

# ECP revokes PTI's 'bat' symbol

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Friday evening stripped off the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of its iconic 'bat' symbol — a sign that depicts its founder, Imran Khan's former life of cricket.

Announcing its reserved verdict, a five-member ECP bench — headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja — declared PTI's intra-party elections unlawful. The 11-page order was announced on the petition of Akbar S Babar, a former PTI member, who claimed that the PTI did not stage the elections in line with the rules.

This serves as a major blow to the former ruling party as it gears up for the February 8 elections, with its founder — PTI's voter driving force — already behind bars for months — and his release does not seem soon. "The PTI has not complied with our directions [...] and failed to hold the intra-party election in accordance with the PTI prevailing Constitution, 2019, and Election Act, 2017, and Election Rules, 2017," the order read.

The elections being declared unlawful, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, who replaced Khan as the party's chairman, is no longer the party's top head. The party also seems to be running out of time as the extended deadline for submitting the nomination papers expires on Sunday and the party only has one day (Saturday) to move courts against the ECP's decision.

The PTI has complained repeatedly that it is being targeted and not being given a level-playing field, but today, just hours before the order, the ECP had assured the party it would be provided equal opportunities. Political analyst Mazhar Abbas told media that the election commission has "never" declared any political party's internal polls unlawful, noting that it seems like the PTI is "under

attack".

"This has never happened. Symbols have been taken back [...] but this is the first time that the ECP has given an order on a party's intra-party polls," Abbas said, adding that parties have opted for alternate methods, as it happened in 1985's polls, so the PTI would also have to come up with a strategy. He added that with the power of social media, if PTI's candidates run as independents, the party could disseminate information about their symbols and the names of the people. "But one thing is for sure: This election is getting harder and harder for the PTI."

In response, the PTI has announced knocking at the door of the high court to seek relief — and the decision will have to be on Saturday as if the deadline expires, there's nothing that they can do to get the bat symbol. "We will not boycott the elections [...] we have a plan B," Barrister Gohar told media, without elaborating what the strategy was, as his party remains under immense pressure after back-to-back challenges.

Kanwar Muhammad Dilshad, a former secretary of the ECP, told media that following the commission's order, PTI's members would have to run in the general elections as independent candidates. "Since the PTI's intra-party elections were rejected for the third time, its [PTI's] candidates will have to contest the polls independently," he said.

**PTI to knock at court's doors against ECP decision:** Terming it a "conspiracy" against the ex-ruling party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) now-former chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Friday announced that they would approach a high court against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision stripping off the party's iconic election symbol — 'bat'.

Talking to media, Barrister Gohar said his party already had concerns about the ECP from day one. He accused the electoral watchdog did not monitor any other party as it focused on his party's matters. "We held the intra-party elections as per the party law and constitution. We had asked the ECP to inform us which law or section of the constitution had been violated during the PTI intra-party polls."

In its reply filed in the Peshawar High Court (PHC), the ECP did not say a single word about it, the PTI leader said and asked which Section of the Elections Act 2017 was violated by his party. Gohar termed the ECP's decision "political and based on personalities", saying that they had conducted the intra-party polls in line with the law and the constitution.

"The ECP already determined to take back the 'bat' symbol from the PTI." He added that the electoral watchdog had never monitored other parties' intra-party elections as it did during the PTI's. "It is a conspiracy. You are depriving a big political party of its election symbol and [compelling] all of its candidates to go into the general elections as independent candidates."

"Currently, there are 70 reserved seats in the National Assembly. The total number of reserved seats in Pakistan is 227. The seats are divided among those parties who have election symbols [as per their parties' strength in the assemblies]." The law-makers elected on reserved seats play a crucial role during the elections for the slots of president, prime minister, chief minister and Senate chairman, he added.

"The conspiracy was hatched to confuse PTI's supporters and candidates during the upcoming general elections." To another query, the PTI leader said, "Did any members of the ECP ask any question which was not addressed by the former ruling party?"

## SC grants bail to Imran, Qureshi in cipher case

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday approved former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan and party's Vice-Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi's post-arrest bail in the cipher case against surety bonds of Rs1 million each.

A three-member bench, headed by interim Chief Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and comprising Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Athar Minallah, conducted the hearing. On December 13, the PTI founder and vice-chairman were indicted in the cipher case again by the special court established under the Official Secrets Act 2023 after the Islamabad High Court (IHC) declared their jail trial null and void.

Both politicians have pleaded not guilty to their involvement in the offence related to the alleged misuse of diplomatic cable for political purposes. During the court proceedings on Friday, the top court also heard the petition against Khan and Qureshi's October 23 indictment. At the outset of the hearing, Justice Masood remarked that the indictment that was challenged was already nullified by the IHC on November 21.

As a result, Khan and Qureshi's Oct 23 indictments in the case also stood null and void, and the trial was conducted again. Justice Masood said that the fresh indictment will not be affected by the previous proceedings that were declared invalid by the IHC. At this, the former PM's counsel Hamid Khan argued that the trial was taking place on the previous charge sheet. Justice Masood noted that the petition against the old charge sheet has become infructuous. "If you have an objection to the fresh indictment then challenge it in the high court," the judge told the lawyer.

To this, Hamid requested the court

to wait for the IHC's decision on Friday against the in-camera trial in the cipher case. Khan's other counsel Barrister Salman Safdar said that Hamid had made amendments to his petitions, requesting the court to take it as a fresh one.

The court then adjourned the hearing on the plea against indictment and took up the bail petitions. Presenting his argument against the bail petitions, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) prosecutor said that notice hasn't been issued on Qureshi's bail plea. After this, the court issued notice to the federation on Qureshi's bail petition.

Justice Shah said that the December 13 indictment in the cipher case has not been challenged. "The FIA remained silent in the case for seven months and then arrested the PTI leader as soon as he [Imran Khan] was granted bail in the Toshakhana case," the counsel told the bench.

Barrister Safdar said, as per the allegations of the prosecution, that FIA had started an inquiry following the federal government's instructions after the audio leak, alleging that during the meeting on March 28, 2022, in Bani Gala, a conspiracy was made to misuse the cipher. He added that the former premier was also accused by the FIA of keeping the cipher's copy and not returning it. "The FIR has four names but the FIA is only investigating two people. Asad Umar and Azam Khan were also to be investigated," he said.

Justice Minallah asked how did FIA had the information about the Bani Gala meeting. "The FIA can answer this question as the prosecutor has not revealed the sources," responded Barrister Safdar, adding that it was claimed that the cipher was received from Foreign Office, however, no complaint has been made from there. Barrister Safdar said that the former PTI chairman was being

targeted for political purposes.

Safdar argued that the provisions of the death sentence or life imprisonment could not be imposed against the former premier. Justice Masood said that the cipher was not shared with anyone but it has been aired. Barrister Safdar said that the meeting in which the cipher conspiracy was allegedly planned took place on March 28, 2022, while the challan alleges that Imran Khan brandished the cipher on March 27, 2022.

"The original cipher is with the Foreign Office and if it was leaked then it is the Foreign Office's crime," remarked Justice Minallah, adding that the cipher cannot be discussed in public. The PTI counsel then read Qureshi's speech during the rally on March 27, 2022, at the parade ground. At this, Justice Masood said the then-foreign minister was sensible as he "knew what to say and what not to say" in the public and he "trapped" Khan.

Barrister Safdar told the court that the PTI's founder did not share anything with the public. "On what basis does the prosecution think that it is necessary to keep the accused in custody," questioned Justice Minallah. Safdar said that no political leader has 40 cases filed against him, requesting the court that the manner in which these cases are being registered should stop.

Presenting his arguments, Qureshi's counsel Ali Bukhari said that the PTI vice chairman is not accused of keeping the cipher nor sharing it with anyone. Justice Minallah asked Bukhari if Qureshi was contesting the polls, to which, the counsel replied that his client would submit the nomination papers on Friday. "Participating in elections is a strong ground for bail," said Justice Minallah. He questioned how the cipher leaked when it only had one original copy which was with the foreign office.

## KP Cabinet reiterated its commitments to provide level playing field in polls

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Caretaker Provincial Cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Friday reiterated its commitment to provide a level playing field to all political parties and has asked them to follow the Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) during their election campaigns.

Besides the directives of the Election Commissions, these SOPs include holding large political gatherings in designated areas notified by the provincial government during daylight to ensure efficient security and safety of the participants. The cabinet met under the Chairmanship of the Caretaker cabinet, Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Arshan Hussain Shah finalized preparations

for the upcoming general elections in light of the directives of the Election Commission reiterating that every effort will be made to ensure free and fair elections in the province.

The Chief Minister said that all resources have been mobilized for the purpose and every effort is being made to ensure transparency and efficient utilization of the taxpayer's money. The Cabinet was briefed in detail about the preparations for the upcoming general elections. It would ensure availability and placement of human resources, mapping of missing facilities, availability and placement of IT staff and equipment. The Cabinet assured that provision of ramps at polling stations to facilitate persons with disabilities, rationalization of sensitive and most sensitive

polling stations, security arrangements, needs of CCTV cameras, transport arrangements for polling staff & equipment, security plan, SOPs for political gatherings, identification of spots in every district for political gatherings.

The upcoming General Election-2024 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be held for 55 National Assembly constituencies and 145 Provincial Assembly seats for which 15,737 polling stations will be set up throughout the province, out of which 4843 will be for men and 4285 for female voters. The cabinet was informed that 4812 polling stations have been identified as the most sensitive, whereas 6581 have been identified as sensitive polling stations.

Similarly, 1919 polling stations



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in a group photo with the President, directing staff of National Defence University and graduating civil service officers of National Security Course-2024.

### Zardari, Sharif families to field next polls

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: The next generation of the two political families, Zardri and Sharif, are gearing up to contest February 8, 2024 elections.

Maryam Nawaz, the daughter of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, will contest elections for Punjab Assembly from five constituencies. It may be recalled that People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari who used to contest elections from Larkana, has decided to run from Lahore this time and filed nomination papers for National Assembly constituency NA-128.

Meanwhile, the old guard of the PPP, Asif Zardari, received nomination papers from Nawab Shah constituency NA-207 for NA on Thursday. Shehbaz Sharif will contest elections from National Assembly constituency NA-123 and Punjab's PP-158 and PP-164.

Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani will contest elections from NA-260 of the National Assembly and constituency PB-32 of Balochistan.

### President, PM shocked

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi and Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday held a telephonic conversation wherein they expressed concerns over the inappropriate police treatment with the Baloch protesters.

Discussing the situation, both the president and the prime minister viewed that the police should not have dealt with the protesters strictly, a President House press release said. During the conversation, the prime minister told the president that the detained protesters were being released on personal bonds.

Meanwhile, Balochistan Governor Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar also called on President Alvi and discussed the overall situation in the province as well as police maltreatment against the Baloch protesters.

The governor viewed that the police should show restraint towards the protesters. In the meeting, the two sides believed that the police should not have acted beyond their limits and powers. Both leaders emphasized the measures to improve the law and order situation in Balochistan.

## Focus on to hold free, fair elections: Solangi

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Friday reiterated the commitment of the government with regard to the holding of free, fair and transparent general elections on February 8 next year.

Ruling out any possibility of delay, he said the general elections would be held under the schedule, already given by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Talking to media persons, he said that Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja did enjoy the confidence of majority people and there was no question of his resignation. To a question, Solangi said he could not comment on internal issues of political parties as the caretaker government wanted to maintain cordial relations with all political forces.

On a question about termination of service of some employees, he said that media channels initially gave feasibility reports to PEMRA which was also required at the time of issuance of licence. He said that under PEMRA Amendment Act 2023, the journalist job was protected. Murtaza Solangi assured that the government would take legal measures to protect the employment of journalists.

The minister said an unpleasant and unwarranted situation had arisen regarding the protesters from Balochistan. And added their demands were long-standing. He said all women and children had been released besides most of the men, adding their protection was being fully ensured. He said that the committee, constituted by the Prime Minister, was doing its work. Currently the Governor Balochistan was in Islamabad and consultations with him were underway, he added. Moreover,

today a meeting of this committee with the Prime Minister was also scheduled, he said.

Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi also said the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) extended the date for submission of nomination papers by two days on the demand of various political parties.

Talking to the "media", he said the ECP had not made any changes in the date of elections, which would be held on February 8, 2024. Solangi said the Commission had also taken notice of the candidates' complaints regarding nomination papers, and the legitimate ones were being redressed.

"We are trying our best to find a remedy for the issues of which the Election Commission has taken notice." The minister said that law enforcement was a provincial matter and the provincial governments acted under the law. "We are bound to help the Election Commission," Solangi reaffirmed.

About the protesters from Balochistan, he said that the caretaker government would try its best to solve the issue in its limited term. The minister said the government had decided to immediately release the women and children involved in the Baloch protests and some protesters were provided medical facilities.

He said most of the protesters included people who had no homes or relatives in Islamabad. "We decided to send them back to Quetta safely but the protesters refused to go back," Murtaza Solangi said. "Our aim was to send the protesters safely to their homes." He said the caretaker regime assured the protesters to consider their long-standing demands as well.

## IHC CJ reprimands Islamabad IGP for crackdown on protesters

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamir Farooq on Friday chided Islamabad Inspector General (IG) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan over the recent crackdown against the Baloch women and men during a demonstration against "enforced disappearances" outside the National Press Club in the federal capital.

During the hearing on Friday, the petitioners' counsel Attaullah Kundi and Imaan Mazari appeared before the court. At the outset, Kundi contended that the police had told the counsels that a bus was waiting outside the police station which would take the protesters back home. "We had a conversation over this with the police for three hours," he said.

The lawyer further stated that the SP had told them that orders were issued by the prime minister for the repatriation of the protesters. "Baloch women were forcefully filled into buses," he revealed, adding that some Baloch students studying in Islamabad were also forced into the buses. However, later these students were released, Kundi said. "Seeing all this, the drivers of the buses refused to move. During all this, the Islamabad police chief reached the police station and said these people should be sent back anyhow," he told the court, adding that the gates of the police station were later closed.

At 5am, the police issued a statement that protesters had been safely sent back home, the lawyer pointed out. At that, the court inquired who had appeared in court to represent the police to which a police officer came forth. However, Justice Farooq expressed displeasure and

summoned IG Akbar Nasir in half an hour.

