism and the idea that a rising tide lifts all boats. The financiers who caused that debacle sailed off in their yachts, untouched, while smaller craft were smashed into flotsam, their passengers reduced to homelessness, joblessness and despair. In Britain and much of Europe, the crisis was followed by austerity policies that devastated public services. With little to no economic growth ever since, it is little wonder that populism's appeal has grown and that democracy and capitalism have fallen out of favor.

This development does not bode well for the future. Populists and autocrats have little respect for institutions, including not only democratic processes and protections for minorities, but also the centers of scientific knowledge associated with educated elites. Fifty years from now, if we are still living in an increasingly illiberal and undemocratic world, we may not even be able to tell, other than anecdotally, whether the great escape continued or was choked off.

History weighs like a nightmare on the living if they are ignorant of basic facts

Robert Tombs

WILLIAM Faulkner's dictum that "the past is never dead - it's not even past" has rarely been more troubling. The conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza and Taiwan, and many smaller disputes, are based on contested history. So are the West's culture wars, obsessed with 17th and 18th-century misdeeds and their supposed present-day consequences.

I cannot think of a time when the past (in Marx's phrase) has more weighed like a nightmare on the brains of the living. History is filling a contemporary intellectual void, as once dominant ideologies have faded. Even when ancient beliefs are still potent, they conceal themselves behind a veil of secular history. Today's "social justice" activism draws not on present-day inequalities, but on the perpetuation (as Lord Sumption has put it) of "grievances on account of past events that have no practical relevance to modern lives". The truth of quasi-historical claims may not be believed by those making them, but they calculate that plenty of others will be convinced. Weaponising history is made easier by the common "postmodern" view that there are no objective historical truths, only a cacophony of "narratives", with those of the "oppressed" having moral authority as "my truth". Such imposition of new orthodoxy was grimly satirised in 1984 by George Orwell, whose anti-hero Winston Smith's job is "rectifying" the past to serve the ever-changing present. "But you could prove nothing," muses Winston. "There was never any evidence." Scholars today are praised for making evidence "tell a different story" to fit a contemporary agenda.

History can more easily be retrofitted if people don't know much about it, or are even uncertain about what is truth and what is fiction. Many of us were astonished to see televised interviews with people demonstrating in London for a Palestine free "from the river to the sea", without knowing which river or sea. Some polls indicate that many young Americans think the Holocaust was a myth, and a notorious British poll suggested that many young people believed Churchill was fictitious. Ignorance opens the way for those claiming expertise, such as Kehinde Andrews, professor of black studies at Birmingham City University, who has stated that Churchill's "ideas are the very same ideas through which the Nazis came to power. They're not even parallel; they're the same, right?"

Given these alarming levels of historical ignorance, one can confidently assume that the number who could in any way assess the truth of Russia's claim to Ukraine or China's to Taiwan is infinitesimal. Yet here history is central. Putin insists that Ukraine is not a nation, but merely a rebellious province of Russia. The Chinese Communist Party makes the same assertion about Taiwan. In fact, Ukraine was only annexed to the Russian Empire in the late 18th century and Taiwan, an independent kingdom, to the Chinese Empire in the late 17th. Both are former colonies with rights to independence at least as great as (let us say) those of the Irish Republic. As for the position of Israel, which some characterise as a "colonial" and "apartheid" state, the present conflict cannot be

understood without knowing that both Israelis and Palestinians include a high proportion of refugees, the former not only from Europe but from across the Muslim world. Yet while knowing something of history is essential to understanding the present, we must not place on history a weight that it cannot bear. The past - Marx's "nightmare" - must not dictate the present, or subordinate the rights of the living and the yet unborn to those of the dead. Doubly so when a distorted past is being used as a weapon.

We must sometimes accept that the past is indeed past, that history gives no imprescriptible right to determine the present. The historian Heinrich von Treitschke insisted that the people of Alsace were German whether they liked it or not, to which the French philosopher Ernest Renan replied that a nation was a voluntary association. No nation has been as willing as Britain to adopt Renan's idealism in an extreme form. Our electoral system places the UK's continuance in the hands of a momentary plurality among a minority of voters. This fragility is one reason to be concerned about the historical "narratives" purveyed within our (present) borders: Renan, after all, believed the cohesion of his voluntary nation relied on a common history. What is happening to our history? We are constantly subjected to negative readings. No subjects are today as sensitive as slavery and empire. Yet surely we all know - at least those with any interest in the past - that slavery was practically universal, and Britain, once a major participant, became the principal actor in ending openly prac-

tised slavery around the world. Yet the story now being actively pressed is that Britain was uniquely guilty, that its wealth is based on slavery, that its anti-slavery efforts are irrelevant, and as a result it is racist today.

Liverpool's International Slavery Museum ignores African and Arab slavery and downplays British abolitionism. The implicit theme of the "Black Atlantic" exhibition at Cambridge's Fitzwilliam Museum is that Atlantic slavery was worse than all other forms, because it was uniquely based on a racism which, it claims, was central to British culture. This is clearly untrue, and moreover it makes abolition incomprehensible. From such "narratives" come demands for shame, apologies, reparations and privileges for supposed victims today. Scholars who pointed out glaring errors in an academic article linking industrialisation with slavery were sternly told that empiricism was a colonial construct and that they were supporting "white domination". Contentious claims, in Moscow, Beijing or Cambridge, cannot be justified by people with no knowledge of history. I am glad to be a member of an advisory committee helping to draw up a model history curriculum for schools - an initiative of Kemi Badenoch. But no curriculum can or should teach everything. What I hope it can do is to inculcate historical knowledge and awareness: looking at evidence and at causes, thinking logically and being sceptical of subjective "narratives". Britain is highly unusual in not giving much time for teaching history at school. In today's world this is an expensive luxury.

The Telegraph

‘Taiwan election intervention’ a total deception

Wang Hailiang

SANDRA Oudkirk, director of the "American Institute in Taiwan's Taipei Office", recently claimed that Taiwan has been at the receiving end of severe cyberattacks which have not only impacted Taiwan residents' daily lives but also undermined the island's "democratic system". She also accused the Chinese mainland of interfering in the island's 2024 elections.

Claiming that Oudkirk is right, Lai Ching-te, a "Taiwan independence" advocate, said that her remarks once again demonstrate "US support for Taiwan", and urged the island's residents to be aware of the mainland's "interference" in the elections. Such remarks by US officials are nothing but attempts to divert attention from real issues, giving people like Lai the opportunity to take advantage of the situation to deceive voters. It is therefore necessary to make clear certain facts.

When it comes to interference in Taiwan's elections, one cannot help but ask who is actually doing so? The answer becomes clear if we analyze the remarks and actions of US officials and Taiwan politicians. Don't the interviews of

members of Taiwan's major political parties by media outlets in the US constitute an interference in the elections? Also, Laura Rosenberger, the "chairperson of the American Institute in Taiwan", has visited Taiwan three times since taking office in March this year, frequently meeting with different candidates. What is the purpose behind her visits and meetings? These visits are conducted for "on-site inspections" and misleading the people.

In addition, some US scholars have written articles in influential publications, giving "weighty" suggestions aimed at influencing the elections. Oudkirk's remarks, in fact, go beyond her official role, and legitimize the Democratic Progressive Party's hype about the mainland "interfering" in the island's "internal affairs", are in themselves interferences the elections with the intention of misleading voters. It must be emphasized that the island's elections are purely China's internal affair which brooks no interference by external or other forces. During the

meeting between the Chinese and US heads of state in San Francisco, Washington made a solemn political commitment to China on the Taiwan question.

As a responsible country, the US should honor its words, fulfill its commitments, refrain from supporting "Taiwan independence" forces and avoid sending wrong signals to Taiwan separatists. But the US continues to say one thing and do another, frequently interfering in Taiwan's elections and trying to cover up its own misdeeds by massively accusing the mainland of interfering in the island's elections. US officials have been doing this for decades and hence it is an open secret today. Lai's endorsement of Oudkirk's baseless accusations is aimed at confusing the concepts of Taiwan and "Taiwan independence". His advocacy for "Taiwan independence" has caused great concern among Taiwan residents and made Americans uneasy. In fact, his endorsement of Oudkirk's accusations has poisoned his election campaign.

During her visit to Taiwan in

October, Rosenberger said that the US opposes unilateral changes to the status quo, and asserted that the US does not support "Taiwan independence", and instead calls for a dialogue between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. But Lai conveniently forgot to mention the US' stance against "Taiwan independence" and selectively used the phrase "US support for Taiwan" to deceive the public and garner votes for himself in the upcoming elections. In reality, whether the US "supports Taiwan" or not is determined by the US' interests. Accordingly, for the US, Taiwan is nothing more than a pawn on its strategic chessboard to be used to contain Beijing, and can be sacrificed any time.

The poorly orchestrated act performed by Oudkirk and Lai raises questions about their underlying motives, which Taiwan residents should ponder over. Is the US "supporting Taiwan" or "harming Taiwan", and are the DPP authorities "protecting Taiwan" or "bringing disaster to Taiwan"? I hope Taiwan residents get to know the reality and make a rational judgment, and not fall for the tricks of Lai and his ilk.

EXIM Bank’s Export Finance Facility: Bank of Punjab conducts first transaction

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Bank of Punjab (BOP) becomes the first bank to execute a transaction for Export Import Bank of Pakistan (EXIM Bank) under its newly launched Export Finance Scheme (EFS) Facility. Under the facility, EXIM Bank will channel the GOP interest rate subsidy to banks to offer low-cost financing to exporters. The facility will eventually replace the existing Export Finance Facilities offered by State Bank of Pakistan.

The Bank of Punjab, being true to its values of being at the fore front of offering innovative and market leading products to its clients, has become the first bank to offer low cost export financing to its clients using the facility.

The ceremony took place in Islamabad and was attended by the caretaker Finance Minister, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, and the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, Jameel Ahmed. Senior representatives from the Government of Pakistan, the State Bank of Pakistan, and leading export houses of Pakistan were also present. Mr. Syed Irfan Bukhari, President EXIM Bank signed the agreement whereas BOP was represented by Mr. Asim Jahangir Seth, Head Corporate Banking & Mr. Muhammad Saqib Sajjad, Head FIs & Correspondent Banking.

BOP also signed the first Master Insurance Policy of the EXIM Bank for the promotion of exports in the country. After regulatory approvals, the facility could

be used as a collateral to offer financing to eligible exporters. This will open Pakistan banks to accepting globally accepted insurance policies as collateral.