Appearing before the court, the police chief said he had arranged for the transport of the protesters. "Wait a moment ... where did you take them? Why did you send them? They could have stayed in Islamabad wherever they wanted to," the judge stressed. "Whether they stay in Islamabad, protest or go home. It is their choice," he remarked.

Justice Farooq further inquired where the detained protesters were staying, to which the IG replied the arrested women were staying at a hostel in I-10 sector. "Tell the counsels where they are," the court instructed the police chief.

Here, Kundi pointed out that the IG had miscommunicated in court yesterday that there were no women in police custody and

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# ‘Khushhal KP’ program reviewed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A progress review meeting regarding "Khushhal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" program was held here on Friday with the caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah in the chair. Besides the concerned provincial ministers, Chief Secretary and administrative secretaries of concerned departments attended the meeting. Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners also attended via video link.

The caretaker Chief Minister was briefed at length about the progress so far made on various initiatives under Khushhal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa program. It was disclosed in the meeting that the steps taken under this program, have resulted in significant improvement in the governance system at gross root level adding that digitization process of manual mutations has been geared up; and resultantly, the number of manual mutations has decreased from 813 to 386

during the last view weeks. Similarly, authorities told that entire system of arm license has been made online, and a virtual system has been launched at prisons for the meeting of inmates with their family members.

They further informed that E-domicile system has been initiated at Nowshera district and would also be launched at rest of the districts across the province by 31 January, 2024. Speaking on the occasion, the caretaker Chief Minister has termed "Khushhal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa program" as of vital importance for the wellbeing of general public and said that all the stakeholders needed to have collective approach in order to implement this important program in its letter and spirit.

"Besides improving law and order and governance system in the province, initiatives would also be taken against encroachments, drugs, adulteration, corruption and other illegal spectrum", he said and added that people are facing a lot of problems related to rev-

enue matters which needs special attention to address them. He directed the revenue officers to dispose of revenue cases well in time adding that the officers should never leave this responsibility to their subordinates.

He also directed the deputy commissioners to personally monitor the revenue officers and other subordinate staff and added that the officials involved in wrongdoing are enemy of our society; so it is much needed that responsible officers should take strict action against the officials found involved in corruption; the government will extend its all-out support in this regard. Syed Arshad Hussain Shah has expressed great concerns over the increasing trend of drug abuse within the educational institutions and said that drugs are ruining our young generations; we have to stop this fatal trend at all costs. He directed the authorities concerned to take curative steps in order to root out this menace from our educational institutions.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chairing a meeting of provincial cabinet.

## Christian community role lauded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: City Traffic Police Peshawar organized a solemn ceremony for the Christian community performing duties in the Traffic Police at traffic headquarters Gulbahar on the occasion of Christmas, the religious festival of the Christian community, in which the Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Zahid Allah along with other officers and traffic wardens participated in large numbers.

During the ceremony, Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Zahidullah and the Christian community cut the Christmas cake and distributed gifts and Christmas cakes among them and said that extra traffic on the sides of the places of worship for uninterrupted flow of traffic on the occasion of Christmas. Police personnel will be posted so that they do not face any difficulties and perform their religious rituals in a proper manner. He directed the traffic authorities to keep the roads leading to churches clear for traffic under the traffic plan issued for Christmas. He further said that the Christian community has a key role in the development of the country and government institutions, whose services are valued.

## 5 lawyers submitted papers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The lawyer community in majority is contesting for general election scheduled on 8th February 2024 from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Peshawar especially member of Insaf Lawyer Forum.

According to details, Shah Faisal Ilyas submitted nomination form from NA-34 Nowshera, Mian Imad advocate NA-28, Bilal Khan PK-80, Malak Zulfiqar advocate from PK-77 and Ali Zaman will contest general election from PK-73.

The nominated candidates claimed that Pakistan Tehreek Insaf had initiated unprecedented developmental projects for public welfare in the history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They claimed that people vote in majority due to their narrative of development and rule of law.

# Ghazi Economic Zone launches work on two units

F.P. Report

PEHAWAR: Ghazi Economic Zone was formally launched on commercial basis with the laying of foundation stone of two industrial units on Friday.

In this connection an impressive ceremony was held at the economic zone with KP Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Tribal Affairs, Dr. Syed Aamer Abdullah as chief guest on the occasion. Besides, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KP-EZDMC), Javed Iqbal Khattak, other senior management of the company and local investors were also attended the launching ceremony.

Addressing the launching ceremony, KP Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Tribal Affairs, Dr. Syed Aamer Abdullah said that though the time-period of the caretaker set-up is brief, but they will honour all commitments made with the investors and industrialists by the government and no stone would be left unturned in this regard.

On the request of the representative of the cement manufacturing industry, the minister directed the authorities concerned for arranging a meeting with the management of the cement manufacturing units. He especially welcomed Karachi based investors for doing investment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and assured them that the provincial government will be their ambassador in making efforts for resolution of their problems. The provincial minister urged the plot allottees of the zone to start work on the establishment of their enterprises as soon as possible. Otherwise, he said the policy of the government is very clear in this



regard.

He also distributed allotment letters of plots in investors of the zone and shields among the proprietors of the under-construction units. The occasion also marked the ground-breaking of two enterprises i.e Art Line Packaging Industry, investing PKR 400 million and creating 250 direct jobs, and Blanc Fixe Minerals, investing PKR 334 million and generating 25 direct job opportunities.

Ghazi Economic Zone has successfully attracted a substantial investment, totaling approximately PKR 4 billion, showcasing a robust commitment to fostering economic development. This noteworthy achievement underscores the region's growing prominence as an attractive investment destination. Diversifying its economic portfolio, Ghazi Economic Zone encompasses key industrial sectors, including marble, pharmaceuticals, printing and packaging, as well as food and beverage industries.

Strategically positioned at the confluence of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, GEZ sprawls over 89 acres, having leasable area of 72 acres, all meticulously developed under the

expert guidance of KP-EZDMC. Situated merely 15 kilometers away from the Chach/Hazro Interchange on the Peshawar-Islamabad Motorway M1, GEZ offers a distinct competitive advantage by minimizing transportation costs and providing seamless access to both provinces and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) route.

GEZ's strategic proximity to successful Economic Zones such as Gadoon and Hattar Economic and Special Economic Zone establishes it as a hub for collaborative growth. The economic impact generated by GEZ is poised to directly benefit the surrounding districts of Haripur, Swabi, Nowshera, and Attock, fostering regional development and prosperity.

Functioning as a dynamic economic catalyst, Ghazi –Economic Zone stands as another noteworthy achievement within the realm of KPEZDMC, underscores the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's unwavering commitment to propelling economic development, generating employment opportunities, and elevating the overall business landscape.

## Chair-IPO Pakistan emphasis need for creating awareness on Intellectual Property Rights

PESHAWAR (APP): Ambassador Farukh Amil, Chair-Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO-Pakistan) here Friday said Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) were very important for promotion of genuine trade and underscored the need for creation of awareness among manufacturers, people and industrialists on its registration, protection and enforcement for genuine business development.

He expressed these views during an awareness session on 'protection and enforcement of IPRs: Business development opportunities for industrialists' jointly organized by (IPO-Pakistan) and Industrialists Association Peshawar (IAP) here.

Speaking as chief guest, ambassador Farukh Amil said that the aim of the workshop was raising awareness among people, manufacturers and industrialists in Peshawar about IPRs related services including trademark, copyrights, patents designs that was protected by his organization and ensure its effective enforcement by law enforcement agencies to avoid counterfeiting and piracy of their products.

For this purpose, he said the process of digitalization has been started by IPO Pakistan with the assistance of Punjab IT Board for speedy service delivery. Besides English and Urdu, he said people need to be educated about IPRs in regional and mother languages including Pashto, Hindko, Punjabi, Sindhi and Balochi for which the role of academia and media was equally important.

Ambassador Farukh Amil said that Pakistan was blessed with all kinds of resources including mines and mineral,

forests, coal, winds, gemstones and hydel power and its optimum utilization through innovative approaches and modern research based practices could bring laurels for the country. He said economic empowerment of youth carried significant importance and transformed societies forward looking and prosperous.

He said promotion of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship (SMEs) was imperative for speedy economic growth and generation of employment opportunities for the young generation and urged academia and educational institutions to come forward with new workable ideas to spur industrial growth. Ambassador Farukh Amil underscored the need for organized innovative business competitions in educational institutions vital to bolster SMEs and attract young graduates to start their own business in their selected fields.

He said academia and industrialists need to encourage young researchers and scientists who were working diligently and bringing innovation in their research work. Underlining the need of proactive role of technical education institutes and universities of Pakistan to prepare students as per industries' demands and exploring markets overseas, Farukh Amil said that IPRs was very important subject being practiced world over and suggested its inclusion in national curriculum for education of youngsters besides discouraging brain drains.

The Chair-IPO spoke at length about the importance of trademark, copyright and patents for the promotion of trade and business in Pakistan. Ambassador

Amil said the doors of his office were open for public.

Ayub Zakori, President IAP Peshawar said that KP was relatively located in disadvantage position in term of business point of view due to its long distance from Karachi sea port and underscored the need for digitalization of IPRs services for prompt action on complaints by FIA and other law enforcement agencies to counter piracy. He said the time of industrialists and businessmen of KP was mostly being wasted while pursuing cases at Islamabad and urged IPO to help in the establishment of the Intellectual Rights Tribunal at Peshawar.

Zakori suggested enhancing communication among traders, industrialists, IPO Pakistan and law enforcement agencies to counter business practices on fake trademarks and copyrights. Besides others, the function was also addressed by Muhammad Ismail, Director Enforcement IPO-Pakistan, Umme Salam, Deputy Director Trademark and Saifullah, Deputy Director Copyright IPO-Pakistan. Dr Ismail spoke about copyright laws and various penalties including fines and jail terms. Former President, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industries Peshawar, Adeel Rauf and other eminent industrialists and businessmen participated in the event and presented different proposals. IPO Pakistan was established on April 18, 2005 and was presently working under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Islamabad. The participants said that a portal would help bring IPO-Pakistan and people closer.

## KMU hosts workshop on diabetes prevention

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU) in Peshawar recently concluded a transformative three-day workshop organized by the Institute of Public Health and Social Sciences (IPH&SS)/KMU, under the umbrella of CENTER FOR IMPACT(C4), focused on non communicable disease control. The culminating day of the workshop unfolded into a vibrant event graced by the esteemed Vice Chancellor KMU Prof Dr.Zia Ul Haq and Pro-VC KMU, Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli, with the event spearheaded by the diligent efforts of Associate Prof. Dr. Khalid Rehman.

At the heart of this initiative lies EMPOWER-D, a project generously funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) in the United Kingdom. This groundbreaking endeavor is housed under the Center for IMPACT (C4I), a collaborative partnership between KMU, the University of York, the Aga Khan University, and the Baqai Institute of

Diabetology and Endocrinology. Focused on diabetes prevention through active community participation, the project is under the dynamic leadership of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq, Dr. Khalid Rehman, and the Director ORIC KMU Dr. Zohaib Khan.

VC KMU Prof Dr. Zia Ul Haq, in his address at the event, commended the unwavering dedication and enthusiasm of the participants, organizers, trainers, and other stakeholders. He emphasized that the overarching goal of C4I is to alleviate the burden of non-communicable diseases in Pakistan. Dr. Zia urged the participants to extend the reach of such awareness workshops, ensuring the dissemination of vital information to the general public.

Pro Vice Chancellor of Khyber Medical University (KMU), Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli, delivered a compelling address during the culminating event of a transformative three-day workshop organized by the Institute of Public Health and Social Sciences (IPH&SS) KMU, in collaboration with the IMPACT (C4I) Project. In a call to action, Dr. Rubina Nazli urged the workshop participants to extend such awareness initiatives beyond the workshop venue. She stressed the need to reach a wider audience, ensuring the dissemination of vital health information to the general public. "Your role doesn't end here; it begins in taking what you've learned and sharing it with your communities," she encouraged.

In a fitting conclusion to the event, the honorable co-guest, Pro Vice Chancellor Prof Dr. Rubina Nazli, personally distributed certificates of recognition among the participating organizers and trainers. The ceremony marked not only the successful conclusion of the workshop but also a collective step towards a healthier, more informed society. This collaborative effort underscores KMU's commitment to fostering public health, advancing research, and actively engaging communities in the fight against prevalent health challenges, particularly diabetes.

## HMC arranges ceremony to mark birth anniversary of Quaid, Christmas

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The administration of Hayatabad Medical Complex (HMC) on Friday arranged a cake cutting ceremony to mark Christmas and birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The ceremony was also attended by hospital administration, member

Board of Governor HMC, Dr. Muhammad Ali Chohan and Christian community. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Chohan highlighted the efforts of Quaid-e-Azam for creation of a separate homeland for Muslims of sub-continent and contributions of Christian community for progress and development of the country.

He said that struggle and commitment of Quaid-e-Azam created a separate homeland for Muslims where they are free to live according to their wishes and practice religion. He congratulated Christians on Christmas and said that 47 Christian employees of the hospital have been given salary and four holidays to celebrate Christmas.



PESHAWAR: Members of various parties submitting nomination papers in RO office for general elections.

## Punjab among four factors to determine popularity of political parties in polls

PESHAWAR (APP): Political experts here Thursday said that four key factors including the large number of voters of Punjab would decide the popularity of 175 political parties during the 2024 general election.

"Following announcement of election schedule by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and submission of nomination papers in all provinces of the country, the mainstream political parties including PMLN, PTI, PPP and newly established Istehkam e Pakistan Party have started eyeing on Punjab province to get maximum seats of national assembly from there and form next government till 2029," said Muhammad Ali Malik, former Professor of Political Science Department, Govt Post Graduate College Nowshera while talking to APP on Thursday.

"Any religious-political party that achieved victory in Punjab

having 127,688,922 population would easily form government in center as well in the country's most populous province," he said, adding Punjab province having about 73,207,896 registered voters have about 173 seats including 141 general seats in the National Assembly and that is why the top political leaders started election campaign from there to obtain maximum seats from there.