Recognizing the BOP support to EXIM, Mr. Syed Irfan Bukhari expressed, “The BOP team, under the leadership of Zafar sahib, has proven to be a steadfast and supportive ally to our bank. Today marks a significant milestone as they not only become the first bank to adopt our Bank Master Policy but also demonstrate their belief in the product’s utility, lending it credibility. Furthermore, BOP has taken a pioneering step by being the first to sign a transaction in support of the government’s reforms program, which involves the transfer of administra-

tion for the Export Finance Schemes from the SBP to EXIM”.

Mr. Asim Jahangir said, “BOP remains true to its values of offering innovative and market leading products to our exporters. We will use this facility to offer low cost financing solutions to our clients. This will go a long way in promoting exports from our country.”

Mr. Saqib Sajjad said, “We believe this facility will kick start a new era of low cost funding solutions to exporters of conventional and unconventional products and services from Pakistan, including textiles, food products, IT services providers, software service providers, BPO and others. The product will particularly benefit small & medium enterprises”.



LAHORE: Representatives of The Bank of Punjab (BOP) and Export Import Bank of Pakistan (EXIM Bank) signing agreement.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Two ships namely, Clemens Schulte and ElgiznurCebi scheduled to load/offload Container and Cement, berthed at Container Terminal and Multi-Purpose Terminal respectively on during last 24 hours.

Meanwhile two more three more ships, Nord Vanquish, Sparto and Sheng Ping Hai are also arrived at outer-anchorage on Thursday.

A total of eight ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Clemens Schulte and Clean Sanctuary left the port on today morning and three more ships, Chemroad Polaris, Ejan, Santa Valentina and Ejanexpected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 162,992 tonnes, comprising 102,683 tonnes imports cargo and 60,309 tonnes export cargo carried in 2,216 Containers (429 TEUs Imports and 1,787 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 07 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Nord Vanquish, Kamome Victoria and Sheng Ping Hai & two more ships, Seaspan Ganges and SpilK-artini carrying Palm oil, Gasoline and Containers are expected to take berths at LCT, FOTCO, PIBT and QICT respectively on Thursday, while three more Container ships, MSC Jemima, SSL Delhi and Santa Viola are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Friday.

Nighat takes charge

KARACHI (PPI): Nighat Awan, Senior Vice President of the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), assumed the charged as KATI’s acting president following the early retirement announcement of President Faraz-ur-Rehman.

The appointment was made by Faraz-ur-Rehman, who praised Nighat Awan’s capabilities and commitment to the business community, according to a statement issued on Thursday. Nighat Awan, an active businesswoman within KATI, has previously served as Vice President and fulfilled the duties of acting president during Faraz-ur-Rehman’s absence.

She is recognized for her dedication to the industrial sector and has been actively involved in addressing the challenges faced by the business community.

Court Notice

In the Court of Jauhar Ali Safi Civil Judge-I/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No 281/1. Institution 22/3/2023. Date of hearing 26/1/2024. Sher Farzand etc vs. Wahid Shah etc. Notice to No. 2/4. Mohamad Jihad s/o Shamsul Hadi. 3/1. Shaefullah Khan s/o Shahirawan residents of Ambela Tehsil Mandanr District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 a.m dated 26/1/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

IBA Karachi joins UNICON as an Associate Member

F.P. Report

Karachi: The Centre for Executive Education (CEE) at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi is now an Associate Member of The Consortium for University-Based Executive Education (UNICON).

UNICON is a Global Consortium of Business School Based Executive Education Organizations. It includes a global network of 115 University-Based Executive Education Centers in five continents, IBA being the 115th member. Through participation in UNICON, the leaders,

managers, and team members of its member organizations gain new knowledge, inspiration, new perspectives, capabilities for enhancing the effectiveness of their operations, and a global network of colleagues. Other prominent members of the consortium include Harvard Business School, HEC Paris, London Business School, MIT Sloan School of Management and Stanford University.

IBA’s membership with UNICON is believed to further strengthen its position as a leading institution in executive education by fostering global collaborations, facilitating access to

cutting-edge insights, and enhancing its ability to provide innovative learning experiences for leaders and organizations. Through this partnership, IBA aims to leverage UNICON’s extensive network and resources to continue delivering excellence in executive education and staying at the forefront of industry advancements.

The board members at UNICON expressed enthusiasm for IBA-CEE joining the community, as the active involvement of new members makes the consortium more vibrant.

IBA-CEE:
The CEE has a strong

network of local and global faculty members and collaborations and currently offers capacity-building programs in several cities for enterprises, public sector organizations, and family businesses.

UNICON serves as a worldwide benchmark in executive education, with its members standing out as premier learning partners for leaders and organizations globally. Remaining at the forefront of the industry, UNICON members collaboratively contribute to shaping the future landscape of the Executive Education industry.

Fertilizer output increases 8.91% in 4 month of FY 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): Fertilizer production in the country during the first four months of the current financial year increased by 8.91 per cent as compared to the output of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period from July-October 2023 over 1.17 million metric tons of Nitrogenous fertilizers were locally produced as compared to the output of 1.05 million tons of the same period of last year, according to the data of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) released by the Pakistan Bureau of

Statistics.

However, during the period under review, the local output of Phosphate fertilizer decreased by 9.22 per cent as compared to the production of the same period of last year, it added.

During the period under review, about 250,315 metric tons of Phosphate fertilizer were manufactured in the country as compared to the manufacturing of 275,746 metric tons in the same period of last year, it added.

Tractor assembling in the country during the first four months of the current

financial year increased by 55.58 per cent as compared to the assembling of the corresponding period of last year.

Meanwhile, about 17,259 tractors were locally produced as compared to the production of 11,093 tractors in the same period last year.

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

tors 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 per cent as compared to 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.

Vast majority of Pakistanis perceive CPEC positive for Pak economy

BEIJING (INP): As 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of the launch of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a report titled “Perceptions on CPEC in Pakistan” was launched at the 8th CPEC Media Forum hosted by the

Chinese Embassy in Pakistan and organized by China Economic Net and Pakistan-China Institute.

Data from the report indicates that there is widespread agreement among Pakistanis that CPEC will help revive economic activity in Pakistan.

The report draws its insight from 350 individuals encompassing key

stakeholders including 62 government employees, 22 parliamentarians, civil sector representatives, private sector professionals, journalists, members of academia and students from Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Kashmir and Gilgit.

Based on the report, 65% of the respondents view Chinese professionals as friends of Pakistan who will help revive the country’s economy and socio-economic well-being.

This means a majority

of Pakistani people strongly believe that CPEC will prove to be beneficial for the country and its people.

About how CPEC will help Pakistan, 93.5% of the respondents view CPEC as a project that will significantly help Pakistan through investment in various sectors while also opening avenues for businessmen.

And, 75.1% of the respondents agree that through CPEC, local businessmen will get access to international markets.

Court Notice

In the Court of Sidra Jalal Civil Judge-III Matta Swat/Judicial Magistrate II. Matta Swat. Case # 150/1 institution year 05/09/023. Next hearing date 23/01/2024. Barkat Ali khan vs. Mst. Jamala etc. Notice to defendant. 3) Fazal Qaboos sons of Sakhi Jan 7) Mst. Rahmat Sultana 8/1) Abdul Rehman 8/2) Fazal Rehman 8/3) Gul Mehmood 8/4) Haider Ali r/o Koz Sherplam Tehsil Matta Swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can’t be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 a.m dated 23/01/2024. Ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this Court.

Public Notice

It is published through this notice that I Muhammad Shahid s/o Farhad Sher resident of Nasrat Khel Distt Kohat is the owner of plot No. 355, size 6.5. Marla, Sector-1, Phase 1, KDA, Kohat. He has requested that the original Transfer deed of the said plot has been lost somewhere and now issuance of duplicate papers is desired the plot is not mortgaged. There has been appointed no attorney and not sold to anybody if any bank/institution/firm or person has any objections. He/she should contact the Housing Officer UADA Kohat within15 days of publication of this Notice in writing with proof. Otherwise, duplicate transfer deed paper will be issued and no objection will be accepted. (Project Director Urban Area KDA Kohat).

Court Notice

In the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge-II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal No. 68/13. Institution 26/6/2023. Date of hearing 29/1/2024. Said Jowhar vs. Gul Khyber etc. Notice to No. 4. Said Akbar Khan s/o Afaten Khan. 7. Said Mukhtiar s/o Said Faqer. 8. Niamat Khan. 9. Abdul Aziz. 10. Said Alam. 11. Sher Ali sons of Abdul Hakem (late). 12. Mst Mahal d/o Abdul Hakem (late).1 5. Naeem Ghafor s/o Amer (late). 21. Shariefullah s/o Najar. 23. Wahab son. 24. Mst Hayat Bibi. 25. Mst Gul Shera daughters of (late) Gul Sadafi residents of Elai Tehsil Daggar District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 a.m dated 29/1/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Public Notice

In the Court of Maliha Allauddin Senior Civil Judge Family Court Kohat, Suit No. 541/FC date of hearing 02-01-2024. Titled:- Lubna Bibi vs. Safdar Ullah (etc) Notice against:- (1) Safdar Ullah Khan S/o Safoor Badshah R/o Nasrat Khel Mohallah Samand Khan Hangu Road District Kohat presently R/o (now in Abroad Bldg 1100-Road 5049 Block 550 Budaiya Behrain) (Defendant) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a family suit of Dower (etc) against you defendant in which date of hearing 02-01-2024 is fixed for your appearance. Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendant is intimated through this publication to appear before this Court by person or by pleader on date fixed 02-01-2024 otherwise Court shall proceed in accordance with law order Issued on 06-12-2023. (Court of S.C.J.F.C Kohat).

PSX turns around to bullish trend — gains 245 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 245.56 points, a positive change of 0.39 percent, closing at 62,693.57 points against 62,448.01 points the previous trading day.

A total of 812,383,481 shares valuing Rs.16.687 billion were traded during the day as compared to 1,187,368,881 shares valuing Rs. 26.038 billion the last day.

Some 358 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 251 of them recorded gains and 93 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 14 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 209,399,163 shares at Rs.5.60 per share, Cnergycio PK with 101,559,312 shares at Rs.5.49 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 59,818,169 shares at Rs.1.58 per share.

Bata Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.46.80 per share price, closing at Rs.1,696.80, whereas the runner-up was Sapphire Textile Mills with

a Rs.46.65 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,330.00.

Unilever Pakistan Foods witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.444.00 per share closing at Rs. 21,355.00, followed by Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs.194.00 decline to close at Rs.7,906.00.

Steady recovery continues: Rupee gains 12 paise against Dollar

Pakistani Rupee on Thursday witnessed the 8th consecutive recovery session as it gained 12 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs282.78 against the previous day’s closing of Rs282.90.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs282.5 and Rs285 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 69 paise to close at Rs309.56 against the last day’s closing of Rs310.25, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.97; whereas a decrease of 79 paise was

witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs357.41 compared to the last closing of Rs358.20.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 03 and 01 paise to close at Rs76.99 and Rs75.38 respectively.

Gold rates decline by Rs.500 to Rs 218,000 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 500 and was sold at Rs18,000 on Thursday against its sale at Rs 218,500 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs 428 to Rs 186,900 from Rs 187,328 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs 171,325 from Rs 171,718, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver witnessed no change and was sold at Rs.2,650 and Rs.2,271.94 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$5 to \$2,055 from \$2,060, the Association reported.

Tokyo stocks end lower after Toyota-linked issues

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed lower on Thursday after Toyota announced a recall of a million vehicles, and its subsidiary Daihatsu decided to suspend shipments of all models over rigged safety tests.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index lost 1.59 percent, or 535.47 points, to end at 33,140.47, while the broader Topix index fell 1.00 percent, or 23.40 points, to 3,325.98.

“Toyota briefly sank more than five percent over

concerns of a quality fraud problem of its subsidiary Daihatsu,” Iwai Cosmo Securities said.

Daihatsu’s announcement on Wednesday came after an independent panel found the malpractice dated back to 1989, when the oldest instance was confirmed.

The panel was set up this year to probe a safety scandal that emerged in April.

Hours after the Daihatsu report, Toyota said it will recall 1 million vehicles due to concerns over airbag

censors. In Tokyo trading, Toyota tumbled 4.02 percent to 2,537.5 yen, after temporarily sinking 5.6 percent. Other automakers were also down with Nissan plunging 2.96 percent to 562.1 yen and Honda dropping 2.92 percent to 1,442 yen.

Chip-linked shares tanked, with Tokyo Electron falling 2.10 percent to 24,700 yen and Advantest losing 2.32 percent to 4,870 yen. The dollar traded at 142.98 yen against 143.63 yen in New York.

Asian markets mixed after Wall St losses

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets were mixed Thursday as investors took their foot off the gas after an extended rally fuelled by expectations the Federal Reserve will slash interest rates next year.

A stream of data in recent weeks has shown inflation continues to slow and the jobs market is softening, while other economic indicators suggest the central bank is on course to bring prices under control while averting a recession.

The latest figures on Wednesday showed US consumer confidence bouncing back more than forecast, while home sales came off a 13-year low.

Eyes are now on the release Friday of the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, the Fed’s preferred gauge of inflation, which could be key in the bank’s decision-making at its next meeting in January.

The most recent gathering ended with officials indicating they would cut about three times in 2024, sparking a buying frenzy in markets and forcing some policymakers to try to temper expectations.

The data could “hold the crucial tarot cards likely to

steer market dynamics into year-end and beyond”, said SPI Asset Management’s Stephen Innes.

“An upside surprise in the figures is crucial to bolster the credibility of the Federal Reserve’s efforts to push back against market rate cut expectations. Failure to see an upside surprise could challenge the Fed to counter expectations of a rate cut in March.

“In such a scenario, risk assets could rebound, and the year-end rally would likely regain momentum.” The upbeat data was not enough to stop investors taking their cash off the table, with observers saying a pullback was inevitable after such a strong rally.

“It certainly looks like it has become very one-sided, and it is a scary world when everybody gets on one side of the boat,” said Cameron Dawson of Newedge Wealth.

“The market is very extended, we do see it being very overbought. But we’re in this melt-up period and so oftentimes things can get even sillier before they really do have a pull-back,” he told Bloomberg Television.

Wall Street’s three main



In brief

Khurram ruled out of Test Series

ISLAMABAD (APP): Khurram Shazad has been ruled out of the Test series against Australia due to a stress fracture in his left 10th rib, as well as an abdominal muscle tear. Fast Bowler Khurram Shahzad complained of discomfort in his left side during the first test. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in a statement on Thursday said it would consult a specialist in Australia after which a final management protocol would be established for the player. He will then return to the NCA in Lahore where he will continue his injury management and rehabilitation, the PCB added.

PHF women hockey league

FAISALABAD (APP): Pakistan's first PHF Women Deputy Commissioner flood-light hockey league started at the international stadium Gojra, here on Thursday. The league will continue till December 24. The opening match was played between teams of Al-Baraka Mall and Marriage Hall, which remained tied with one goal from both sides. C o m m i s s i o n e r Faisalabad Silwat Saeed was the chief guest at the opening ceremony. Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Muhammad Naem Sindhu, District Police Officer Ibadat Nisar, and a large number of people watched the match. At the end of the opening match, a spectacular display of fireworks and a Qawwali was also organised by the famous band. Later, Faisalabad commissioner awarded prizes among the players. The deputy commissioner said that 120 national and international women players are participating in the hockey league.

Rehman Baba Cricket Stadium

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Thursday inaugurated the ceremony of Rehman Baba Cricket Stadium in Orangi Town Sector 4 here. On this occasion, Deputy Parliamentary Leader of PPP in City Council Dil Muhammad and other leaders were also present. The Mayor of Karachi said that PPP representatives decided to improve it and today we are inaugurating this project. The Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab after formally opening the stadium, played cricket and football with youngsters of the area. The Mayor of Karachi said that when he became administrator in Karachi in 2021, the board named Garibabad underpass on Liaquatabad underpass. The famous Qawwal and Naat Khwan Amjad Sabri was the hero of my era, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation decided in 2021 that the underpass of Liaquatabad should be named after Amjad Sabri, the people of Karachi can not forget the services of his father Ghulam Farid Sabri too, we will also name a place in the city after him, he said. He said that the various steps being taken to solve the problem of water supply, this city belongs to all of us, the journey of love will continue without discrimination, and all the problems of the citizens will be solved on a priority basis. He said that the restoration and renovation of Rehman Baba Cricket Stadium will provide the best sports facilities to the youth here and they will get an opportunity to express their talents.

Pakistan are down, but Shakeel keeps faith in Boxing Day dream

LAHORE (Agencies): Perhaps it was Saud Shakeel who gave birth to the Pakistan Way. It is difficult to think of another cricketer on whom the idea could be so pointedly based after looking at how Shakeel went about his business at home a year ago. "Before the Sri Lanka series started, I worked on batting with a more positive mindset," Shakeel says. "And then I executed that in Sri Lanka."

Over what was a miserable winter for Pakistan last season, when they lost three Tests out of five and didn't win a single one at home, Shakeel emerged as a significant positive in the middle order, with 580 runs in five Tests at 72.50.

"When you play cricket, your main job is to perform for the team," he says. "I don't think of whether I'm new to the team or not. I just want to score runs that win matches for the team."

It was his strike rate of 41.66, though, that got more attention than his sparkling average. Shakeel's stodgy grit was emblematic of a side that wasn't just outplayed by two better sides at home, but, perhaps more unforgivably for Pakistan, was also out-styled. Pakistan were a dull, conservative watch over those six weeks, scrambling to save Test matches rather than looking to win them.

Shakeel, at least, was doing it somewhat effectively, famously putting together an epic unbeaten 125 that took more than eight hours and 341 balls to compile. While Pakistan

just about managed to rescue that game against New Zealand - the final pair clinging on for 21 balls - how close they had come to winning it was equally noteworthy; when stumps on day five were called, Pakistan were just 15 runs from victory.

Thereafter, the Pakistan Way began to emerge. Sequentially, it appeared to be less a cricketing philosophy than a passive-aggressive dig at Pakistan's player of the season. Shakeel was told he was missing out on scoring opportunities, failing to put away bad deliveries even when the opportunities to do so with very little risk presented themselves. He understood he had the technical ability to go after the bowling more, and in Sri Lanka, he did just that. His strike rate through that series was an impressive 57.95, as he scored an unbeaten double-hundred and a half-century to help Pakistan win 2-0.

It is unsurprising, then, that Shakeel can do a better job explaining the elusive Pakistan Way than just about anyone else who's tried. "The Pakistan Way doesn't mean you go out and start attacking like mad and only target boundaries," he says. "The theory behind the Pakistan Way is to look at the situation and take the most positive route out of it. If the situation demands caution, the philosophy doesn't prevent you from doing that. But always look for positive intent. If you look at my double-hundred in Sri Lanka, there were phases in

that innings where I batted slowly, but I always looked for the positive option."

We're at the MCG, a ground Shakeel holds special affinity for. When he was younger, he used to set a 5am alarm on December 26 every year, looking to catch the start of the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne. He has just finished a two-and-a-half hour training session at the nets across from the ground, testing his defensive block against pace and using his feet to spin. At one point, Pakistan spin-bowling coach Saeed Ajmal sent down a few deliveries, with Shakeel managing to look assured, something that eluded most cricketers in Ajmal's heyday.

Perhaps, though, that has to do with the conditions, too. "Whenever you come to Australia, it takes time to get used to conditions," Shakeel says. "We played a practice match in Canberra but the conditions there weren't the fast-bouncing pitches we got in Perth, so it took us time to get used to that. We've moved on from that now and are looking ahead, and getting more and more used to conditions by the day. I haven't got big runs in the first Test, but my intent was positive there. And that's the mentality for us as a batting group, to go out there and play positive and attacking cricket." Anyone who watched that first Test on a pitch that was - even by West Australian standards - exceptionally spicy will understand why Pakistan felt so strongly about the strip prepared for the four-day game in Canberra.



MULTAN: A view of final cricket match played between Women's Avengers and Women's Strikers teams during Elite Women's League at Groundup Academy.

Second round in Mohibullah Khan Senior KP Junior Squash concluded

PESHAWAR (APP): The second phase of Mohibullah Khan Senior KP Junior Squash Championship has been concluded at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex here Thursday.

Squash legend Qamar Zaman was the special guest along with Chief Organizer and Chief Referee Manoor Zaman and other officials among the attendees. Atif Ali Naz, Abdul Rehman Khalil, Isa, Abdullah Khan, M Nihal, M Azan Zaman, M Huzaifa and M Rian Zaman won the U-9 competitions.