Dr Malik said that 26,994,769 voters of Sindh province would elect candidates on about 75 total seats including 61 general while 55 seats of KP with 21,928,119 voters, 20 seats of Balochistan with 5,371,947 voters and three seats of federal capital with 1,083,029 voters would give added advantage to the parties that win majority in Punjab. "The Central and Northern Punjab have maximum number of seats in National Assembly compared to

Southern Punjab districts and the political leaders were persuading its voters through their election manifestos to reach the power corridors.

"The other two important factors that will determine the outcome of the 2024 general election are young voters and religious-political parties' manifestos," he said. Out of 128.585 million registered voters in Pakistan, he said 69.263 million are male voters and 59.3 million are women voters, adding the majority of these voters are youth whose votes would play a deciding role on February 8, 2024. "This election is unique due to an increased number of young voters whose ballot would determine which party will rule Pakistan for next five years," he said. "Over 45pc of the voters have aged between 18-35 i.e 57,095,197 and about 22 million new voters have been added to the electoral rolls since last general election which is 18 percent of the elec-

torate.

"Most of these young voters are educated and their active participation with high turnout would help elect candidates with better people's service record," he said. Dr Muhammad Ali Malik said large barardaris (communities) would also play a key role in the outcome of 2024 general election.

Besides others tribes, he said that Wazir and Mehsud tribes in Wazirsitan, Bangash tribe in Orakzai, Hangu and Kohat, Salazar tribe in Bajaur, Khattak tribe in Karak and Nowshera, Youfzai tribe in Swat, Swabi and Mardan, Khalil tribe, Mohmand tribe in Peshawar, Afridi and Shinwari tribes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa role would be a significant. Similarly in Hazara, the candidates are eyeing to get support of Gujar, Jaddon and Abbasi tribes in Abbottabad, Haripur and Manshera while in Bathani tribe and Marwat

tribes in Tank and Lakki Marwat besides Bannuichi in Bannu role would be of paramount importance.

The political scholar said that political parties' manifestos will play a key role in election results. He said people wanted solutions to their problems including unemployment, poverty, price hike, houses and illiteracy and any party that provided its solution would get an edge over others. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has recently announced key points of his party's election manifesto including construction of three million houses for the poor, launching of welfare cards for labourers, patients and farmers besides increasing BISP assistance during various public addresses in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said PMLN manifesto revolved around supremacy of constitution, legal reforms and access to justice; economy, poverty allevia-

tion/reduction in inflation and unemployment, trade, industry and natural resources, overseas Pakistanis, elimination of corruption, education and health, sustainable development and climate change etc. Dr Malik said ANP was taking credit of giving identity to people of KP by renaming NWFP as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and construction of a maximum number of public sector universities while PTI's manifesto revolved around Sehat Cards, BRT and youth empowerment reforms.

He expressed the hope that the popularity graph of political parties would be cleared as General Election 2024 comes nearer. Dr Malik said that the overwhelming response of people ahead of the election campaign was a positive sign for democracy of Pakistan and urged masses, political parties and the entire nation to unite for the 2024 general election.





## In brief

## Ex-PTI MNA quits party

GUJRAT (INP): Former Member National Assembly from Gujrat belonging to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Tashfeen Safdar has announced to quit the party. In the same breath, Tashfeen Safdar also announced joining Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q). Three leaders of PTI from Gujrat had already parted ways with the party in recent days. Former MNA Syed Faiz Ul Hasan Shah has recently also announced parting ways with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. He was elected from NA-74 on the ticket of PTI in the 2018 polls. In a press conference held in Gujrat on Tuesday last, Shah along with the former member of provincial assembly Chaudhry Arshad denounced the events of May 9 and announced to quit PTI.

## 11-member team appointed

D I KHAN (INP): An 11-member team has been appointed to monitor the election campaigns of political parties and candidates during the upcoming general elections in the district. According to notification issued by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Additional Deputy Commissioner Ahad Yousaf has been appointed as the District Monitoring Officer (DMO) for Dera Ismail Khan district. Other members of the team included Tehsil Municipal Officer Paharpur Hamidullah Khan and Principal Government High school Paniala Nawab Khan for PK-111, Dera Ismail Khan-I, Executive Engineer Irrigation Paharpur Division Muhammad Rizwan and Assistant Excise and Taxation Officer Faheem Nawaz Khan for PK-112 Dera Ismail Khan II. Similarly, Deputy Controller Examinations of Gomal University Muhammad Irfan Khan and Tehsil Municipal Officer Dera Muhammad Ajmal Khan have been appointed as monitoring officers for PK-113 Dera Ismail Khan III. For PK-114 Dera Ismail Khan IV, District Health Officer Dr. Mahmood Jan and Assistant Accountant Sher Wahab while Secretary of the Dera education board Muhammad Rahman and Assistant Finance Officer Qudratullah Khan to monitor election campaign for PK 115, Dera Ismail Khan-V. These officers would monitor election campaigns of political parties and candidates in their respective Constituencies in light of code of conduct notified by the election commission in this regard.

## Gul-e-Daudi exhibition

MULTAN (INP): The annual chrysanthemum (Gul-e-Daudi) exhibition organized by the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) would be held in the current month to provide recreational activities to citizens. Additional Secretary Housing Rana Akhlaq Ahmad expressed these views during a tree plantation drive at Quaid-e-Azam Park here on Friday. Director Admin and Finance Muhammad Akhtar Mundhera, Director Engineering Adnan Butt and Deputy Director Horticulture Chaudhary Ghulam Nabi were also present. He said that PHA was committed to making Multan city green and the department has been given the task of planting shady trees in green belts and parks of the city. The tree plantation was being made at the entrance and exit points of the city while the plantation of local shady trees was underway at Shujaabad, Matital, and other places.

# Barrister Gohar files nomination papers for NA-10

F.P. Report

BUNER: The PTI central Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Friday filed his nomination papers for the slot of NA 10 Buner. He visited the office of returning officer in Daggar with his family members and party workers. He was accorded warm welcome at entry point at Ambela and brought to the RO office in a procession of motorcades.

Talking to media and addressing party workers he expressed unhappiness over the ongoing what he called discriminatory attitude from the government and election commission. He pointed out that PTI was being deprived of its due political and democratic rights as the party chief was in prison the intra party elections were not accepted the party symbol was denied the candidates were prisoned the party candidates were not provided level playing field

even they are diapered and nomination papers and documents snatched.

He shared there were 175 political parties in the country but only PTI was subjected to push the wall. He also shared date of 227 reserved seats out of them 70 in national assembly and rest in the provinces but due to no single election symbol of bat the candidates would be considered independent and the PTI would lose the right of reserved seats besides a chance for the independent to move towards other parties that would further tarnish the PTI in future.

He was crystal clear to comment this discriminatory attitude towards PTI was created panic among party leadership and workers but they were time and again directed to cool down as this land of Pakistan and the state of Pakistan sacred for them more. He repeated the PTI was moving to high courts and supreme court

for speaking equal political treatment so as enter into political process and serve the state and nation in future.

**1 dies, 3 injures when drowns in Elum Ghar lake:** A 57 years old Muslim Khan of Shekh Baba died on spot and three his accomplices went unconscious while drown in a popular lake at a visiting spot in the popular Elum Ghar on Friday.

Those went on conscious identified Irfanullah 24 Years age from Bazargay Ehtisham 18 Years age from Sharefay and Talha 18 years age from Pir Baba.

The rescue 11 22 team dashed the hilly spot and rescued them and transported to THQ hospital Pacha Kalay Pir Baba. The THQ hospital staff after fulfilling medico legal process handed over the dead body to legal heirs for performing last rituals and admitted the three unconscious for further treatment.

## Second suspect involved in murder of teacher held

F.P. Report

KARAK: The police have arrested the second suspect involved in the murder of a school teacher, while the police are trying hard to arrest the other suspects. The teacher was killed by firing a firearm due to unknown reasons and the accused fled the scene after the incident.

A case was registered against the unknown accused in the complaint of the victim's son in Yaqub Khan Shaheed police station. As soon as the head of the investigation department, Zahidullah Khan, took charge, he and his team started working on these trace cases quickly, using the investigation skills of the investigating officer Ayaz Khan and the modern technical investigation (geofencing) using technical means to solve the case 596.

Dated 06/11/2023 Crime 302 Police Station Yaqub Khan Shaheed by tracing the unknown suspects in a very short period of time and arresting the accused Muhammad Tariq son of Mashal Khan Sakna Chokara, Muhammad

Raziq son of Mashal Khan Sakna Chokar while for the arrest of other accused. The efforts of the police are continuing. On this occasion, SP Investigation Zahidullah Khan encouraged the investigation team and distributed cash prizes and certificates of appreciation. The SP Investigation urged the investigating officers to fulfill the demands of justice by investigating on merit.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Karak Mujibur Rahman presided over DPEC meeting for polio campaign in January. Sub-divisional Police Officer Karak, Additional Deputy Commissioner Karak, Health and all other officers and officials participated in the meeting.

In the officers' meeting, the Deputy Commissioner was briefed about the ongoing activities and planning regarding the campaign. Deputy Commissioner Karak issued instructions to all concerned officials to complete all the preparations before the campaign and to make the campaign successful every child must be administered polio

drops. Moreover, according to the instructions of Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under the supervision of SP Investigation Zahid Khan in his office between DSP Headquarters Karak, District Public Prosecutor Karak, District Social Welfare Karak and District Labor Department Karak. A meeting was held. During the meeting, discussions were held to strengthen mutual relations.

While the officers discussed the human trafficking law and the steps taken so far were carefully reviewed. The SP Investigation also urged the concerned representatives to ensure the implementation of specific Acts designed to prevent human trafficking. The SP Investigation issued instructions and said that a seminar and workshop should be held in this regard so that the public can get awareness about this law and added that any forced or physical labor on women, especially children, should be reported to the local police in time. Do it.



HYDERABAD: Activists of Awami Tehreek holding a protest in favour of their demands.

## Kundi optimistic of victory as submits nomination papers

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Former Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and Central Information Secretary Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Faisal Karim Kundi was optimistic of his victory as he submitted nomination papers on Friday for the general elections to be held on February 8, 2024.

Through personal appearance at the returning officer's office along with his supporters, the PPP leader filed his nomination papers for NA 44 (D.I Khan-I). Talking to media after filing his papers, Faisal Karim Kundi said this time PPP step into the election race with the backing of the area's two esteemed political families including Miankhel and Makhdoom

at Dera Ismail Khan to secure stunning victory against opponents.

The PPP leader said that he was going to contest the election from NA-44 while Fateh Ullah Miankhel submitted his nomination papers as a candidate for NA-45 on PPP tickets. He revealed that Makhdoom Aftab Haider representing the Makhdoom family contesting for PK-111 (Paharpur) constituency on a PPP ticket, while Former MPA Ahmed Karim Kundi contesting from PK-112 (City-II) and Qaizar Khan Miankhel from PK-114 (Parowa) for provincial assembly seats.

The candidates for Constituencies PK 113 (City-I) and PK-115 (Kulachi) would also be finalized soon after mutual

consultation, he said. Kundi said that it was the wish of the people of Dera Ismail Khan that he should defeat Maulana Fazlur Rahman for the second time too from NA-44. Kundi said that his party would give a big 'surprise' in the forthcoming general elections in 2024, and added that the PPP would win the next general election and form its government.

He said that the people have faced "selected government" in past and they will not tolerate any such move in the future. "If the selection process is adopted this time, the nation will not accept it because now the majority of the population is comprised of young people who will not accept a 'selected' government," he added.



LOWER DIR: JI Chief Sirajul Haq and other party members coming after submitting of nomination papers for general elections.

## Tourist throng KP tourist resorts

KALAM (INP): After announcement of winter vacations in schools, tourists through to tourist resorts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Abbottabad, Swat, Naran, Kaghan, and Malam Jabba resulting in huge rush there.

According to a report of private news channel, the visitors along with their families were enjoying the picturesque beauty of hill stations of different tourist resorts.

Famous hilly tourist destinations in Pakistan are no less than any other international vacation spots as scenic views and beautiful landscapes have been enhancing the beauty of nature during snowfall season every year.

The residents of the Northern parts said that a large number of families have planned to visit these areas with their families to enjoy the picturesque beauty of hilly areas and enjoy snowfall, taking advantage of winter vacations, adding, several local as well as international tourists was witnessing significant increase after the first snowfall of the season.

According to visitors, like every year this year too many tourists are interested in seeing snowfall, and winter vacations are the best opportunity for families to plan their trips to the beautiful hilly areas. Hill stations in Pakistan are the perfect option to spend an adventurous and fun-filled vacation with your friends and family, said a group of youngsters.

Malam Jabba is a world-famous paradise for tourists. The charming green valleys, pastures, and meadows are the main source of attraction for people," said a local. "Pakistan is a very beautiful country with diverse weather and locations to explore," said a foreigner. Taking advantage of the winter vacations, several families are visiting tourist destinations but they should ensure safety measures before travel, said a local.

## Cheque among Christians distributed

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad has distributed cheques of financial assistance Rs. 6 lakh among 60 Christian families to provide opportunities for celebrating religious festival of Christmas with zeal and zest.

Addressing the cheques distribution ceremony held at district complex, DC said that the Punjab government was given Rs. 10 thousand per family on the eve of Christmas to deserving families so that poor and less resources families could enjoy their religious festivities without facing financial problems.

Meanwhile, a ceremony was arranged at office of the District and Sessions Judge Hafizabad Malik Ali Raza Awan on the eve of Christmas and Christmas cake was cut in the function. District and Session Judge Malik Ali Raza Awan said on the occasion that the minorities are enjoying full religious freedom while constitution of Pakistan protected the rights of minorities. He said that Christian employees were our brother and we were sharing joys of them.

## Admn takes action to enforce transport fares

Anees Takar

MARDAN: In response to the recent decrease in petroleum prices, the Deputy Commissioner of Mardan, Muhammad Fayyaz Khan Sherpao, has directed the administration officers to ensure the implementation of government-regulated fares. This initiative aims to protect the public from unfair pricing practices within the public transport sector.

Taking swift action, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Mardan, Saeedullah Jan, conducted visits to various bus stands to gather information on the fares being charged from passengers. Subsequently, actions were taken against those who were found violating the official fare list. Stand managers were instructed to adhere strictly to the government-mandated fares.