Umar Ashraf won the U11 competitions. Fahya Farman, Arbab Fahad, Abdul Rehman Riaz, Fahad Arif, Muhammad Samir, Hussain Bakhsh, Anas Rafe won the match in straight sets. Khizr Hayat and Malik Muhammad achieved success while Hamza Khan, Zohaib Hasan, Muhammad Umar, M. Fawad Khan, Faisal Khalil, Abbas Khan, M. Azhar Ali and Abdullah Zaman won the second round matches of U15 and reached the third round.

Usman Khawaja charged by ICC for wearing black armband at Perth Test

PERTH (Agencies): Usman Khawaja has been charged with breaching ICC regulations for wearing a black armband during the first Test against Pakistan in Perth without prior approval.

Khawaja wore the armband in place of taking the field with writing on his shoes which he had worn in training stating "all lives are equal" and "freedom is a human right" to raise awareness of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Black armbands are a regular sight in international cricket to mark deaths of former players, family members or other significant individuals, but they need permission from the national board and the ICC.

"Usman Khawaja has been charged for breaching Clause F of the Clothing and Equipment Regulations," an ICC spokesperson told ESPNcricinfo. "Usman displayed a personal message (arm band) during the first Test Match against Pakistan without seeking the prior approval of Cricket Australia and the ICC to display it, as

required in the regulations for personal messages. This is a breach under the category of an 'other breach' and the sanction for a first offence is a reprimand."

As of Thursday night, this was a charge against Khawaja with the sanction yet to be confirmed. Even if the reprimand did eventuate it would not leave him in any doubt for the Boxing Day Test against Pakistan, and even a fourth such sanction in a 12-month period would only be a penalty of 75% of the match fee rather than a suspension. That said, it remains to be seen what would happen if Khawaja continues to use the arm band at the MCG.

The ICC's clothing and equipment regulations state: "Players and team officials shall not be permitted to wear, display or otherwise convey personal messages on their clothing, equipment or otherwise, irrespective of whether such messages are affixed to clothing, equipment or otherwise and whether such

messages are displayed or conveyed through the use of the specific clothing or other items (eg. an arm band) or by the use of words, symbol, graphic message, images or otherwise (personal messages)', unless approved in advance by both the player or team official's board and the ICC Cricket Operations Department. Approval shall not be granted for messages which relate to political, religious or racial activities or causes."

Ahead of the Perth Test, and shortly after opting not to wear the shoes with the writing, Khawaja posted an emotional video on social media stating that he was not making political claims. At the time he said he would challenge the ICC over his right to wear the shoes. "What I've written on my shoes is not political. I'm not taking sides," he said. "Human life to me is equal. One Jewish life is equal to one Muslim life is equal to one Hindu life and so on. I'm just speaking up for those who don't have a voice."

Peshawar beat Hazara in Tchoukball Girls Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar claimed the trophy after defeating Hazara in the final of the Tchoukball Girls Championship played here at Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Sports Complex on Thursday.

Miss Rahim Bibi, a former Director Sports Frontier College for Women and Ex-Pakistan Cricket Board Coordinator, was the chief guest on this occasion. Before the start of the matches the players were introduced to her. Assistant Professor Abdur Rashid Anwar, Organizing Secretary Games Miss Rahim Bibi, Uzma Qadar, Lecturer HPE Yakha Ghund, Shumaila Begum of HEP Governor Girls Degree College Jamrud, Sadia Gul of HPE Govt Girls Degree College Nahaqi, Assistant Professor Miss Huma Tariq, former Director Sports PSB Coaching Center, officials,



players and spectators were also present.

In the final Peshawar players played well and the players including Nagin, Afreen, Humaria, Farha Aysha, Iqra, Sidra, Maria played well against a strong Hazara team comprising Alishba, Saba, Arwa, Sherish and Tahira.

Peshawar won the match in a closely contested encounter against a strong Hazara team. Hazara was leading the first two quarters by 5-8 and 13-17 and it was the last two quarters in

which Peshawar dominated the proceeding and led the third set by 19-21 and won the last quarters by 27-25.

Peshawar despite going into deficit in the first two quarters by their players played well and staged a strong comeback and thus won the final match.

Earlier, Peshawar defeated Mardan by 23-19 in the semi-final while Hazara recorded victory against Malakand in the second semi-final by 20-17.

In the throw ball Peshawar-A (Frontier

College for Women) and Peshawar-B (Bacha Khan) reached the final after defeating Mardan and Kohat in the semi-finals. In the first semi-final Peshawar-A recorded victory against Mardan by 25-22, 25-21 and 25-20. Peshawar-A team played well and specially Farishta, international player Irum, Sadaf, Huma and Shakeela played well for Peshawar-A team against strong Mardan team. In the second semi-final Peshawar-B Bacha Khan defeated Kohat by 25-21, 25-22 and 27-25. Peshawar-B Bacha Khan, Aysha, Humaria, Nadia, Iqra and Farah played well for Peshawar-B team.

In the third position Mardan defeated Kohat by 3-0, the score was 25-19, 25-23 and 25-21. The players of Mardan including Tahira, Shabnam, Javeria and Kiran played well while for Kohat, Muqasas, Iqra, Ruba and Anmol played well.

Benazir Bhutto National Tennis C'ships: Salar beats Abdullah in thriller

ISLAMABAD (APP): Muhammad Salar came from behind to snatch victory from Abdullah Adnan in a thrilling three-set 2nd round fixture of the 9th Benazir Bhutto (Shaheed) National Tennis Championships 2023 at Islamabad Tennis Complex on Thursday.

Both players played the highest level of the tennis but in the third set Muhammad Salar excelled his game and broke the serve at 3-3, winning the match 4-6, 7-5, 6-3.

Matches in other categories were also held on Thursday.

Following are the results:

Men Singles:
2nd round: Muhammad Shoaib bt Ahmed Naeel 6-2,6-1; Muhammad Salar bt Abdullah Adnan 4-6,7-5,6-3; Yousaf Khalil bt Hamza Asim 6-2,6-1; Barkat ullah bt Hamza Roman 6-2,6-3;

Men Doubles:
2nd round: Yousaf Khalil/Barkat ullah bt Sami Zeb Khan/Ahmed

Naeel 7-5,6-1; Muhammad Shoaib/ Muzzamil Murtaza bt Hamza Asim/Muhammad Salar 6-3,6-2;

Ladies Singles:

Pre Quarter: Sarah Mehboob bt Daliah Ashraf 6-2,6-0; Asifa Shabaz bt Labika Durab 6-2,6-1; Mehak Khokhar bt Syeda Ajwa 6-0,6-1;

U-18 Boys Single Results:

Quarterfinal: Hamza Roman bt Asad Zaman 6-4,6-3; Mahatir Muhammad bt Muhammad Salar 6-2,6-2; Hamza Asim bt Ehtisham Himayun 6-4,6-2;

U-18 Girls Single Results:
1st round: Zunaisha Noor bt Dalia Ashraf 6-0,6-1;

U-14 Boys single:
Quarterfinal: Muzzamil Bhand bt Muhammad Yahya 4-0,4-1; Hassan Usmani bt Haziq Asim 2-4,4-0,4-0;

Mahd Shezad bt Haziq Areejo 5-4(7),2-4,4-2; Rohab Faisal bt Nabeel Ali Qayum 4-5(5),4-2,4-2;

U-12 Boys Single:

Pre Quarterfinal: Ahmed Hussain bt Ansar ullah 4-1,4-2; Shayan Afridi bt Muhammad Shakeeb 4-1,4-1; Raziq Sultan bt Muhammad Faizan 4-1,4-0; Abdul Wasay bt Majid Ali Bachani 4-1,4-1; Zayed Zaman bt Raja Muhammad Taha 4-1,4-0; Rashid Ali Bachani bt Waniya Khalid Raja 4-4-0; Arsh Imran bt Behroze Memon 4-0,4-1;

Boys Under 10:

Pre Quarterfinal: Qasim ul Khair bt Umer Zaman 4-1,4-2; Majid Ali Bachani bt Ali Nasir 4-0,4-1; Rashid Ali Bachani bt Fatima Maqsood 4-0,4-2; Arsh Imran bt Beroze Memon 4-0,4-0; Salar Khan bt Amna Maqsood 4-1,4-2; Ibrahim Gil bt Amir Masood 4-0,4-1;

Vetran Doubles 45+

Quarterfinal: Sohail Bulant/Yasin Abbassi bt Anwar ul Haq/Asim Israr 6-3,6-0; Muhammad Amin/Murtaza Hussain bt Gul Hameed/Younus Khan 6-2,6-2;

14 selected under PM Talent Hunt Youth Handball Trials

SWAT (APP): A total of 14 players were short-listed under Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt for Handball League from Swat Region on Thursday.

The trials were held at University of Swat in connection with the Prime Minister's Talent Hunt Youth Sports League wherein a total of fourteen players were selected while three players were kept in reserve, thereby making the

final list of seventeen players. Under the auspices of the Directorate of Sports Peshawar University, the trials will be held in other zones of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Hazara and Bannu as per the schedule.

Director of Sports Peshawar University, Organizer and Coordinator and President Provincial Handball Association Bahre Karam are supervising the trials.

A large number of players participated in the trials, in which players were selected from here like other zones, after which handball trials will be held in Hazara and Bannu zones. The selected players were included Aziz Ullah, Noor Islam, Ibrahim Khan, Abu Sufyan, Anwar Zeb, Ashfaq Ali, Kashif Ullah, Ihtisham-ul-Haq, Ayaz Khan, Sudais Khan, Naveed Iqbal, Irfan Ullah, Salman Khan and Usman Ullah.



In brief

IRSA releases 68,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 68,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 36,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1474.99 feet and was 74.99 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,300 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1157.55 feet, which was 107.55 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 4,700 cusecs and 26,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 42,200, 32,900, 26,000 and 500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

PMD signs agreement

ISLAMABAD (APP): As a landmark achievement, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has signed a Contract Agreement with the Consortium of Japan Radio Co, Ltd. (JRC) and Tobishima Corporation for the installation of a state-of-the-art dual-polarization Weather Surveillance Radar in Multan. This achievement is a testament to the unwavering efforts of the Director General PMD, Sahibzad Khan, has diligently worked to overcome obstacles that stalled this project for the past five years. The signing ceremony took place on December 21, 2023, in Tokyo, Japan, marking a significant milestone in strengthening the nation's weather forecasting capabilities, said a news release issued here. The signing ceremony was attended by esteemed dignitaries, including Mir Hassan Naqvi, Senior Joint Secretary Aviation Division, Sahibzad Khan, Director General PMD, Dr. Muhammad Tahir Khan, Director P&D, PMD, representatives of JRC, JICA and International Meteorological Consultants (IMC). It is noteworthy to highlight that this project faced delays due to the impact of COVID-19 and subsequent inflation over an extended period. However, the dedicated and effective efforts of DG PMD, Sahibzad Khan, have successfully transformed this challenge into a reality, paving the way for advancements in weather and flood forecasting through the installation of the Weather Surveillance Radar in Multan.