Additionally, a joint effort involving Additional Assistant Commissioners Burqa Awan, Rashid Khan, Attallah, and Kamran Khan, along with the traffic police, was initiated to inspect fares at different squares and stands. Drivers found charging above the government-approved fares

were fined, and stand managers were directed to enforce the official fare list rigorously.

The citizen of Mardan appreciated the action administration. Khalid Khan said that it's a commendable move by the administration to crack down on overcharging by public transport. This not only helps ease the financial burden on citizens but also ensures a fair and regulated system. Kudos to the officials for taking prompt action.

Another passenger came to Mardan for his business dealing, said that enforcing official fares is a step in the right direction. It provides relief to the common people who often bear the brunt of arbitrary pricing. The administration's initiative will surely make public transportation more accessible and affordable for everyone.

The proactive approach taken by the Mardan administration has garnered positive feedback from citizens who appreciate the efforts to create a fair and transparent system within the public transport sector. The crackdown on overcharging is seen as a positive step toward ensuring affordability and fairness

## Lowari Tunnel: A dark and dangerous journey

CHITRAL (APP): The Lowari Tunnel, one of the longest road tunnels in the world, is plagued by serious operational issues that endanger the lives of the commuters and the security personnel.

According to details available to this agency, the tunnel, which spans 8.6 km, is supposed to connect the largest district of Chitral and Dir Upper in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. However, the tunnel is not operated as per the standard operating procedure.

More than half of the tunnel is in complete darkness, as the LEDs installed inside the tunnel are out of order. The commuters feel

like they are inside a grave when they pass through the tunnel. Moreover, on both sides of the tunnel, no electricity is provided to the security personnel, who are responsible for maintaining the safety and order of the tunnel.

The situation is worsened by the alleged negligence and corruption of the chief operating officer (COO) of the tunnel, who was previously posted as the Deputy Director of afforestation on the motorway. According to the sources from the Lowari Tunnel, the COO has not visited the tunnel even once in the last five months.

However, he is continu-

ously giving monthly invoices to the operator, despite the poor performance of the contractor. The people from both sides demanded the Chairman of the National Highway Authority to intervene and solve the problems of the Lowari Tunnel, which is a vital infrastructure project for the region.

The tunnel should be operated according to the international standards and the best practices, and the COO should be held accountable for his actions. The people of Chitral and Dir Upper deserve a safe and smooth journey through the Lowari Tunnel.

## Sale of mobile phone SIMs banned in Lakki

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: The district administrations have banned the sale of mobile phone SIMs by unauthorised dealers for one month in Lakki Marwat and Bannu, claimed officials on Friday.

Lakki Marwat DC Rahmat Ali Wazir and Bannu DC Shah Saud imposed restrictions following credible reports about the sale of mobile phone SIMs by the unauthorised dealers. They said that the authorities had also received reports that some dealers were involved in using fraudulent techniques to save fingerprints of buyers on silicon and x-ray films and then use those to issue SIMs and then activate them.

They said that such SIMs were used in criminal and terrorist activities and might lead to law and order situation and a threat to public peace in both southern districts. "The true implementation of the restrictions will help to curb anti-social and anti-state activities", they main-

tained. They said that the violators would face stern action as per law.

**DPO visits Banochi check post:** Lakki Marwat district police officer Tariq Habib visited the Wanda Banochi check post a day after a militant attack was foiled by the cops deployed there. He met policemen who had vigorously retaliated against the attack forcing the assailants to flee the area.

Tariq appreciated the cops for their alertness and launching a prompt action against militants. He inspected different portions of the post and asked the policemen to adhere to the security SOPs (standard operating procedures).

The district police officer also met deputy superintendent of police Ghaznikhel and SHOs during a visit to Ghaznikhel and Shaheed Haibat Ali Khan police stations. He called upon the subordinate police officials and cops to perform their professional obligations with commitment and provide protection of life and property to citizens.

"It is your (policemen) prime duty to be vigilant and keep a check on movements of suspects and miscreants in your respective areas", he added, saying that the law enforcement personnel can prevent attacks by ensuring constant monitoring of night vision goggles and alertness during duty hours.

## Cop shot injured

LARKANA (INP): Armed motorists gunned down a policeman here on Friday. Police arrested both culprits with weapons.

According to details, the incident took place in Ratodero area of Larkana where police personnel signaled to stop a suspected car at picket. The car riders instead of stopping, started firing at police critically injuring a cop and sped the scene.

The police chased the fled culprits and held them in nearby locality besides recovering weapons from their possession.





## Ukraine war: Hopes of rebuilding rely on fighting corruption

KYIV (BBC): Western donors have pledged billions to help rebuild Ukraine, a country with a reputation for high levels of corruption. The task of reconstruction is expected to be the biggest of its kind since World War Two.

But the government hopes a flagship project in Bucha, a town shattered at the start of the war, will show new standards for transparency have been set. At least 245,000 buildings are estimated to have been damaged or destroyed in Ukraine, including many homes in Bucha, just outside Kyiv. Nearly two years ago, this town became a byword for some of the worst atrocities of Russia's full-scale invasion. Russian occupying forces are accused of killing about 500 people. A nine-storey Soviet-era block caught in the cross-fire between the two armies has become a building site. Most of the 330 residents have gone, scattered across Ukraine or abroad, and they will only return when the work is complete next spring.

From a block I had thought was empty, a woman emerged from her damaged flat, its walls covered in scorch marks. "They were bombing here for a month and everything got burnt," said Anna Prokopyevna, who's 71. Extraordinarily, she stayed in her flat throughout the terrifying battle for Bucha. In February this year, the World Bank calculated rebuilding Ukraine would cost \$411bn (£325; 375). And there has been much more destruction since then. International donors have voiced concerns about whether funds will be prop-

erly accounted for. The European Union has made the fight against corruption central to Ukraine's bid to join the EU. Ukraine was ranked 116th out of 180 countries in a 2022 corruption perceptions index by campaigning and research organisation Transparency International. But the rebuilding of the Bucha apartments, one of the first housing projects of Ukraine's new State Restoration Agency, is intended to show that the country can, in the agency's words, "build back better". And that means not just more modern homes, designed according to residents' wishes, but also projects funded, monitored and accounted for in the most open way. "No country knows how to do reconstruction on the level needed here in Ukraine," says Oleksiy Dorogan, chair of a coalition of civil society groups spearheading the drive for openness. "We need to learn not only how to manage that; we also need to learn how to make it transparent." The stakes are high, because if the international community sees something amiss then he fears funding will dry up. Before rebuilding began in Bucha, the Restoration Agency devised a new competitive bidding procedure for contracts.

Former investigative journalist Valeriya Ivanova is in charge of its anti-corruption measures and believes she can achieve more to tackle corruption "from the inside" than she could in her previous job. But the team she used to work for, Bihus.Info, has produced a series of hard-

hitting videos making serious allegations about earlier stages of rebuilding in Bucha and other nearby towns which were handled by local councils rather than her agency. Hundreds of millions of Ukrainian hryvnia (equivalent to millions of dollars) "intended for reconstruction were distributed... mostly without tenders, competitions, or any oversight", it alleged. Taras Shafranskyi, secretary of Bucha town council, insists no violations were found by the state audit service and all the work was of high quality. But reporter Oleksiy Yarylchenko says the revelations have led to several officials in the region being dismissed. As a result there was no longer the kind of "exorbitant spending" seen in the year after Kyiv region was liberated of Russian forces, he said. "Did it harm our reputation with international donors? I'm sure it did," he said. "But we have to show this and draw lessons from it so it doesn't happen again. If we stay silent, we'll become a totalitarian state." Ukraine now has an online transparency platform called Dream, developed by the government and civil society organisations, which it believes will make it easier to spot possible corruption, without relying on whistle-blowing journalists. The tool will allow anyone to key into any rebuilding project in Ukraine and find all the documents about how and why it was planned, who is behind it, who is implementing it, what their track record is - and exactly how much has been spent.

## Trump ally files for bankruptcy following defamation case

WASHINGTON: Rudy Giuliani has filed for bankruptcy, just days after he was ordered to pay \$148m to two former Georgia election workers he falsely accused of fraud as he worked to overturn Donald Trump's 2020 presidential election loss. The former mayor of New York, in a bankruptcy petition seeking protection from his creditors, listed assets of between \$1m and \$10m and liabilities of up to \$500m.

The largest of his debts is the \$148 million a federal jury in Washington, DC ordered him to pay on December 15 to Ruby Freeman and her daughter Wandrea "Shaye" Moss for repeatedly making false claims that they engaged in 2020 election fraud. The Chapter 11 bankruptcy petition filed with a New York bankruptcy court also listed debts ranging from the hundreds of thousands to the millions of dollars to the Internal Revenue Service, New York tax authorities and his former lawyers and accountants. "Unknown" amounts were also recorded as being owed to Hunter Biden, former president Joe

Biden's son, and the voting machine companies Dominion and Smartmatic. Hunter Biden, Dominion and Smartmatic have all filed lawsuits against Giuliani. They are ongoing. A spokesperson for Giuliani said the bankruptcy filing will give him time to appeal the \$148m penalty and ensure that other creditors are treated fairly. "No person could have reasonably believed that Mayor Rudy Giuliani would be able to pay such a high punitive amount," spokesperson Ted Goodman said. The 79-year-old Giuliani was found liable in August by US District Judge Beryl Howell of defaming Freeman and Moss, both Fulton County poll workers, with his 2020 election lies on behalf of Trump.

An eight-person federal jury awarded Freeman and Moss more than \$16m each for defamation, \$20m each for emotional distress and \$75m in punitive damages. Giuliani, who led Trump's legal efforts to overturn the results of the election, posted a video of the pair that falsely accused them of

engaging in fraud during ballot counting and made numerous other baseless claims about them. Freeman and Moss, who are Black, told the jury during the four-day trial that Giuliani's false accusations upended their lives and made them the target of racist threats. "The flame that Giuliani lit with those lies and passed to so many others to keep that flame blazing changed every aspect of our lives, our homes, our family, our work, our sense of safety, our mental health," Moss said. The defamation case is just one of a number of legal challenges facing Giuliani, who has been indicted on racketeering charges in Georgia along with Trump and others for allegedly conspiring to overturn the 2020 election results in the southern state. Giuliani was New York mayor from 1994 to 2001, guiding the city through the shock of the September 11, 2001 attacks and becoming known as "America's Mayor" - before signing up as Trump's personal lawyer while he was in the White House. — Aljazeera

## Orbán agreed to a meeting with Zelenksyy

BUDAPEST (AP): Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán says he has accepted an invitation from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to hold a bilateral meeting in the future, a potential first between the two leaders since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Speaking at an annual international news conference in Budapest, Orbán said he agreed to Zelenskyy's proposal for a future meeting during a brief conversation between the two leaders on the sidelines of a Dec. 10 swearing-in ceremony for Argentina's new president, Javier Milei. "(Zelenskyy) said, 'We should negotiate,' and I told him I'd be at his disposal. We just have to clarify one question: about what?" Orbán said, adding that the Ukrainian leader requested a discussion on his country's ambitions to join the European Union.

Relations between the two leaders have been fraught as Hungary has repeatedly blocked EU efforts to provide financial aid to Ukraine and refused to provide its neighbor with arms support. Orbán also has opposed Ukraine embarking on the EU membership path and is one of the only EU leaders not to have made an official trip to Kyiv as Ukraine fights against Russia's invasion. Last week, Orbán prevented the adoption of a 50-billion euro (\$54.7 billion) EU aid package to Kyiv, the only leader in the 27-member bloc to oppose the funding. The EU requires unanimity among its members, giving the Hungarian leader tremendous leverage. However, by leaving the room when a vote was held, he allowed his counterparts to approve beginning accession talks with Ukraine. Orbán said his government continues to oppose the scope and timeline of the proposed funding for Ukraine, suggesting he would maintain his position when EU leaders meet again in February. He said the financing should not come from modifications to the EU budget but be based on individual contributions from member countries, and that plans to provide Ukraine with money over the next several years should be limited to more short-term assistance.

"The Hungarian perspective is that if we want to give money to Ukraine, then we shouldn't give it for a five-year period because we have no idea what will happen in the next three months," he said. Orbán has faced increasing isolation within the EU for his position on the war and allegations that his government has systematically rolled back Hungary's democratic checks and balances during his 13 years in power. The bloc has withheld billions in funding because of concerns over corruption and judicial independence, though last week it granted Hungary access to 10.2 billion euros (\$11 billion) to reimburse spending on approved projects after the government undertook judicial reforms.

## Day of mourning declared after 14 killed in Prague mass shooting

PRAGUE: The Czech Republic has declared a day of mourning after a 24-year-old student shot dead his father, before killing 14 people and wounding 25 others at his Prague university in the country's worst-ever mass shooting. Following a special cabinet meeting, President Petr Pavel said December 23 would be a day of mourning with flags on official buildings to be flown at half-mast and people asked to observe a minute's silence at noon.

"I would express my great sadness along with helpless anger at the unnecessary loss of so many young lives," Pavel said. "I would like to express my sincere condolences to all relatives of the victims, to all who were at this tragic incident, the most tragic in the history of the Czech Republic." The shooting erupted at the Charles University's Faculty of Arts, across the river from Prague Castle and near other historic sites in the picturesque city including the 14th-century Charles Bridge.

Media images showed students evacuating the building with their hands in the air, and others perched on a ledge near the roof trying to hide from the attacker, while students barricaded classrooms with desks and chairs. "I can confirm 14 victims of the horrible crime and 25 wounded, of which 10 seriously," police chief Martin Vondrasek told reporters after the shooting. All the victims were killed inside the building, he added. Media reports said at least some of them were the gunman's fellow students.