ANF recovers 394 tons chemical

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations managed to recover 394 tons of chemicals and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that ANF in a major operation against the illegal use of industrial chemicals conducted raids in different areas and recovered 394 tons chemicals. The campaign was launched in the context of increasing threats of drug trafficking. The ANF spokesman said that under the supervision of the national and military leadership, a comprehensive anti-smuggling campaign is underway to protect the economic and national interests of Pakistan. Industrial use of controlled chemicals increases domestic production, tax revenue and national exchequer. However illegal use of chemicals used in industry is a constant threat.



ISLAMABAD: A flock of pigeons picking food at a local park, F-10 in Federal Capital.

Aneeq stresses international collaboration for Ummah's unity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Thursday emphasized the necessity of restoring the concept of Ummah, urging increased efforts to unite the Ummah with the support of the international community. This was discussed during a meeting with Malaysian Ambassador Mohammad Azhar Mazlan in the office of Religious Affairs Minister Aneeq Ahmad. They engaged in an in-depth conversation on bilateral relations, economic stability and the promotion of religious harmony, including discussions on Hajj arrangements.

The minister emphasized the crucial need for restoring the concept of Ummah. There should be increased efforts to unite the Ummah, taking the international community into confidence, he said and highlighted that Pakistan and Malaysia had valuable lessons to learn from each other. Malaysia's provision of excellent service and facilities to its pilgrims is worthy of emulation, the minister said adding that there should be exchange of trade, cultural delegations between Muslim countries. Hussan-e-Qiraat, an international competition, will be held in Pakistan this year on the model of Malaysia, he added.

The minister also said that Malaysia's impressive growth, economic stability and consistent policies served as models for emulation. Ambassador Azhar Mazlan highlighted the stark difference in their Hajj quota compared to Pakistan. Prospective Hajj participants in Malaysia, both women and men, face prolonged waiting periods. Malaysia has prioritized providing the new generation access to modern science and achieving economic stability over the years. An independent and robust economy is a fundamental requirement for freedom and decision-making independence, he expressed.

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a leader of great eminence

ISLAMABAD (APP): Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a leader of great eminence, who changed the direction of history of the South Asian region by transforming the Muslims of South Asia from a minority community to a nation.

A leader, having a long-term perspective of goals and strategies can convince others of the genuineness of his cause and these qualities could be identified in Jinnah's personal life, professional career as a brilliant lawyer, his political career.

Jinnah could be described as the creation of the political, socio-economic and historical environment of the beginning of the 20th Century. However, he did not stay trapped in the milieu of his time. Thomas Carlyle, a British-Scottish historian and philosopher, was right to suggest that the great men shape history when he wrote that "the history of the world is but the biography of great men."

Most Muslim intellectuals and political and religious leaders viewed the Muslims of South Asia as a socio-cultural and civilizational entity separate from other religious communities residing in British India. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, one of the fearless, determined, and strong-willed leaders, fought for Muslim rights with his willpower and comprehensive knowledge.

Jinnah accepted this argument of a separate community, but he moved this notion to a higher stage by converting them into a nation and spearheading the demand of a separate and independent homeland for them to turn the idea of a nation into a concrete and full political reality.

Jinnah was a charismatic leader who enjoyed the full confidence of the majority of the Muslims of South Asia. They were convinced from the strength of his character and a bold advocacy of their cause that he had the ability to solve their socio-political and economic problems and secure their political future.

This view of Jinnah was shared by the Muslims across all societal and regional divides. Charisma arises in a situation acute societal crisis as well as the crisis of legitimacy of the institutions and processes in the last decade of the British rule in India. In such a transitional period, Jinnah was the source of inspiration and guidance for the Muslims of British India. Their devotion to him was so strong that he received enthusiastic welcome wherever he went for political mobilization.

Like Dr Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Jinnah believed that Islam provided an ethical and moral basis to the state and he firmly believed that the modern notions of govern-

nance like the rule by constitution and law, democracy and basic human freedoms and individual rights, obligations of the state to its citizens, equal citizenship and religious and cultural tolerance were incorporated in the teachings and principles of Islam. Islamic idiom and terminology began to appear in Jinnah's speeches and statements from 1934 onwards when he returned from England and devoted his attention to reorganizing and strengthening the Muslim League for an effective advocacy of the Muslim demands and interests.

The presence of these Muslim leaders in the Congress Party partly contributed to the Congress leadership misperception that they could neutralize the Muslim League with the help of the Muslims in the Congress. Major Islamic parties of 1946-47 either opposed the Muslim League demand for a separate homeland or they stayed away from the Jinnah led political struggle for the making of Pakistan. The credit goes to Jinnah whose determined leadership and a persuasive advocacy of a separate homeland neutralized the opposition of a section of Muslim political and religious leaders and left no option for the Congress Party leadership but to accept the division of British India into India and Pakistan. The British were divided on this issue.

Sharmila urges political parties to avoid making elections controversial

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan People's Party' Senior leader Sharmila Farooqi Thursday urged all the political parties to avoid making the election process controversial as economic stability is not possible without political stability in the country. "Holding of transparent and timely elections is the need of the hour", she said that while talking to PTV news.

"Political stability can only be brought through a reconciliation approach as opposed to confrontation," she added.

She criticized that some political leaders are trying to create chaos and anarchy

in the country to take political benefit, however, in the larger interest of the country such attitudes should be shunned. All political parties and national institutions should focus on developing consensus as Pakistan is passing through a critical juncture in its march toward future, she highlighted.

The nation is anxiously watching toward its leaders, she said, adding, Political parties need to create political stability in the country in order to improve the economy and resolve the problems of the people.

Hafeez Jalandhri remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 41st death anniversary of creator of Pakistan's national anthem, Abul Athar Hafeez Jalandhri observed on Thursday.

He was born in Jalandhar, Indian Punjab on 14th January 1900, his family migrated from Jalandhar to Lahore after partition. He was a great poet of song as well as a poem and ghazal. His extreme achievement is "Shahnama Islam" which he wrote in poetic form and published in four volumes. Due to this commendable achievement, he was given the title of 'Firdowsi Islam'. The second major achievement of Hafeez Jalandhri was the National Anthem of Pakistan and he will always be remembered for this unique creation.

Hafeez Jalandhri's poetry collections include 'Naghma Bar', 'Talkhaba Shireen' and 'Soz-o-Saz'. He also compiled a collection of short stories 'Haft Paikar'. His songs collections were published as 'Hindustan Hamara', 'Phool Mali' and 'Bachun ki Nazmeen'. Hafeez Jalandhri died on this day in 1982 in Lahore and buried near Minar-e-Pakistan.

Sanjrani congratulates new Emir Kuwait Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Thursday extended warm congratulations and best wishes to Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah on assuming charge as new Emir of Kuwait.

In a statement, Sadiq Sanjrani expressed profound felicitations on behalf of the Senate of Pakistan, conveying heartfelt congratulations to Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah and the people of Kuwait on this momentous occasion. Chairman Senate emphasized the longstanding friendly relations between Pakistan and Kuwait, rooted in shared values and mutual respect.

Sadiq Sanjrani affirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening these ties under the leadership of Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah. The Chairman praised Kuwait's remarkable progress under the wise leadership of the late Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber and expressed confidence in the continued prosperity and development of Kuwait under the new leadership.

Senate body directs MoCC&EC to work out better strategy to curb smog

ISLAMABAD (APP): The members of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change on Thursday directed the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination to work out a better strategy to curb smog as the environmental pollution in the major cities of the country was lingering despite all policy and regulatory efforts.

The Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change was held here at the Parliament House with Senator Seemee Ezdi in Chair. The committee members emphasized the urgent issue of smog in various cities of Punjab. The committee chairperson initiated the discussion by pointing out that this critical matter is often considered only when it's too late. Officers from the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC) provided a briefing on the factors contributing to air pollution in Punjab's cities.

The MoCC&EC officers explained that a significant portion of pollution is due to traffic pollution. They presented their legal and institutional framework for smog prevention and control. They also highlighted weaknesses in watch and ward, work prosecution, collaboration, presence, operations, and monitoring.

They admitted some industries in the north of Lahore violated their standardized procedures. They mentioned their forward strategy involves strengthening field officers, presence, drone surveillance, improved and timely reporting, and daily debriefing sessions.

They initiated the ECO Watch Android app for accurate mapping of irritants,

ensuring daily monitoring of actions, and tracking pollutant footprints. They also reported implementing 80% effective emission control to reduce black smoke.

The committee chairperson expressed that, despite these efforts, smog persists in the region, suggesting a possible flaw in the implementation of their methodology. Officers concluded that local pollutants such as transport, fugitive dust, and uncontrollable dry sweeping contribute to environmental degradation, while industrial contributions to pollution have significantly decreased. Senator Dr. Mohammad Humayun Mohmand highlighted that the issues are not being addressed correctly, with progress stagnant compared to the previous year. He recommended a reassessment of the monitoring of the Air Quality Index (AQI). Senator Taj Haider also suggested a clear policy for transportation to mitigate pollution issues.

Furthermore, the secretary MoCC&EC provided a briefing on COP28, explaining that Pakistan, the UAE, the Philippines, and Saudi Arabia were elected for the Loss and Damage Fund. It was successfully operationalized under the World Bank, with a pledge of more than USD 792 million and Pakistan played a vital role in its operationalization during COP27 and COP28. Additionally, Pakistan was nominated to the Santiago Network Board in COP28 as well. Addressing climate change financing, the secretary of MoCC&EC added that funding priorities for mitigation and adaptation, ranging from 34 to 66 per cent, have been initiated. The recognition of ocean and coastal systems-based mitigation has also been included in the Global Stocktake (GST) of COP28.

Shopping frenzy reaches its peak during December sale offers

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the birth anniversary of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah is around the corner, famous brands outlets and online shopping platforms have announced sale offers on dresses and other seasonal accessories to attract the buyers especially women who remain in search of discounted items for their family due to the prevailing price hike situation.

The shopping frenzy reaches its peak in the month of December with sales in connection with the Quaid-i-Azam Day, Christmas and New Year celebrations. December is the month when majority of the brands and fashion outlets offer sales up to flat 50 on various items to attract the buyers who usually purchase the stock for this season as well as next assuming further rise in the prices. Following the past trends, the famous brands of dresses, shoes and other accessories have started offering Quaid Day sales while many online retailers have also displayed discount offers to sell maximum winter stock.

A number of women buyers have started visiting the popular malls and brands outlets to look into the discount offers for purchasing winter stuff for them and their families.

"Purchasing winter stock at the advent of the season is difficult for the salaried class due to high rates. I always buy dresses, shoes and other needed items at the end of December when the New Year sale starts", Shaista Hameed, a mother of three children said.

Talking to APP, she said the prevailing price hike situations has limited the purchasing capacity of the general public who now think twice before buying a dozen of eggs and tomatoes what to talk about dresses.

She said, "It is a routine practice of the people across the world to buy from sale offers and now the trend of sale offers during the special occasions has picked up pace in Pakistan too which is a good thing". Shahzad Ali, who is a father of two children said, "Some of the brands only offer sales on the unwanted items or those which are left in only few sizes to just finish their stock which we cannot call as a sale offer in real sense however there were some brands which offer very good discounts on all their stock".

'No possibility of seat adjustment with JUI-F'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader Sherry Rehman said on Thursday that there was 'no possibility of seat adjustment with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazal (JUI-F), as it did not want general elections to be held on time.

"The JUI-F was part of the collation government; however, this time the situation is different, but PPP doors are always open to other political opponents," she told a private news channel. Sherry reiterated that her party would launch a vigorous electoral campaign from Garhi Khuda Bakhsh on December 27, on the death anniversary of

BB Shaheed.

She said that the PPP was the only party that stresses the need for holding timely elections in the country. The other political parties in the country are seemingly running away from the polls.

She deplored that different tactics were used in the past to create rifts in her party; their all attempts went in vein, and the PPP raised the slogan 'Pakistan Khappay' (Long live Pakistan). "We would never let anyone break Sindh," said Sherry.

The PPP leader urged the politicians to abstain from politics of division as the country is going through

tough conditions. She emphasized that the national interest must be above everything else.

Sherry Rehman was optimistic to form next government, saying that the PPP would contest elections from all constituencies across the country, and results in Punjab would be different. She noted that the PPP wanted a level playing field for all the parties to contest the next polls in a free and fair manner. In response to a query, she remarked PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto is a young politician and he will be the candidate of her party for the slot of prime minister in the upcoming elections.



ISLAMABAD: A view of massive traffic jam after a vehicle hit to another at Islamabad Expressway.

Minister for help from Council

KABUL (BNA): Mohammad Arsal Kharoti, the Deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, held a meeting with Salma Abdollahi, a representative of the Norwegian Refugee Council. The meeting focused on the council's projects in Afghanistan. Abdollahi outlined the activities of the Norwegian Refugee Council, assuring that aid would be distributed according to the needs and priorities of individuals across various sectors.

Traders express confidence

KABUL (BNA): Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi met with a group of national traders and investors to discuss the economic situation and the opportunities for investment in the country. The traders and investors praised the Islamic Emirate for ensuring the security of life and property, which had been lacking in previous years. They expressed their readiness to invest in various sectors and contribute to the country's development and prosperity.

Qatar to assist Uzbekistan with Trans-Afghan railway

KABUL (TOLOnews): Uzbek media reported that the Uzbek government has asked Qatar to help the country build the Trans-Afghan railway, which will connect Central Asia from Afghanistan to South Asia. Trend News Agency wrote that the agreement was reached after the meeting between the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim ibn Hamad Al Thani, and the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and the Emir of Qatar has also announced its readiness to help in the construction of the railway.

The Afghanistan Railway Authority said that the authority is fully prepared to start the practical work on the big project. "In the meeting with the President of Uzbekistan, the Emir of Qatar showed

interest in investing in the project, the United Arab Emirates and Russia also showed interest, and we are trying to attract investment in the project," said Abdul Sami Durani, spokesman for the authority.

The spokesman of the Islamic Emirate said that for the development of Afghanistan's trade with the countries of the region, the Trans-Afghan railway must start.

"The project is very important, and it is still one of the most important and key plans in connecting Central Asian countries with South Asian countries," said Zabiullah Mujahid.

Meanwhile, some economic experts said the development of railways are beneficial in the country's economic progress.

"The creation and recommendation of the railway can reduce the cost of commercial goods and speed up the transfer of commercial goods and also facilitate the development of trade and improve economic progress and create more jobs for the country," said Abdul Zahur Mudabir, an economist.

"The Trans-Afghan Railway can provide progress to countries, including export and import in countries, it can boost the level of employment," said Mer Shekab Mer, an economist.

The Trans-Afghan railway project agreement was signed in February 2021 between Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the railway will be made with an initial cost of five billion dollars.

CSTO raises concerns over insurgency

KABUL (Khaama Press): Imangali Tasmagambetov, Secretary General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), raised concerns about increasing terrorist activities, drug smuggling, and arms trafficking in Afghanistan at a joint meeting of the CSTO Council and the 16th plenary session of the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly in Moscow.

During his speech, Tasmagambetov highlighted the threats facing the southern borders of Central Asia and called for an agreement to counter these threats.

He stated, "The danger of terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, and illegal arms trade spreading from Afghanistan remains a direct threat to the southern borders of the CSTO's area of responsibility."

He emphasized the importance of the Working Group on Afghanistan under the CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers in coordinating efforts to address these challenges.

However, the Taliban administration rejected the allegations, with spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid assuring that Afghan territory would not be used against any country and stating their opposition to narcotics trafficking.

Since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, there has been increasing concern among regional countries about security and stability in the country and the broader region. These concerns are amplified by the complex dynamics of regional politics and the potential for instability to spill over national borders.

On a related note, the Pakistani UN envoy recently criticized the Taliban, accusing them of harbouring terrorist groups. This accusation reflects ongoing tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, particularly regarding the activities and influence of various militant groups in the region.

Pakistani officials have claimed that the Taliban has not effectively acted against the Tehrik-i-Taliban hideouts within Afghanistan.

In response, the Taliban have denied these allegations, reiterating their commitment not to allow Afghan soil to be used against any neighbouring countries, including Pakistan.

This denial and reassurance, however, continue to be a point of contention and concern for regional stability.

AAF able to defends its airspace, says Minister



KABUL (Ariana News): The Acting Minister of Defense Mohammad Yaqub Mujahid on Wednesday visited the general command of the Afghan Air

Force (AAF) and met with officials, employees, pilots, engineers, technicians and other force members.

Addressing the air force personnel, he said: "It is

true that we have problems, but our air force has the ability to defend their territory and they will be strengthened more than ever."

Mujahid also expressed

his gratitude for the round-the-clock efforts of the staff to strengthen the air force and assured them he would find ways to solve their problems.

West, Ratwatte discuss situation in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLOnews): The US Special Representative Thomas West, in a meeting with Indrika Ratwatte, UNAMA Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, talked about the support for Afghan refugees and the humanitarian and economic situation in Afghanistan.

West on X pledged the US's continued partnership with UNAMA to address these challenges.

"Discussed support for Afghan refugees and the humanitarian and economic situation in Afghanistan. Look forward to continuing our strong partnership with UNAMA on these challenges," West said.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway in a statement said that it allocated nearly \$7 million to support Afghans and returnees from Pakistan.

"Norway increases its support for Afghanistan with USD 3.8 million (NOK 40 million) to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and USD 2.9 million (NOK 30 million) to the UN World Food Program (WFP), due to the large influx of Afghans repatriated from Pakistan," the statement reads.

The statement said that Norway remains committed to supporting the humanitarian response in Afghanistan.



In the meantime, the acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Khalil Rahman Haqqani, in a meeting with Amy Pope, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration, asked the organization to increase its assistance to returnees in Afghanistan.

"We ask those organizations that help immigrants and are working in the immigration section, to work transparently and in cooperation with the institutions of the Islamic Emirate and continue their assistances to the immigrants," the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid said.

"The international community so far, has provided assistance under different names to those Afghan immigrants which came from Pakistan. But unfortunately, no fundamental

assistance has been provided by them, and the Islamic Emirate also has not provided fundamental assistance to the immigrants," Abdul Basir Taraki, an economist told TOLOnews.

The Ministry of Economy said that the Islamic Emirate has so far provided the necessary assistance in the areas of shelter construction, food and sanitation to immigrants deported from other countries, especially Pakistan.

"The Islamic Emirate has a plan for immigrants in the fields of health, shelter and education, and it has implanted its major parts," said Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy of the Ministry of Economy.

Earlier, nine international non-governmental organizations expressed their concerns regarding the situation of immigrants returning from Pakistan to Afghanistan.

339 Afghan nationals moved from Pakistan to Canada

KABUL (Khaama Press): Canada's immigration department has recently moved 339 Afghan refugees from Pakistan to Canada. The transfer was made on a special charter flight as part of an ongoing relocation effort.

This move is the latest in a series of efforts by the Canadian government to assist Afghan citizens by providing them with safe passage and resettlement opportunities in Canada.

The immigration department of this country announced on Wednesday, on social media platform

X, that approximately 339 Afghan migrants were transferred from Pakistan to the city of Toronto, Canada, on a charter flight.

The Canadian Immigration and Citizenship Department has added that the mentioned migrants will be relocated to 40 locations across Canada, especially in Windsor, Calgary, and St. John's.

This comes while the Canadian government had also announced on December 15 that 338 Afghan citizens were

transferred to Canada from Pakistan on a charter flight.

The Canadian Immigration and Citizenship Department has added that reviewing previously received and qualified asylum applications is still ongoing.

It is worth mentioning that after the increase of the deportation of Afghan migrants from Pakistan, Canada has intensified the process of transferring migrants to that country.

The British government has recently transported

over 200 Afghan refugees from Pakistan via a charter flight. This action is part of an effort to assist displaced Afghan nationals.

Pakistan has been escalating the forced deportation of Afghan migrants. In response, countries like the UK and Canada have stepped up their resettlement programs for these refugees.

The accelerated resettlement process by foreign nations aims to provide Afghan refugees with safer destinations and stability following their departure from Pakistan.