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs said one of the injured was a Dutch national. People lit candles outside the university, which was established in 1348 and is one of the oldest in central Europe. "We mourn the loss of life of members of our university community, express our deepest condolences to all the



bereaved, and our thoughts are with all those affected by the tragedy," Charles University said in a statement. Vondrasek said the gunman, previously unknown to the police, had a large number of legally owned weapons and that swift police action after a tip-off earlier in the day had prevented even worse carnage. Police evacuated a Faculty of Arts building where the gunman was due to attend a lecture, but were then called to the faculty's larger main building, arriving within minutes after reports of the shooting, Vondrasek said. Police had "unconfirmed information from an account on a social network that he was supposedly inspired by one terrorist attack in Russia in the autumn of this year," Vondrasek told reporters, describing the attack as a "pre-mediated horrific act". Authorities did not name the gunman but said he was a high-achieving student with no prior criminal record. His death was probably a suicide, but authorities were also investigating whether he might have been killed by police who returned fire.

Prime Minister Petr Fiala said the "lone gunman ... wasted many lives of mostly young people". "There is no justification for this horrendous act," he added. United States' President Joe Biden condemned the "senseless" attack and the White House said the US was ready to offer assistance. French President Emmanuel Macron expressed his "solidarity" with the Czech people, as did other European leaders including EU chief Ursula von der Leyen and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Later, Vondrasek said that based on a search of his home, the gunman was also suspected in the killing of another man and his 2-month-old daughter in Prague on December 15. Gun crime is relatively rare in the Czech Republic. In December 2019, a 42-year-old gunman killed six people in a hospital waiting room in the eastern Czech city of Ostrava before fleeing and fatally shooting himself, police said. In 2015, a man fatally shot eight people and then killed himself at a restaurant in Uhersky Brod. — Aljazeera

## Sanctions threat looms over BD's garment sector ahead of elections

DHAKA: Weeks after turbulent wage-hike protests and subsequent factory closures, Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) industry, a key revenue earner for the nation, is dealing with a new phase of anxiety: "possible" economic sanctions by the country's Western partners. The United States and European Union collectively account for more than 80 percent of Bangladesh's multibillion-dollar apparel sales, and any sanction on the RMG industry would put a severe dent in its already beleaguered economy, said analysts.

The threat of sanctions from the US arose once Dhaka announced January 7 for national elections in what is likely to be another seemingly one-sided vote. Those concerns were further boosted in early December when a key garment supplier to the US was warned of sanctions in a letter of credit (LC) from a foreign garment buyer. An LC is issued by financial institutions or similar parties to guarantee payment to sellers of goods and services after appropriate documentations are presented. It essentially helps in avoiding risk by having intermediate buyer and seller banks that ensure proper payment. According to the LC, a copy of which was obtained by Al Jazeera, the Western buyer stated: "We will not process transactions involving any country, region or party sanctioned by the UN, US, EU, UK. We are not liable for any delay, non-performance or/ disclosure of information for sanction-based causes."

Should the clause kick in, the garment manufacturer in Bangladesh would likely incur massive losses as the buyer wouldn't be liable to make any payment for the orders placed with that apparel producer. Both industry leaders and government officials have dismissed the threat as a "rumour" and "antigovernment" propaganda and say no such economic sanction can be imposed, especially on the garment

sector, as it is a fully compliant industry and abides by all the international labour laws. Faruque Hassan, President of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) said that the LC came from a particular buyer, and was not a statutory order or notice by "any specific country or countries". "From BGMEA, we have already contacted the buyer and the issue was sorted out. It was just a cautionary clause inserted by the bank who prepared the LC on behalf of the buyers," Hassan told Al Jazeera. "It doesn't mean that any country is planning to impose some sanctions on our industry," Hassan however admitted that many factory owners had expressed their concerns in a recent BGMEA meeting over that LC clause and the "ongoing political turmoil of Bangladesh has given birth to all sorts of speculations". Bangladesh's national election is due in less than three weeks but several political unrests have disrupted the country's business and economy. Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the main opposition party, has boycotted the election amidst concerns of severe poll rigging. That sets up the elections as a repeat of one-sided polls held in 2014, in which Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League won 153 out of 300 parliamentary seats uncontested.

BNP says no free and fair election is possible under a partisan government and gave an example of the 2018 poll, in which it took part. Independent observers termed it a severely "rigged" election which saw Awami League securing 288 out of 300 seats, a result that The Washington Post said could only be expected in a country like North Korea. For the last few months, opposition parties have been staging protests on the streets to press home the demand of installing a neutral election-time caretaker government. The government has, since late October, used brute force and court cases to suppress

the protests. In November alone, more than 10,000 BNP leaders and activists were thrown in jail. None have received bail so far. Khondokar Golam Moazzem, research director of Bangladesh think tank Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) told Al Jazeera that the current political upheaval has obviously played its role in propagating the widespread notion that Bangladesh's RMG industry might face an economic sanction. The United States has already taken a tough stance with a new visa policy for Bangladesh in September in which it said it would impose a visa sanction on "individuals undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh".

The warning note in the LC also came at a time of severe unrest in the RMG sector over minimum wage hikes in which four workers died. It also coincided with the introduction by the US, Bangladesh's single largest garment buyer, of the Presidential Memorandum on Advancing Worker Empowerment, Rights, and High Labor Standards Globally. The memorandum is the Biden administration's effort "to pursue a whole-of-government approach to advancing worker empowerment and organizing, workers' rights, and labor standards globally". While introducing the bill, the US Secretary of State specifically mentioned a firebrand garment labour activist in Bangladesh and said: "We want to be there for people like Kalpona Akter, a Bangladeshi garment worker and activist, who says that she is alive today because the US embassy advocated on her behalf." After the new US bill, the Ministry of Commerce in Bangladesh received a letter from the Bangladesh embassy in Washington, DC in which the embassy speculated that "Bangladesh could be among the countries targeted by the new US Memorandum". — Al Jazeera

## China tries to 'bury the memory' and trauma of zero-COVID era

BEIJING: When Evelyn Ma's two-year-old daughter had a persistently high fever and a bad cough earlier this month, she and her husband began to worry. The couple decided to take their daughter to a nearby children's hospital in the city of Jinan. But as Ma walked through the doors with her daughter in her arms, she found a scene of chaos.

"Doctors and nurses were rushing around everywhere between long lines of patients waiting their turn, and people were even sitting on the floor and against the walls," Ma, who is 36 and works as a sales representative in China's northeastern Shandong province, told Al Jazeera. China experienced a sharp rise in cases of influenza, pneumonia, RSV and common cold viruses, particularly among children, in early October. By the next month, the surge in the number of people seeking medical attention had put a strain on hospitals, especially those catering to children. "We arrived at the hospital in the early morning, but we didn't get to see a doctor until the late afternoon, and I think that was only because my daughter's symptoms were quite bad and my husband and I made a fuss," Ma said. The rising infections and reports of undiagnosed pneumonia sparked concern that the world was on the cusp of another novel pandemic outbreak spreading from China, after COVID-19 also first appeared as undiagnosed pneumonia in the

central city of Wuhan. But after requesting data from China, the World Health Organization (WHO) concluded there was no cause for alarm because the evidence suggested there was no new pathogen. The jump in cases, it appears, was more a reflection of the return of illnesses that had been suppressed by the country's prolonged pandemic lockdowns. Ma's daughter soon recovered, but the experience brought back upsetting memories. "Last time I was at the hospital was in late December last year, and I was also sitting in a crowded waiting room filled with coughing people," she said. "Back then I was holding the hand of my grandmother who was very sick with COVID," Ma said. Just a few weeks before that, the Chinese authorities had abandoned the strict COVID measures that were a pillar of the country's so-called zero-COVID policy after protests in several Chinese cities against the continued enforcement of lockdowns. For three years until then, the zero-COVID policy had defined - and limited - Chinese people's interactions with each other and the outside world in the name of combatting the pandemic. "So many people suffered under the zero-COVID policy, and so many people died when it ended," Ma said. "Because of that, my family and I are traumatised to this day." Ma's grandmother succumbed to COVID-19 in early January.

At about the same time, 29-year-old translator Lily Wang from Shenzhen also lost her grandmother to the virus. She blames the authorities' abrupt decision to abandon the zero-COVID policy for her death. "If they had just given us a warning or given us time to prepare, we might have been able to save her," Wang told Al Jazeera. A wave of infections swept across China after the sudden end of the policy posing a particular hazard to elderly Chinese of whom only 40 percent had received a booster shot by December 2022. In the months that followed, upwards of almost two million more people died compared with the same period in previous years, according to a study by Hong Xiao and Joseph Unger of the Public Health Sciences Division at Seattle's Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center that was published in August. While the death of Wang's grandmother was traumatic for her whole family, the strict lockdowns of China's cities, which brought a recurring phenomenon throughout 2022, were traumatic for Wang personally. Her neighbourhood in the southern city of Shenzhen was repeatedly placed under total lockdown for months on end to quell flare-ups of COVID infections. "We were not allowed to go outside - not even to stretch our legs, do grocery shopping or take out the garbage," she said. Wang was living alone in a small apartment at the time, and food sup-

plies, provided by the authorities, were often late to arrive at her building. "I was hungry, lonely and trapped, and I started to suffer from panic attacks," she added. As soon as the COVID policy ended, she moved out of the apartment and back home with her parents. "After zero-COVID, I just couldn't stay in the apartment any more," she said. "Even today, it is still difficult for me to be alone for more than a few days."

Ma from Jinan has also struggled to recover mentally. "I am much more concerned about the future than I was before 2022," she said. During the lockdown of her family's neighbourhood, they also experienced food supplies arriving late. "Now I get nervous when we don't have much food left in the apartment, so I make sure that we have lots of meals available in the freezer and the refrigerator in case something happens," she explained. Hou Feng, a 31-year-old programmer from Shanghai, has also had trouble sleeping since the strict lockdown of Shanghai that took place from April until June 2022. "During that time, people in my building contacted the authorities to accuse each other of breaking the COVID rules," Hou told Al Jazeera. Residents of Shanghai, China's biggest city, were required to undergo constant COVID-19 testing, and it was obligatory to report to one of the city's quarantine centres if the result was positive. Hou witnessed his screaming neighbour getting

dragged out of her home by the authorities when she refused to leave of her own volition after testing positive.

He still has nightmares about people in white hazmat suits breaking down his door and taking him away to a quarantine facility. "I just saw some really bad sides of China during the lockdown that I never thought I would see." While the zero-COVID policy ended in failure and trauma, according to Hou, it was initially quite successful. "In 2020 and 2021, we luckily didn't really feel the pandemic in China," he said. After a late response to the initial COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, the Chinese authorities subsequently managed to get the pandemic under control, and by mid-2020, normal life had resumed and social order was restored. That was a contrast to several high-income countries in the Western world where health services struggled when the pandemic first struck, according to assistant professor Yan Long, who has studied the development of Chinese public health policies at the University of California, Berkeley. That also made the zero-COVID policy a source of national pride in China and an opportunity for the Chinese leadership to showcase, at least domestically, that China had outdone countries such as the United States. "It was a way to say, 'Look, democracy has failed, we succeeded,'" Long told Al Jazeera. The success began to

fray, however, with the emergence of more infectious COVID-19 variants such as omicron. Immense resources were poured into constant rounds of mass testing and the implementation of lockdowns, but the measures failed to put an end to new outbreaks. "The zero-COVID policy became financially unsustainable, and scientifically impossible, while the confidence in the policy also began to drastically decline," Long said.

"By 2022, COVID was no longer the biggest fear. People were more afraid of the disruption of the lockdowns," Hou from Shanghai agrees that towards the end, the zero-COVID policy felt worse than COVID-19. "The policy made life a living hell," he said. Hou knows of many people who experienced traumatic episodes during the lockdowns as well as in the subsequent rapid reopening of society. "But unlike me, most people I know don't want to talk about the COVID times. They just want to forget them," he said. Long, the academic, doubts that Chinese people have had a chance to heal after what happened. "It is now a year later, and there has been no discussion about COVID, no reflection about what was right and what was wrong," she said. "When you bury the memory, you don't learn any lessons, which means there is no guarantee that the same mistakes won't be made again." — Aljazeera



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## Unsuccessful campaign against smog

**R**ECENTLY, the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination held a hearing on the issue of smog and the reasons behind the government's failure to tackle the problem which is worsening every passing day. During the session, senior bureaucrats from the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC) briefed the forum on the factors contributing to air pollution in various cities in Punjab. According to the briefing of the concerned ministry, industrial contributions to pollution have significantly decreased, while local pollutants such as transport, fugitive dust, and uncontrollable dry sweeping still contribute to environmental degradation. As said, a significant portion of pollution is due to traffic pollution and highlighted weaknesses in watch and ward, work prosecution, collaboration, admins' operations, and monitoring. The officials presented their legal and institutional framework for smog prevention and control. The Senate body 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. According to government executives, their forward strategy involves strengthening field officers' presence, drone surveillance, improved and timely reporting, and daily debriefing sessions to cure the ever-biting ailment.

The Smog has shaped a grave environmental challenge for the government and the masses as the poisonous smoky gases have covered almost one-third of Punjab's landmass. Although smog has now become an annual phenomenon yet the local governments and provincial administration paid no heed to that problem at the early stage, until the Lahore High Court (LHC) took up the case and issued orders for the closure of schools and offices by putting forth a plan to curb the hazardous polluted air in densely populated areas. Over the past two months, government leaders implemented various strategies including school/college closures, workday off, imposition of smart lockdown in certain areas, enforcing the ban on smoke-emitting vehicles, industries, and unethical disposal of waste. However, no recipe could produce the required result and Lahore is still on the list of top polluted cities in the world, several cities and towns are still embattled with dense smog. Polluted air causes serious diseases in the public and prevents the functioning of routine citizenry life in Central and Southern Punjab. Meanwhile, the idea of pouring artificial rain and providing 10000 electric bikes to the public could not work, and all tall claims, cosmetic measures, and politically motivated strategies failed in achieving a single-point agenda of smog prevention.

Historically, nothing is impossible and no problem is unsolvable in this universe, however, all difficult tasks and extraordinary issues require foreknowledge/ forecast, timely preparation by the administrator, public-private teamwork, and cooperation from the masses that all disappeared throughout our national history. Air pollution is an environmental issue caused by the release of pollutants particularly smoke from vehicles and factories into the atmosphere that continues throughout the year but in extreme cold weather, it shapes into smog and becomes a serious health and safety hazard for the masses. Anti-pollution campaigns of the relevant departments such as Police crackdown against vehicles, and administration actions against factories and corporate giants must continue throughout the year while strict supervision by the provincial and federal ministries remain in place so the situation cannot become so dire and the wheel of life could not stop anywhere in the country.