\$185 million for health sector demanded

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Health Organization (WHO) has requested \$185 million for the provision of medicines and support of hospitals in Afghanistan.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the head of the WHO, announced that this amount is requested to prevent malnutrition, especially among women and children.

According to the head of the organization, currently, 13 million people in Afghanistan are facing food insecurity.

The WHO's request for funds to combat malnutrition comes at a time when it is estimated that approximately one million children are suffering from severe malnutrition and about 2.3 million children in Afghanistan are moderately malnourished.

The WHO recently stated that the JICA, in partnership with the WHO, has contributed \$6.9 million to address infectious diseases in Afghanistan.

Russia special envoy meets with IEA Minister



KABUL (Ariana News): The Acting Minister of Interior Affairs Sirajuddin Haqqani met with the special representative of the Russian President for Afghanistan where a range of issues were discussed.

According to the ministry, both parties discussed relations between the two countries, security issues, the development of trade relations, and Russia's support for Afghanistan in

regional and international forums.

Haqqani in turn called the relations between the two countries "positive" and emphasized that the visits of the representatives of both countries will further strengthen relations.

He also said: "The security created in Afghanistan, is for the benefit of the entire region, including Russia."

At the same time, the

special representative of Russia Zamir Kabulov agreed the improved security benefitted the entire region.

Kabulov also said his country respects the actions of the Islamic Emirate and stated the United Nations should be more understanding of the government.

Kabulov also said Moscow wants to further increase trade relations between the two countries.

Girls demand reopening of universities in Afghanistan



KABUL (Khaama Press): December 20, as a result of a decision by the cabinet of the Taliban administration. These girls, on female students are now

demanding the Taliban government to reopen the university gates.

Throughout this year, girls and women have never remained silent against the ban on education and have expressed their opposition to these restrictions in various ways. However, the inflexibility of the Islamic Emirate towards women's freedoms and the lack of practical action by the international community have increased disappointments.

Salim Paigeer, the head of the Committed Thought Party of Afghanistan, in an interview with Khaama Press, says that depriving girls of education

has a detrimental effect on the lives of the Afghan people.

He added: 'Girls do not study just to become literate, but they study able role in the future of Afghanistan.'

Mr. Paigeer calls the continued ban on girls from universities a 'disaster'.

According to UNESCO, the number of female university students was five thousand in 2001, and this figure had approached one hundred thousand by 2021, but in 2023 it has dropped to zero.

On the other hand, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in one of its reports

stated that as a result of being deprived of education, girls have faced early and forced marriages.

Meanwhile, girls, on the first anniversary of being deprived of education, are asking the Islamic Emirate to reopen the university gates to them.

Pariwush, an economics student at Bamyani University, speaking to Khaama Press, says that the Taliban should reconsider its decision to suspend universities for girls and allow them to study.

She also said: 'The current government should reduce its anger and reconsider this matter. Continuing our educa-

tion is important under any circumstances. We have no problem with wearing a hijab, it is enough to participate in classes.'

Samira Gohari, another female student who was simultaneously studying law, political science, and journalism at two universities, is now demanding the authorities of the Taliban to reopen the universities for girls.

However, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Higher Education of the Taliban, without providing explanations, says that the presence of girls in universities is suspended 'until further notice'.

It is worth mentioning that

the Ministry of Education celebrated the graduation of two thousand students on Thursday, December 21, none of whom were girls.

It should be noted that some girls, as a result of being deprived of universities, have turned to online classes or distance learning.

'Women's Online University' is one of the online platforms that says it has more than 14,000 female students engaged in various fields of study.

According to a UNAMA report, after the ban on education, girls have turned to forced and early marriages, tailoring, embroidery, and handicrafts.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi addressing a press conference along with other ministers.

UN: 570,000 people in Gaza now ‘starving’ due to fallout from war

RAFAH, Gaza Strip: A report released Thursday by the UN finds that more than half a million people in Gaza are “starving” because of not enough food entering the territory since the outbreak of war more than 10 weeks ago.

“It is a situation where pretty much everybody in Gaza is hungry,” said World Food Program chief economist Arif Husain. He warned that if the war between Israel and Hamas continues at the same levels and food deliveries are not restored that the population could face “a full-fledged famine within the next six months.” The report released Thursday by 23 UN and nongovernmental agencies found that the entire population in Gaza is in a food crisis, with 576,600 at catastrophic — or starvation — levels.

UN relief workers on Thursday reported “unbearable” scenes in two hospitals in northern Gaza, where bedridden patients with untreated wounds cry out for water, the few remaining doctors and nurses have no supplies, and bodies are lined up in the courtyard — signs of the worsening humanitarian crisis after 10 weeks of war between Israel and Hamas.

The relief workers spoke after delivering supplies a day earlier to Ahli and Shifa hospitals, which are located in the heart of the north Gaza battle zone where Israeli troops have demolished vast swaths of the city while fighting Hamas militants. Bombardment and fighting continued Thursday, but with Gaza’s Internet and other communications cut off for a second straight day, details on the latest violence could largely not be confirmed.

Israel says it is in the final stages of clearing out Hamas militants from northern Gaza, but that months of fighting lie ahead in the south. The war sparked by Hamas’ deadly Oct. 7 rampage and hostage-taking in Israel has killed nearly 20,000 Palestinians. Some 1.9 million Gaza residents — more than 80 percent of the population — have been driven from their homes. With supplies to Gaza cut off except for a small trickle, the World Food Program has said 90 percent of the population is regularly going without food for a full day.

A blast Thursday morning hit the Palestinian side of the Kerem Shalom crossing from Israel into Gaza, forcing the UN to stop its pickups of aid there, according to Juliette Touma, spokesperson of UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. At least four people were killed, the nearby hospital reported. Israel had begun allowing aid to enter Gaza through Kerem Shalom only days earlier for the first time in the war, under pressure from the United States to ensure more help gets to Palestinians. Palestinian authorities blamed Israel for the blast, but its cause could not immediately be confirmed.

Only nine of Gaza’s 36 health facilities are still partially functioning — and all are located in the south, the World Health Organization said. In the north over recent weeks, Israeli forces have raided a series of health

Northern Gaza no longer has a functional hospital: WHO

GENEVA: The World Health Organization said on Thursday that northern Gaza has been left without a functional hospital due to a lack of fuel, staff and supplies. Only nine out of 36 health facilities were partially functional in the whole of Gaza, according to the WHO. All these facilities are concentrated in the enclave’s south. “There are actually no functional hospitals left in the north,” Richard Peepkorn, WHO representative in Gaza, told reporters via video link from Jerusalem.

“Al-Ahli (Hospital) was the last one but it is now minimally functional: still treating patients but not admitting new ones.” Describing it as a “shell of a hospital,” Peepkorn said Al-Ahli resembled a hospice providing very limited care. About 10 staff, all junior doctors and nurses, continue to provide basic first aid, pain management and wound care with scant resources, he said.

“Until two days ago, it was the only hospital where injured people could get surgery in northern Gaza and that was overwhelmed with patients needing emergency care,” he said. “There are no operating theaters anymore due to the lack of fuel, power, medical supplies and health workers, including surgeons and other specialists.” The bodies of victims from recent Israeli attacks were lined up in the hospital’s courtyard because they could not be given safe and dignified burials, he said. In addition to Al-Ahli Hospital, northern Gaza had only three other minimally functioning health facilities: Al-Shifa, Al Awda and Al Sahaba hospitals, which Peepkorn said were sheltering thousands of displaced people.

Some patients at Al-Ahli had been waiting for surgeries for weeks or if they had been operated on, they faced the risk of a post-operation infection due to lack of antibiotics and other drugs, he added. “All these patients cannot move and need to be transferred urgently to have a chance to survive,” he said, reiterating the WHO’s call for a humanitarian ceasefire. “This is needed now to reinforce and restock remaining health facilities, deliver medical services needed by thousands of injured people and those needing other essential care, and, above all, to stop the bloodshed and death.” — Arab News

facilities, detaining men for interrogation and expelling others. In other facilities, patients who are unable to be moved remain along with skeleton staff who watch over them but can do little beyond first aid, according to UN and health officials.

Ahli Hospital is “a place where people are waiting to die,” said Sean Casey, a member of the WHO team that visited the two hospitals Wednesday. Five remaining doctors and five nurses along with around 80 patients remain in Ahli, he said. All of the hospital buildings are damaged except two buildings were patients are now being kept — the orthopedics ward and a church on the grounds, he said. He described entering the compound, strewn with debris, and a crater from recent shelling in the courtyard. Bodies were lined up nearby, but doctors said it was too unsafe to move them with fighting still outside, he said.

Inside the church, it was “an unbearable scene,” he said. Patients with traumatic wounds were struggling with infections. Others had undergone amputations. “Many patients said they hadn’t changed their clothes in weeks,” he said. “Patients were crying out in pain but were also crying out for us to give them water.” Hamas fired a large barrage of rockets at central Israel on Thursday, showing its military capabilities remain formidable. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage, but the rocket attack set off air raid sirens in Israel’s commercial hub of Tel Aviv.

Hamas militants have put up stiff resistance lately against Israeli ground troops, and its forces appear to remain largely intact in southern Gaza, despite more than 2 1/2 months

of heavy aerial bombardment across the territory. Israel has vowed to continue the offensive until it destroys Hamas’ military capabilities and returns scores of hostages captured by Palestinian militants during their Oct. 7 rampage. Hamas and other militants killed some 1,200 people that day, mostly civilians, and captured around 240 others.

The United States, Israel’s closest ally, has continued to support Israel’s campaign while also urging greater efforts to protect civilians. But in some of the toughest American language yet, Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday said “it’s clear that the conflict will move and needs to move to a lower intensity phase.” The US wants Israel to shift to more targeted operations aimed at Hamas leaders and the tunnel network.

UN Security Council members are negotiating an Arab-sponsored resolution to halt the fighting in some way to allow for an increase in desperately needed humanitarian aid deliveries to Gaza. A vote on the resolution, first scheduled for Monday, was pushed back again on Wednesday in the hopes of getting the US to support it or allow it to pass after it vetoed an earlier cease-fire call.

The Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said Tuesday the death toll since the start of the war had risen to more than 19,600. It does not distinguish between civilian and combatant deaths. Israel’s military says 137 of its soldiers have been killed in the Gaza ground offensive. Israel says it has killed some 7,000 militants, without providing evidence. It blames civilian deaths in Gaza on Hamas, saying it uses them as human shields when it fights in residential areas. — Arab News

Govt committed to ensure peace, equal rights to all citizens: President

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that the government was fully committed to ensure peace, tranquility and equal rights to all citizens of the country irrespective of caste, creed and religion as enunciated in the Islamic teaching, pronounced by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and laid down by the Constitution of Pakistan.