As a nation, we do not learn to carry forward our national agenda persistently throughout the year. Unfortunately, our nationalism stirs up on the 14th of August and 23rd of March, we remember Quid's quotes on the 25th of December, and our high-ups repeat their credos only on concerned days and keep them aside until the next time. The same is the case with the issue of Smog which comes every year in winter, the rulers and the public are well versed in it. But, government leaders and relevant national institutions do not move to perform their duties until and unless a catastrophe occurs and public life comes to a halt. During the Senate Committee hearing, the relevant bureaucrats successfully lured the lawmakers into the future anti-smog plan while eluding accountability for their failure in forehead prevention of the problem. Awfully, such irresponsibility, opportunist behaviour, and ad-hocism are the real reasons behind the degradation of our nation over the past seven decades of independence otherwise Pakistan owes no scarcity of resources, minerals and deposits.

## Reversal of western legacies

**T**HE EU President has informed the media that the community has reached an agreement on reforms designed to share the cost of hosting migrants and refugees and limit the numbers of people coming into the bloc after years of discussion on how to overhaul its outdated asylum rules. Envoys from member countries, the EU parliament, and the European Commission have reached a deal on the core political elements of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. According to the details, the reform includes speedier vetting of irregular arrivals, creation of border detention centres, accelerated deportation for rejected asylum applicants, and a solidarity mechanism to take pressure off southern countries experiencing big inflows of migrants. The proposed accord still needs formal approval by the European Council, representing the 27 member nations, and the European Parliament, before it enters the bloc's law-books, proposedly the next year.

Historically, the European Union, North America, and several other countries have adopted somewhat a liberal immigration regime, including the philosophy of child birth rights, a political asylum for those who face the risk of life, and religious or ethnic discrimination in their native/ country of residence, etc along with the core purpose of attracting brilliant and talented minds from across the globe to come to Europe and play their part in technological development and economic growth of the European Community. The majority of the EU's immigration laws particularly concerning asylum governed by the Geneva Convention and Common European Asylum System (CEAS) aim to harmonize asylum procedures, and facilitate victims of state oppression, ethnic or religious violence, and discrimination.

Historically, the European Union earned the utmost respect and dignity due to its lax immigration regime, civil liberties, human rights, and assistance to oppressed and disadvantaged communities. However, the EU's high morals were gradually influenced by its political, economic, and strategic interests, and the EU's approach largely became selective, one for EU's partners and allies and the other for unfriendly nations and target regions. Meanwhile, the EU's asylum policy had been massively used by criminals and crooks around the globe instead of genuine political dissidents, civil activists, and human rights defenders. This is the reason that the butcher of Karachi, and deserter Baloch leaders are enjoying luxurious lives in London and Switzerland but poor Muhajirs and Baloch are fighting with the state on their directions. Even then, the European Community claims it service to humanity. The EU is considering a set of reforms in its immigration laws, hopefully, the new law will bar illegal migration, while genuine travellers and law-abiding settlers will not be hurt by the newest legislation.



# Supreme Court should toss Colorado case

Ruth Marcus

**B**ACK then, the court's rush to intervene in the 2000 Florida recount stained its reputation, making it look like just another political actor in effectively awarding the presidency to George W. Bush. But, unlike Bush v. Gore, the Supreme Court should take this case, which Trump has already announced he will appeal. Yes, once again, whatever the justices do will be interpreted through the distorting lens of partisanship.

A decision that allows Trump to remain a candidate despite his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection - the most likely result, in my view - will be derided as the work of "partisan hacks," to use Justice Amy Coney Barrett's resonant phrase, siding with the party that appointed them. That skepticism would be understandable, given the record of this court's aggressive conservative majority. But it would also be wrong, because Section 3 of the 14th Amendment should not be used to prevent Americans from voting to elect the candidate of their choice. The best outcome, for the court and the country, would be for a unanimous court - preferably an 8-0 court with Justice Clarence Thomas recusing himself - to clear the way for Trump to run.

To back up, Section 3 of the 14th Amendment provides that "no person shall ... hold any office, civil or military, under the United States ... who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States ... to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof." Unlike the rest of the 14th Amendment, this post-Civil War provision, aimed at former Confederate officials, has been little used, then or in subsequent years. But Jan. 6, 2021, revived attention to the once-obscure provision, and challenges under Section 3 have been filed in multiple states.

On Tuesday, the Colorado Supreme Court found that Section 3 applies to Trump and therefore bars

him from appearing on the state's March 5 presidential primary ballot. The court divided 4-3; all seven justices were appointed by Democratic governors. A lower court had found that Trump engaged in insurrection but was not covered by Section 3 based on an implausible reading under which "officer of the United States" did not include the president. It defies logic to believe that the framers of the amendment meant to exclude for-

***But the majority agreed with the lower court that Trump's conduct amounted to engaging in insurrection under Section 3. "President Trump did not merely incite the insurrection," it said. "Even when the siege on the Capitol was fully underway, he continued to support it by repeatedly demanding that Vice President Pence refuse to perform his constitutional duty and by calling Senators to persuade them to stop the counting of electoral votes."***

mer Confederate soldiers from all offices but the most important, and the Colorado Supreme Court was correct to disagree with this interpretation.

"President Trump asks us to hold that Section Three disqualifies every oath-breaking insurrectionist except the most powerful one and that it bars oath-breakers from virtually every office, both state and federal, except the highest one in the land," the majority wrote. "Both results are inconsistent with the plain language and history of Section Three."

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President Pence refuse to perform his constitutional duty and by calling Senators to persuade them to stop the counting of electoral votes.

The three dissenting justices each wrote separately. The most interesting came from Justice Carlos Samour Jr., who said barring Trump from the ballot without legislation from Congress implementing Section 3

benefit of a decision by Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase in 1869 - the year after the 14th Amendment was ratified - that Section 3 requires enabling legislation.

In that case, from the days when justices rode the circuit, Chase ruled in the case of a formerly enslaved Black man who argued that his conviction for assault was void because the presiding judge had served in the Confederacy and was therefore disqualified from holding judicial office. Chase found that "legislation by Congress is necessary to give effect to the prohibition, by providing for such removal." A second, more troubling, avenue would be for the justices to conclude, in opposition to the Colorado Supreme Court, that Trump's speech is protected by the First Amendment and therefore cannot be punished as insurrection. In the seminal 1969 case, Brandenburg v. Ohio, the court said that "mere advocacy" of violence can't be punished "except where such advocacy is directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action and is likely to incite or produce such action."

Trump would surely seize on any such finding as vindication for his appalling behavior, which makes the Chase solution a better alternative.

But there is no world in which the justices are going to empower states to throw Trump off their ballots. Given that, the court should keep in mind: This is a moment it should aspire to be the unanimous court of Brown v. Board of Education, not the splintered, party-line body of Bush v. Gore. On that score, it was fitting that the Colorado court's ruling arrived on the day of the memorial service for Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who was reliably reported to have regretted her vote with the Bush v. Gore majority.

"Probably the Supreme Court added to the problem at the end of the day," O'Connor told the Chicago Tribune in 2013. That is a good test for the current court. Will its eventual ruling - and one seems unavoidable - add to the problem or help resolve it?

*The Washington Post*

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*The Washington Post*

# US can't deny China its developing nation status

Fu Suixi

**C**HINA has made great contributions to the global fight against climate change, and vowed to peak its carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and realize carbon neutrality before 2060. Yet developed economies asked China at the recently concluded United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, to make even more ambitious commitments, including reducing coal-fired power generation and contributing to the global "Loss and Damage Fund" created at last year's climate change conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

The developed world should know that China is not a developed country. Instead, it is a major developing country which fulfills its due responsibilities of addressing the challenges brought about by climate change. But the US Congress has been using every means possible to contain China's development by, among other things, labeling it as a "developed country".

Thanks to the United States' self-proclaimed role as a global leader, members of the House of Representatives voted 415 to 0 to pass the "PRC Is Not a Developing Country Act" on March 27 to strip China of its developing nation status. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the "Ending China's Developing Nation Status Act" without dissent on June 8 for the same purpose. The second act requires the US secretary of state to make efforts to change China's status from a developing to a developed nation in international organizations and treaties where a mechanism for change exists. The US senators who supported the bill claimed that China enjoys privileges and special treatment in many international organizations because of its developing nation status.

Although the Republican and Democratic party members in the Congress are highly polarized and disagree on most domestic and global issues, taking a tough stance against China is one of the few issues on which they readily agree, as the cross-party proposal of dozens of China-related bills in less than half a year shows. The US started using China's developing status as an excuse to contain China since the former Donald Trump administration. Saying that China was harming US interests in competitions by claiming the developing nation status, the former US president demanded the reform of the World Trade Organization. Accordingly, Trump signed the "Memorandum on Reforming Developing Country Status in the World Trade Organization" in July 2019 to target China, claiming that "the WTO continues to rest on an outdated dichotomy between developed and developing countries, allowing some WTO members to gain unfair advantages in the international trade arena".

Incumbent US President Joe Biden has been following Trump's policy, with the US Senate voting to approve an international climate treaty, suggesting that China no longer be classified as a developing country. It is important to make it clear that China, lawfully recognized as a developing country, cannot be deprived of its developing nation status just because a few politicians on Capitol Hill want it to. The World Bank divides economies into four income groups - low, lower-middle, upper-middle and high income - based on per capita gross national income (GNI). High-income countries, with per capita GNI above \$13,205, are usually designated as developed countries. In 2021, China's rankings, in terms of per capita GNI(\$11,880) and Human Development Index (0.768), were 68th and 79th respectively which were similar to other developing countries. Moreover, China's per capita GDP in 2022 was one-fifth that of the advanced economies and one-sixth that of the US.

The International Monetary Fund, on its part, classifies 196 economies into two major groups, advanced economies, and emerging market and developing economies, with China belonging to the latter group. The classification is based on countries' aggregate GDP, exports of goods and services and population rather than strict economic or other criteria, which have evolved over time. As an important member of the developing countries' family, China is committed to safeguarding the common interests of developing nations. And as the largest developing country, China endeavors to strengthen solidarity and cooperation with other developing countries, safeguard the common interests of the developing world, and promote the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind. Also, China has forged mutually beneficial relationships with many countries and international organizations, but it has never used its developing country status to compete with other developing countries for resources. Furthermore, China's contributions to global economic growth and the United Nations' regular and peacekeeping force budgets outweigh that of most developed countries, and its commitment to further open up its economy and offer concessions to institutions are moves that have won widespread praise from other developing countries. Yet the US has repeatedly said that China is a developed country, in order to deprive China of its developing country status and check its rise. Its aim is to coerce China to shoulder global responsibilities beyond its capabilities, increase China's development cost, and divide and weaken developing countries. However, the US can neither deny the fact that China is still a developing country nor stop China from realizing its national rejuvenation.

*The China Daily*

## Excluding Hamas from the 'day after' in Gaza would be a mistake

Mahjoob Zweiri

**I**N the field of the social sciences, it is very common to say "history repeats itself". However, there is nothing inevitable about how political events pan out and the choices that political actors make. In this sense, and in the current context of Israel's war on Gaza, it is important to consider what foreign intervention in a country's internal affairs and government can lead to.

When foreign powers decide to eject a certain political player from power and impose an unelected provisional government, they create two problems. First, the population of the country is denied their voting rights and their right to voice their political opinions. A governing body that does not represent the people ignores their demands and complaints, which leads to precarious outcomes, including internal conflict. Second, the forced marginalisation of a political party could weaken or silence it, but it could also

backfire. The denial of its right to political participation could push its members to reorganise, remobilise and return to the political scene with more hardline approaches or even violence.

The example of Afghanistan is quite telling. In 2001, a US-led coalition invaded the country and dislodged the Taliban government from power. In the subsequent proceedings to form a government, the Taliban was excluded after being present-ed as an illegitimate actor. What followed was 20 years of political instability and war, which ended with the Taliban coming back to power. Today, as the international community mulls the fate of Gaza after Israel's war on it ends, it is on its way to repeating its mistakes of the past. Of course, the history and current situation in Gaza are different from Afghanistan's, but there is a similar desire to marginalise a legitimate political actor. Since Israel announced its war on Israel, it has repeated-

ly made clear that it wants to dismantle and eliminate Hamas, for which it has received backing from its ally, the US, and European countries. The Israeli military has claimed it is after Hamas's fighters and military infrastructure, but over the past 75 days, it has become evident that it is also targeting its political structures, including ministries, institutions that provide civilian services, facilities responsible for basic utilities and so on. Worse than that, Israel has demonstrated its intentions to devastate the civilian infrastructure of the Gaza Strip and expel as many of its residents as possible.

In a November 17 interview with NPR, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refused to say who should take over governing Gaza; he did insist that whoever it is, it "can't be people committed to funding terrorism and inculcating terrorism". He then went on to compare the Israeli invasion

of Gaza to the Allies' occupation of Germany and Japan after World War II. But the comparison Netanyahu drew between Germany, Japan and Gaza is inaccurate. Gaza, as well as the West Bank and East Jerusalem, has been under Israeli occupation since 1967. The Palestinians, unlike the Germans and the Japanese, do not have a state and have the status of an occupied population. As such, under international law, their acts of armed resistance are not equal or comparable to acts of aggression by an independent state with a national army.

Resistance in Palestine under occupation has historically taken numerous forms and has been channelled by various political parties, both on the left and on the right. Yet, Israel has labelled all of them as "terrorist", whether it was the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine,

the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or any other. If Hamas is dismantled, as Israel seeks to do, another resistance group would take its place. This is due to the fact that the culture of resistance is embedded in the Palestinian society on the religious, political, economic and social levels and it will require much more than the eradication of one party to change that. That is why, the plans of foreign powers to impose an unelected government on Gaza are likely to backfire. The US specifically has proposed the unification of the West Bank and Gaza under the rule of the Palestinian Authority as a step towards Palestinian statehood. Such a move would deny the right of the

Palestinian people to choose who they want to be governed by. It is important to note that Hamas won the 2006 legislative elections in the occupied Palestinian territories and its government was democratically elected.

Since then, it has become so embedded in the Palestinian society in general, and in Gaza specifically, that its marginalisation in any future Palestinian would create massive societal tensions. But one thing is clear: If Western and regional powers repeat past mistakes of marginalising a major political actor and seek to impose their will on the Palestinian people, they would not get a different outcome than they have had in the past.

*Aljazeera*

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# Justin Trudeau’s belated and shameful volte face on Gaza

Andrew Mitrovica

SOME of Israel's most prominent enablers now claim to **Sahhor the scope of Israel's wanton killing of Palestinians with a barrage of bullets, bombs, and rampaging bulldozers. Earlier this week, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak joined France and Germany in calling for a "sustainable ceasefire" to stop the killing.**

Like his European allies, Sunak said that "too many civilian lives have been lost". Sunak's belated admonition invites several questions: When did he realise that "too many [Palestinian] lives have been lost"? What was the number of dead Palestinians that tipped into "too many"? Why didn't 5,000, 10,000 or 15,000 dead Palestinians constitute "too many"? It is touching, isn't it, to watch Sunak and craven company find, surprisingly, a moral compass when, all along, we warned them that this is what was going to happen. We told them that their fulsome embrace of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was bound to mean the litany of horrors the world has witnessed in the shattered remains of Gaza and the occupied West Bank. But Sunak and craven company did not listen. They ignored us. So, they backed, once again, Netanyahu's permanent licence to kill as many Palestinians as he wants to, for as long as he wants to.

Netanyahu has obliged them. Happily. Eagerly. Indiscriminately. Almost 20,000 Palestinians have been killed - mostly children and women. Thousands of others are buried beneath the rubble. Thousands more have been maimed in body, mind, and perhaps their souls. Netanyahu, true to his foul nature, has dismissed every one of those dead and damaged human beings, including boys and girls, as "collateral damage". Apparently, Netanyahu killed too many Palestinians, too

quickly for London's, Berlin's, and Paris's liking. Hence, the qualified volte-face. Israel has the right to defend itself, they say. But it shouldn't kill that many Palestinian civilians that quickly. It's not a good look, they say. Canada's prime minister, Justin Trudeau, has finally had a "humanitarian" epiphany too.

Not too long ago, Trudeau also told Netanyahu that he could, in effect, do whatever he wanted to do in Gaza and the West Bank since Israel had the right to defend itself. The silly, verging-on-juvenile hubris. As if Netanyahu needed Trudeau's blessing to do what he has done in Gaza and the West Bank.

Anyway, several weeks later, like Sunak et al, Trudeau appears to be having second thoughts. Today, he agrees that Israel may have gone too far, too quickly, in Gaza and the West Bank. Trudeau had Canada's UN ambassador, Bob Rae, announce the sudden change of strategic heart. Rae told the General Assembly last week that Canada supported a ceasefire. Trudeau's decision has provoked a furious rhetorical response from the "no ceasefire" quarters inside and outside the Liberal caucus who, predictably, have insisted that the jejune prime minister had not only abandoned Israel, but sided with the murderous Hamas. The carnage in Gaza is no longer palatable. Only zealots refuse to acknowledge that the winds have shifted. Trudeau can see what most of us can see. It is, of course, an indelible shame that he and the other pusillanimous prime ministers and presidents waited so long.

If they had heeded the alarm, they might have saved a lot of Palestinian boys and girls from what former British Defence Minister Ben Wallace has described as Israel's "killing rage". Still, despite the

emerging ceasefire refrain, I don't believe that Israel will end its "killing rage" soon. It's too late. As long as US President Joe Biden keeps telling Netanyahu that he can do whatever he wants to Palestinians, for as long as he wants to, the "killing rage" will claim more Palestinians. Inevitably, 20,000 will become 30,000 and on and on it will go until Israel, and Israel alone, decides its "killing rage" is spent. That doesn't mean that Trudeau is powerless to help Palestinians in desperate straits. To help relieve their shocking hardship and suffering. To extend a generous, welcoming hand to a people whose generosity and welcoming spirit is familiar to anyone who has visited Gaza or the West Bank. Trudeau can help but it will require the will to help. It will require Trudeau to push back against the noxious naysayers who will denounce him for doing the right thing, at the right time - just as he did when Syrians and Ukrainians, fleeing want and fear, found haven in Canada.

Trudeau did it on the eve of Christmas in 2015. Back then, in an important display of solidarity, Trudeau greeted the first Syrian refugees to Canada at airports as part of "Operation Syrian Refugees." "As a country, we opened our arms and our hearts to people and families fleeing conflict, insecurity, and persecution," Trudeau said in December 2020. Later, many of the thousands of Syrian refugees who came to Canada would become citizens. They built new lives here. They went to school. They opened businesses. They became "valued members of the community". And, as a tangible expression of gratitude, they, in turn, have helped refugees who have arrived after them because they understood, as Canadians, it was their

duty. In 2022, Trudeau erased bureaucratic barriers to allow many Ukrainians to settle in Canada. It was a humanitarian emergency, Trudeau said, that demanded a swift, humanitarian answer. As of late November 2023, more than 200,000 Ukrainians have settled in Canada - far from the disfiguring war that has changed their lives and homeland forever. The applications of another nearly one million Ukrainians for "temporary residency" in Canada have been approved, as have new immigration rules to make that "temporary" status "permanent".

Canada had confirmed its compassionate bona fides. The test will be whether Trudeau can show that same compassion for Palestinians. Will he open Canada's "arms" and "hearts" to Palestinian families "fleeing conflict, insecurity, and persecution"? The realist in me doubts that he will. Political calculations trump humanity even in the face of the strafing, starvation, and siege Palestinians are enduring. Syrian and Ukrainian lives matter. Palestinians are the "international community's" unwanted orphans. Trudeau will not risk the wrath of the noxious naysayers - and their faithful friends in the establishment press - who traffic in odious caricatures about the Palestinian civilians are. That's why, I suspect, Trudeau broke his word, as prime minister, to 100 injured Palestinian children that he had vowed, as opposition leader, to help arrange care for in Canada to mend their broken bodies and minds. A politician who deserts children is, I'm afraid, likely incapable of summoning the decency to admit that he was wrong and to try to save them. That will be Trudeau's other lasting shame. When he had the means and opportunity to heal children, Trudeau shunned them and their families because they were Palestinians.

# There is a way out of climate crisis

Carola Rackete

while addressing the climate crisis. However, CCS technologies are inefficient and costly, and there is little indication that they could be scaled up soon enough to make a difference. As such, they currently serve no purpose other than prolonging the burning of fossil fuels with all its destructive consequences, from gas leakages and oil spillages to collapsing mines.

False solutions like CCS make it possible for those in positions of power to close their eyes a little bit longer, to further delay change that is long overdue, and keep on destroying the planet. And in the process, they prevent real solutions from receiving public attention and funding. CCS expansion can be found in the programme of the German Green Party; fossil fuel companies, such as the German corporation Wintershall, are pushing for it, and it was even mentioned in the final text of the COP28. Why? Well, to keep capitalism running, fossil fuels burning, and European GDP growing - at the cost of lives and livelihoods elsewhere. Another corporate delay tactic is promoting even more markets for carbon offsets, nowadays called "nature-based solutions". Carbon offset certificates do not even reduce emissions in 80 to 90 percent of the cases. Despite this, nations like Australia and the United Kingdom are already extending their carbon markets to nature, while the European Commission is planning for biodiversity credits and water pollution trading.

COP is a hoax and has become more and more corrupted over the years. The reality is - and everyone knows it - the only way forward is an end to fossil fuels, an end to corporate capture of politics and a far-reaching conversion of industry away from any fossil fuels. Some countries are already extending their carbon markets to nature, while the European Commission is planning for biodiversity credits and water pollution trading. COP is a hoax and has become more and more corrupted over the years. The reality is - and everyone knows it - the only way forward is an end to fossil fuels, an end to corporate capture of politics and a far-reaching conversion of industry away from any fossil fuels. Some countries are already extending their carbon markets to nature, while the European Commission is planning for biodiversity credits and water pollution trading. COP is a hoax and has become more and more corrupted over the years. The reality is - and everyone knows it - the only way forward is an end to fossil fuels, an end to corporate capture of politics and a far-reaching conversion of industry away from any fossil fuels. Some countries are already extending their carbon markets to nature, while the European Commission is planning for biodiversity credits and water pollution trading.

natural instead of industrially produced fertilisers for a change towards ecological agriculture. It is up to organisations and people from the global north to raise and create pressure on the streets to make our governments join. The European Union, while clearly not interested in sharing its wealth, is nevertheless in an economic position to walk ahead much faster than the UN agreements. The EU at least implemented the Green Deal, one of the most progressive policy packages in the world - though it falsely aims to grow the economy by a green transition instead of moving towards sustainability. But lately, policy is turning from bad to worse. In the last few months, conservatives and the extreme right in Europe partnered to destroy some of the most important laws of the Green Deal: the nature restoration law and the sustainable use directive for reducing pesticide use. If this alliance is strengthened or gains a majority after the next parliamentary election in June, there is little hope for the EU institutions to keep moving towards an end to fossil fuels. As a candidate for the next EU parliament, such a far-right and conservative alliance is what worries me most. A lot will depend on people understanding the importance of EU decisions and turning out to vote.

What we know is that in the end, change does not come from the COP or the EU Commission. Change comes from below. In Europe, it comes from places like GKN at Campi Bisenzio in Italy, where workers are pushing for an ecological conversion of their abandoned automotive factory. It comes from trade unionists and climate activists in Germany, who have teamed up to support bus drivers in their struggle for better working conditions and more public transport investments. It comes from common resistance struggles of farmers and activists for fair communal use of water, like in France. From local resistance against LNG imports or fracking as in Rügen or Piombino. We need to join forces against corporate takeover and the rise of the far-right. We have to build new collaborations for a fast-moving, bottom-up, people-oriented ecological transition. As Europeans, we have to abstain from false solutions offered at COP and join the lead of the Global South to end fossil fuels.

## Coal mines had canaries

**I am pelted by wet snow as I climb above 8,000 feet in the Sierra Nevada of eastern California, tugging a sled loaded with batteries, bolts, wire and 40 pounds of sunflower seeds critical to our mountain chickadee research.**

At the research site, I duck under a tarp and open a laptop to program "smart" bird feeders for an upcoming experiment with fellow behavioral ecologist Vladimir Pravosudov. I have spent the past six years monitoring a population of mountain chickadees here, tracking their life cycles and, importantly, their memory, in a system Pravosudov established in 2013. The consistent record from this site has provided us with a unique window to observe how chickadees survive in extreme winter snowfall and to identify ecological patterns and changes.

In recent history, intense winters are often followed by drought years here in the Sierra Nevada and in much of the US West. This pattern has been identified as one of the unexpected symptoms of climate change, and its impact on the chickadees is providing an early warning of the disruptions ahead within these coniferous forest ecosystems. As my legs get colder and wetter in the mountain snow, a charming and chipper "DEE DEE DEE" chimes down from a nearby tree. How is it that a bird weighing barely more than a few sheets of paper is more comfortable in this storm than I am? The answer comes down to the chickadees' incredible spatial cognitive abilities.

Cognition is how animals acquire, process, store and act on information from their environment. It is critical to many species but often subtle and difficult to measure in nonhuman animals. Chickadees are food-storing specialists that hide tens of thousands of individual food items throughout the forest under

edges of tree bark, or even between pine needles, each fall. To survive, they use their specialized spatial memory to retrieve those food caches in the harsh winter months. We measure the spatial memory of chickadees by hanging a circular array of eight feeders equipped with radio-frequency identification and filled with seed in several locations across our field site. Birds are tagged with transponder tags in leg bands that contain individual identification numbers and allow them to open the doors of their assigned feeders to get a food reward - if they remember which feeder is theirs. Over eight years, our findings demonstrate that chickadees with better spatial memory abilities are more likely to survive in the high mountains than those with worse memories.

However, chickadees may be facing increasing challenges that will shape their future in the mountains. In 2017, a year with record-breaking snow levels, adult chickadees showed the lowest probability of survival ever measured at our site. This exceptionally extreme winter made it difficult for even the memory-savvy chickadees to forage and survive. Nevertheless, triumphant populations have persisted in high-elevation mountain environments, but their future is becoming uncertain. The Sierra Nevada and other mountain ranges in western North America have been experiencing "weather whiplash" - more extreme snow years and drought years, amplified by climate change. In 2023's record winter, over 17 feet of snow covered the landscape that our chickadees were using every day. The intense storms and cold temperatures not only made it difficult for birds to survive the winter, they made it almost impossible for the chickadees to breed the next summer: 46% of nests

at our higher elevation site failed to produce any offspring. Even in years of tremendous snowfall, chickadees can still use their finely honed spatial memories to recover food. However, severe storms can shorten their survival odds. And if they do survive the winter, their nesting sites - tree cavities - may be buried under feet of snow in the spring.

It doesn't matter how smart you are if you can't reach your nest. Extreme snow oscillations also affect insects that are critical for feeding chickadee chicks. Limited resources lead to smaller chickadee offspring that are less likely to survive high in the mountains. Snow cover is good for overwintering insects in most cases, as it provides an insulating blanket that saves them from dying during those freezing months. However, if the snow persists too long into the summer, insects can run out of energy and die before they can emerge, or they emerge after chickadees really need them. Drought years also can drive insect population decline. These compounded effects mean that in some years chickadees simply don't successfully nest at all. This leads to a decline in chickadee populations in years with worse whiplash - drought followed by high snow on repeat - especially at high elevations. This is especially concerning, as many mountain-dwelling avian species are forecasted to move up in elevation to escape warming temperatures, which may turn out to be hazardous.

Chickadees may be portrayed as radiating tranquil beauty on holiday cards, but realistically, these loud, round ruffians are tough survivors of harsh winter environments in northern latitudes. When the symptoms of climate change reach such extremes that they can't make it, we should all take notice.

*The Los Angeles Times*

## This shocking state law could spell disaster for migrants and Texans alike

ON Tuesday, the ACLU filed a lawsuit in response to Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's signing of a bill that he says will enable his state to fight illegal immigration. Under SB 4, migrants who enter Texas without authorization will be committing a state crime. Local law enforcement officers in the Lone Star State will have the power to arrest them, and state judges will be able to order them removed to Mexico. The law is scheduled to take effect in March. Abbott said at a Monday news conference that he was taking this action on immigration because "President Biden's deliberate inaction has left Texas to fend for itself."