Being an Islamic welfare state, it was their duty to safeguard the basic rights of all religious minorities, he said and reassured that their all rights would be completely protected at all costs as the successive governments had been making strenuous efforts in this regard. While addressing a ceremony held here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr on Thursday in connection with the celebrations of Christmas, the president said Prophet Isa (AS) was an embodiment of peace and affection and these values were much needed in today’s world shaken by strife, conflicts and wars.

He said that teachings of Islam as well as by almost all religions laid emphasis upon the value of human

life and when its value was reduced, it gave rise to conflicts. “Wars and carnage are no solutions. My message to the world is; wars must end,” he stressed. The ceremony was arranged by the ministry of religious affairs and interfaith harmony was attended by parliamentarians, religious leaders and members from different faiths, members of diplomatic corps and a large number of Christian families.

Dr. Arif Alvi referring to atrocities in Gaza, said contrary to the religious teaching of peace and tolerance, the scenes in the world were topsy-turvy. About 19,000 precious human lives in Gaza had been lost but the human hearts had not melted, he added. He opined that despite the United Nations’ calling for immediate ceasefire and a denunciation by the Pope himself, the carnage of Palestinians including Christians continued where churches besides, mosques were razed to the ground.

The enlightened world advocating the tenets of democratic values was so oblivious to the humanitarian woes in the conflict, he added. He said when Pakistan Resolution was passed

during 1940, a simultaneous resolution over Palestine was also adopted and reaffirmed that the two-state was the only solution to the issue.

President Alvi said in Pakistan, all communities were enjoying equal rights and living with peace which was ‘a beautiful banquet’ of interfaith harmony and unity. Recollecting the tragic Jaranwala incident, he said whenever an incident involving religious minorities surfaced, the governments had immediately responded and also commended the judiciary for playing a significant role in ensuring their rights. He said Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and the Caliphs also repeatedly advised and acted for the protection of rights, places of worship and lives of the followers of other faiths.

Moreover, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of nation, in his historic and memorable speech of August 11, 1947 had stressed that everyone irrespective of colour, creed and religion would have the equal rights, privileges, and obligations, besides complete religious freedom in the new State of Pakistan, he added.

Pakistan calls for holding Israel accountable

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has called for holding Israel accountable for its evil actions and urged the United Nations Security Council to take immediate effective action to impose a ceasefire and lift the inhumane siege against Gaza.

At her weekly media briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, Foreign Officer Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan remains deeply concerned over the ongoing campaign of brutality and large-scale massacre unleashed upon the Palestinian people. She said we strongly condemn Israel’s ongoing war on hospitals and its barbarous bulldozing of tents in the courtyard and vicinity of the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Gaza that crushed to death numerous Palestinians including women, children and wounded patients under treatment.

She said the crimes against humanity in occupied Palestine are a haunting stain on the conscience of humanity. The Spokesperson said Pakistan is also deeply concerned over the recent statements made by senior Israeli officials, rejecting the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian state.

She said such statements, especially the comments on the “Oslo Accords”, reflect the true intentions of the Israeli occupation authorities, their disregard for International law and commitments and rejection of a just resolution of the Palestinian question. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan firmly believes that the only just solution to the Palestinian question is the creation of an independent, viable, sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State along pre-June 1967 borders with Al-Quds-Al-Sharif as its capital.

PML-N seeks extension in time to file papers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Thursday sought a two-day extension in the December 22 deadline to file nomination papers for the general elections scheduled for February 8 next year.

A day earlier, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUIF) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) also wrote to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), seeking an extension in date for filing nomination papers by three days.

In a letter written to the electoral authority, PML-N Senator Ishaq Dar said the commission enjoys the power to make necessary amendments to the election schedule without affecting or changing the polling date which for the present election is Feb 8, 2024. “That perusal of schedule reveals that only 03 days have been allocated for filing of nomination papers whereas 07 days have been allocated for the scrutiny of the same,” the letter added.

It said the process of filing nomination papers requires multiple details as well as documents to be annexed with the same, “which also include NOCs/ NECs from various public departments”. The PML-N leader said the nomination of papers is a time-consuming exercise and any lapse can lead to the rejection of the documents.

“It is therefore requested that in order to facilitate thousands of candidates desirous to take part in elections, it would be appreciated if only two days extension is granted in filing of nomination papers by amending the schedule issued on 15.12.2023 without changing the polling day i.e. 08th Feb, 2024.” As per the earlier election schedule, the nomination papers would be received from December 20 to 22.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) candidates have started submitting nomination papers from all over the country. PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif yesterday gave formal approval to party candidates who were interested in getting party ticket to submit nomination papers. Every party candidate while submitting nomination paper would be bound to submit affidavit to the relevant district president of the party.

Palestine crisis worries world, says Solangi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Thursday that the current situation of Palestine was a cause of concern not only for the Muslim Ummah but also for the civilized nations of the world.

During a meeting with Jordanian Ambassador Dr. Maen Khreasat who met with him here, the minister said that peace in Palestine was the responsibility of the whole world. “International community should play a role for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine,” Murtaza Solangi said.

Besides, ceasefire between Palestine and Israel, coming elections in Pakistan and Jordan, regional security situation, cooperation in the media sectors and other important issues were discussed during the meeting. In the meeting, both the minister and Ambassador expressed concern over the tense situation in Palestine.

Expressing complete solidarity with the Palestinian people, Murtaza Solangi said that Jordan’s role in aid activities in Palestine was commendable. The Jordanian Ambassador said that a

humanitarian crisis was brewing in Gaza due to lack of food. Solangi said that Pakistan valued its relations with Jordan as the two countries had deep ties based on religion, common values and culture.

The caretaker minister briefed the Jordanian Ambassador about the progress towards the general elections in Pakistan. Elections would be held across the country on February 8 next year in Pakistan, Murtaza Solangi adding the Election Commission of Pakistan had already released the election schedule.

He said all registered political parties were provided 54 days for election campaign. The Caretaker Government, he said was providing all possible support and facilities to the ECP to ensure the conduct of free, transparent and impartial elections. Murtaza Solangi expressed his best wishes for the successful completion of the election process in Jordan next year.

He expressed the hope that a new era of relations between the two countries would begin with the governments established as a result of the electoral process in Jordan and Pakistan. The meeting also agreed to promote cooperation in potential areas of

trade and investment between Pakistan and Jordan. The important meeting of the 10th Joint Ministerial Commission would be held in Islamabad next year, Jordanian Ambassador said.

He said that the joint ministerial commission meeting will review the trade and bilateral relations between the two countries. The existing relations between Pakistan and Jordan, he added should be promoted in terms of cooperation in the fields of economy, trade and investment.

In the meeting, emphasis was placed on increasing cooperation between Pakistan and Jordan in the fields of media and information. The minister and Jordanian envoy also discussed the memorandum of understanding between PTV, APP, Radio Pakistan and Jordanian Radio, Television and Jordan News Agency Petra.

They called for speeding up the process of Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries for cooperation between state media institutions. The caretaker Federal Minister of Information also emphasized on the exchange of media delegations between the two countries.

Yemen militia scales back Red Sea attacks

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen’s Houthi militia has significantly scaled back attacks on ships in the Red Sea, despite continued threats to target US-led multinational task forces monitoring the key trade route.

The number of Houthi strikes fell to zero for a second day on Thursday, with neither the UK Maritime Trade Operations nor the US Central Command reporting fresh attacks on commercial or naval vessels. The UKMTO’s most recent alarm early on Tuesday warned of a “suspicious” watercraft approaching a ship 80 nautical miles northeast of Djibouti.

Iran-backed Houthis have threatened to prevent any ships heading to Israel from passing through the Red Sea and have seized a commercial ship. The militia has also launched ballistic missiles and drones at

ships to put pressure on Israel to lift its blockade of Gaza. The US has led a global coalition task force to protect the Red Sea, a major international trade route, against Houthi threats. Militia assaults have led to some shipping corporations rerouting their ships away from the area.

The Houthis have vowed to strike US-led naval forces if Yemen is attacked. The decline in Houthi Red Sea attacks comes amid renewed clashes between the militia and Yemeni government forces in the southern city of Taiz. Yemen’s army said on Thursday that the Houthis attacked an air defense site west of Taiz, the latest militia effort to seize military locations in the besieged city.

Troops fought off the Houthi onslaught, according to an army statement. Hostilities have generally

eased since April 2022, when a UN-brokered ceasefire went into place. Meanwhile, Amnesty International asked the Houthis on Wednesday to release six members of the minority religious Baha’i sect, including a woman, saying that the detainees face a significant risk of mistreatment at the hands of their captors.

On May 25, armed Houthis raided a Baha’i assembly in Sanaa and seized 17 people. Following worldwide pressure, 11 were released. “Amnesty International calls on the Houthi de facto authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the remaining six Baha’i detainees as they are detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights,” the rights group said in a statement. — Arab News

SC directs Sindh govt for steps to facilitate affectees

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday directed the Sindh chief secretary for urgent measures to facilitate families of affectees, whose houses were razed in an anti-encroachment drive around Gujjar, Orangi Town, and Mahmoodabad Nullahs.

The bench gave 15-day time to the caretaker government for approval of the funds to compensate the affectees. The court summoned Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary, Commissioner

passed the orders while hearing a plea from affectees of Gujjar, Orangi Town, and Mahmoodabad nullahs.

The bench gave 15-day time to the caretaker government for approval of the funds to compensate the affectees. The court summoned Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary, Commissioner

Karachi, and other officials to address the issue.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar sought clarification from the relevant authorities on the status of the alternative homes initiative, to which the Chief Secretary sought ‘leverage’ from the court as the approval of the Cabinet is pending regarding the compensation to the affectees.

مت کریں گیس پیٹر کا استعمال

رکھیں اپنی زندگی کا خیال

گیس پیٹر کے استعمال سے بل کنی گنا تک بڑھ سکتا ہے

گیس پیٹر کمرے میں موجود آکسیجن کو ختم کر دیتا ہے جس سے آپ کا دم گھٹ سکتا ہے

گیس پیٹر سے مضر صحت گیسز کا اخراج جان لیوا حادثات کا سبب بن سکتا ہے

اپ کے تحفظ کی ضمانت پبلیک لائن 1199

احتیاط کی عادت... یقینی حفاظت