In escalating the battle over immigration between Texas and the Biden administration, Abbott is playing a dangerous, cynical game. His new law is constitutionally suspect and logistically impractical. It will open the door to racial profiling of Latinos while placing Texas communities at risk. And there is no sound evidence that it will lead to a significant drop in illegal immigration.

Abbott made this move against a backdrop of record levels of unauthorized entries at the southern border. In November alone, officials apprehended about 192,000 migrants between ports of entry, a border patrol chief told CNN. This ongoing influx of migrants has become a huge political liability for President Joe Biden, and a drain on resources in border states.

Yet SB 4 is legally problematic because it encroaches on federal authority over immigration. Under the Supremacy Clause of the constitution, federal laws take precedence over state measures, and existing federal law already guarantees migrants the right to apply for asylum. Texas cannot sweep such humanitarian relief away with its own law. In addition, for over 100 years the Supreme Court has held that the power to regulate immigration lies exclusively with the federal government. In the 2012 case Arizona v. US, the high court established that states may not put in place their own immigration laws, citing "the federal government's broad, undoubted power over immigration." It's no wonder that a group of 30 former immigration judges, appointed by both Republicans and Democrats, signed a November letter opposing SB 4 as unlawful.

SB 4 will allow state and local law enforcement in Texas to arrest people they suspect of being in the country illegally. However, as some Texas police chiefs have pointed out, this will pull police away from their regular duties, such as fighting violent crime. The law burdens local officers with immigration responsibilities, for which they may not have been trained. In a state that is 40% Latino, according to the US Census Bureau, and about 17% foreign-born, according to the American Immigration Council, how are state

and local police supposed to decide who is undocumented - by asking for papers? Or judging people based on their skin color or language preference?

Turning all police into de facto immigration agents is bad policy because it will discourage migrants and their families from reporting crimes or coming forward as witnesses. Texas' new law will likely sow distrust between local law enforcement and Latino communities. That's why three county chief executives in Texas have written to Biden, urging him to take action against SB 4; they recognize the measure as a threat to public safety. It also represents a potential financial burden on state and local jail and justice systems, as Texas localities will bear the costs of incarcerating migrants and adjudicating their cases.

Without a doubt, SB 4 is an extreme measure. Just ask Abbott. He called the legislation that he signed on Monday "so extreme" that it would keep migrants away from the state. His comment bespeaks a lack of compassion for people who are fleeing persecution and violence in their countries of origin. For migrants, SB4 will mean more suffering, more mistreatment and an improper abridgement of their right to an asylum hearing and due process. Since the law curtails access to lawful humanitarian relief, it could drive more migrants to attempt to

enter the country with smugglers and cartels, which is hardly a desirable outcome for anyone.

True, there is a crisis at our southern border. But Abbott is wrong when he says that Biden is doing nothing on immigration. Biden has ended Title 42, a Trump-era public health regulation used to turn migrants back at the border. He has granted Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelan nationals; and set up a new mobile app that asylum-seekers can use to apply for appointments. Biden is taking action on immigration - just not the kind of action that Abbott wants. Nor are our borders "open"; this year, the administration has been ramping up deportations. The president makes immigration policy, not state governors, and for good reason. Imagine if all 50 states initiated their own immigration and deportation programs. It would create havoc with US foreign policy. Already, Abbott's actions could backfire, by sending a message to lawmakers in DC working on an immigration compromise (tied to Ukraine aid) that GOP leaders are not acting in good faith on this issue. SB 4 could throw a wrench in their plans, by conflicting with any possible immigration deal. SB 4 is an assault on civil and human rights and a threat to public safety. It undermines federal authority on immigration. The Biden administration should join the ACLU in suing to prevent this harmful measure from going into effect.

CNN

## Immigration underpins the rise of West’s populist narrative

Mohamed Chebaro

frameworks around asylum."

The British PM - under fire at home from his own party, let alone an electorate fed up with Conservative Party chaos - hailed Meloni's approach to tackling illegal migration, while announcing that they had agreed to co-fund a project to help return migrants to their home countries from Tunisia. Though few details have emerged about the Tunisia plan, it seems to me that it is another attempt to throw taxpayers' money at a complex problem, wishing it would make it disappear. Sunak and Meloni's own policies are already facing strong criticism; the former for his plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda and the latter for her efforts to limit the activities of charity rescue ships in the Mediterranean.

The UK's proposed Rwanda scheme, first formulated in April 2022 by then-PM Boris Johnson, was designed to deter migrants from making the dangerous journey across the English Channel from France and to break the business model of people smugglers. Under the plan, anyone who arrived illegally in the UK after Jan. 1, 2022, faced being deported to Rwanda. However, the first flights were blocked by a decision of the European Court of Human Rights, which the UK Supreme Court last month endorsed. The ruling was based on safety grounds, for fear of returning asylum seekers being sent by Rwanda to other unsafe countries. London has already paid Rwanda £240 million (\$304 million) for the scheme, which has a maximum capacity of 500 asylum seekers at best. A new emergency

Rwanda bill tabled by Sunak's government has drawn criticism from all tribes of the ruling Conservative Party, as well as the opposition. It aims to address the Supreme Court ruling preventing anyone from being sent anywhere other than back to Britain and affirm that Rwanda is a safe country. It disapples sections of Britain's Human Rights Act and gives ministers the final say on whether to comply with European Court of Human Rights injunctions.

The desire to curb immigration has long been a rallying point for the British right and far right, with "taking back control" of the country's borders and ending freedom of movement key factors in the UK's 2016 vote to leave the EU. It remains one of the most important issues for voters. But successive governments over the last 13 years have failed to limit net migration to under 100,000 per year, as the Conservative Party pledged in 2010. In 2022, the number hit 745,000, partly due to new visa rules for arrivals from Ukraine and Hong Kong. Sunak believes a raft of measures he announced this month will slash arrival numbers by 300,000 annually, while also hoping that the Rwanda scheme will reduce the number arriving on small boats to under the 45,000 recorded last year.

The idea of sending asylum seekers to a faraway land has long played on the minds of many, as populist leaders consistently magnify the threat migrants present to the native population. It has recently become a way for aspiring leaders to cheaply win votes. But it is not a problem that will simply disappear by adopting half-baked deterrent policies,

AS 2023 draws to an end, for UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak 2024 is likely to start with the same old issue: Trying but failing to stop the small boats from ferrying migrants or asylum seekers to British shores. Even if his plan to send a few of them to Rwanda gets the go-ahead in Parliament next year, it is increasingly clear that immigration and refugee problems are here to stay, not only in Britain but across Europe.

Many nations are grappling with an uncontrollable influx that has been overwhelming the public debate and enabling more far-right parties to enter parliaments and governments, normalizing as a result the hard-line, populist, inflammatory narrative on migration. This has now become mainstream, with no reasonable attempts made to find a common denominator that would allow a sober review and reform of asylum and immigration laws. After meeting with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni to push for global reforms to the asylum system, Sunak warned that the number of migrants could soon "overwhelm" Europe, in a speech the British Conservative Party leader delivered to a gathering of Meloni's far-right Brothers of Italy party. In it, he warned that some "enemy" states were deliberately "driving people to our shores to try and destabilize our societies."

Though he stopped short of repeating ex-US President Donald Trump's claim that immigrants "are poisoning the blood of our country," Sunak instead insisted that tackling this problem "requires us to update our laws and lead the international conversation to amend the postwar





# Weekly inflation falls by 0.51%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.51 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on December 21, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 310.00 points as compared to 311.58 points during the past week, according to the PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 42.60 percent.

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

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732, decreased by 0.39 percent and went down to 304.83 points from last week's 306.02 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 it decreased by 0.40 percent, 0.39 percent, 0.44 and 0.59 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 18 (35.29%) items increased, 09 (17.65%) items decreased and 24 (47.06%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW) included potatoes (13.17%), petrol super (4.97%), diesel (4.68%), tomatoes (3.45%), sugar (1.16%), wheat flour bag (0.33%), chicken (0.13%), rice basmati broken (0.11%) and cooking oil 5 litre (0.07%).

The items that recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis, eggs (10.42%), firewood whole (1.23%), onions (1.19%), pulse moong (0.88%), pulse gram (0.79%), garlic & rice irri-6/9 (0.40%) each, pulse masoor (0.30%), lpg (0.26%), bananas (0.19%), shirting (0.15%) and georgette

(0.13%)

On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the items that witnessed decrease in prices included f onions (23.92%), mustard oil (4.24%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (1.59%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.62%) and bananas (0.06%).

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices on YoY basis included gas charges for q1 (1108.59%), cigarettes (93.22%), chilies powder (81.74%), wheat flour (78.80%), garlic (72.48%), rice basmati broken (62.52%), rice irri-6/9 (59.45%), gents sponge chappal (58.05%), tomatoes (56.89%), gents sandal (53.37%), sugar (50.33%) and gur (49.86%).

## OGDCL to construct 84 climate resilient houses in Jhal Magsi

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In continuation of its strategic collaboration for uplifting the local community, Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) has partnered with the Health and Nutrition Development Society (HANDS) for the construction of 84 climate-resilient houses at Umaid Ali Rawtani village of Jhal Magsi district of Balochistan province.

The transformative initiative aimed to uplift the community of Jhal Magsi in Balochistan. The groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of climate-resilient houses took place at Umaid Ali Rawtani village, marking a significant milestone in this collaborative endeavor. OGDCL and HANDS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a Model Village at Umaid Ali Rawtani vil-



lage in Jhal Magsi district, with a total cost of Rs. 84.929 million.

OGDCL, with a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) focus on Health, Infrastructure, Water supply, and Environment, aims to make a positive impact on the lives of the local communities in Jhal Magsi, an area that has

faced challenges of poverty and flood-related adversities.

This strategic partnership between OGDCL and HANDS lays the foundation for the construction of 84 climate-resilient houses. Each house will consist of a 15 x 15 room, a washroom, a kitchen, and a veranda, providing essential amenities for the

residents. The construction is expected to be completed within a time-frame of 4 to 6 months.

The initiative underscores OGDCL's commitment to social responsibility and community welfare. OGDCL remains steadfast in its dedication to sustainable development and positive societal impact.

## BOP launches free helmet drive for safer roads

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: At the Bank of Punjab, our organizational ethos is deeply rooted in the principles of community welfare. We take pride in our commitment to fostering a sense of inclusivity among our people, as it forms the cornerstone of our institutional growth. This dedication serves as our humble contribution to the betterment of our nation. Our tagline, 'Har Fard Ka Khayaal' - 'Care for All,' signifies a commitment to community welfare, reflecting our steadfast dedication to values with universal resonance.

As part of the Bank's corporate social responsibility, we are pleased to announce a special initiative focused on road safety and community welfare. The Bank of Punjab will be distributing helmets to both our staff members and the general public at various locations. Our primary objective is to raise awareness about the importance of wearing helmets while riding two-wheelers, contributing to



the reduction of road accidents and fostering safer road habits. Helmets, provided at no cost, will play a pivotal role in mitigating head injuries and preventing fatal outcomes.

A launch ceremony was conducted at the Civil Secretariat in Lahore, where Chief Secretary Punjab Mr. Zahid Akhtar Zaman, Secretary Finance Punjab Mr. Mujahid Sherdil, Mr. Zafar Masud (President & CEO – BOP), Nofel Daud (Group Head Strategy & Strategic Initiatives), along with other esteemed government officials and the Bank's senior manage-

ment, participated in the ceremony and distributed helmets among motorists.

Speaking on the occasion Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman said, "We extend our sincere appreciation to the Bank of Punjab for spearheading impactful initiatives. Under the leadership of Zafar Masud (President & CEO – BOP) their unwavering support for the Government of Punjab's initiatives is commendable. The Punjab government's ongoing efforts to promote awareness about driving licenses align seamlessly with our shared commitment to road safety. Helmets are an integral part

of ensuring the safety of two-wheel riders, and we applaud the bank's dedication to enhancing safety measures on our roads."

Addressing the attendees at the launch ceremony, Zafar Masud (President & CEO – BOP) stated, "We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the Government of Punjab for their unwavering support. This initiative, though modest in scale, underscores the Bank of Punjab's commitment to social responsibility. We stand ready to offer any necessary support to the government for such initiatives. Through our collaboration, not only do we aspire to enhance road safety, but we also seek to fortify BOP's reputation as a socially conscientious organization, exemplified by our contribution of free helmets." The impact of this initiative will extend beyond immediate road safety, as our commitment to broader societal well-being is integral to our values. This underscores our dedication to responsible corporate citizenship.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor selling vegetables on his stall at H-9 weekly bazar in federal capital.

## Senate body discusses financial challenges faced by PSM

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Industry and Production Friday discussed multiple options to address the financial challenges of Pakistan Steel Mill.

The meeting, chaired by Senator Khalida Ateeq, was held at the Parliament House to deliberate on critical issues concerning the industrial sector of the country. During the meeting, the committee received a comprehensive update on the progress regarding the previous recommendations concerning Pakistan Steel Mill, National Fertilizer Corporation, and Pakistan Industrial Technical Assistance Center.

The Chief Financial Officer of Pakistan Steel Mill highlighted a 25% increase in the temporary relief allowance for employees, effective since September 2023, initially emphasizing its one-year duration. Of profound concern for the committee was the alarming surge in theft incidents within Pakistan

Steel Mill, resulting in substantial financial losses.

Officials revealed that since 2021, thefts have escalated, causing a loss of approximately 18 million rupees, with recoveries amounting to 4.9 million rupees. The theft of machinery and assets has significantly impacted the operations and stability of Pakistan Steel Mill.

Dilating on the issue, the committee discussed the correlation between decreased workforce and the rise in theft incidents.

The CFO of Pakistan Steel Mill attributed the increase in thefts to the decreased workforce, highlighting a drastic reduction in employees from over 9,000 to a deserted environment, thereby escalating security vulnerabilities.

The committee expressed apprehension regarding the prolonged vacant CEO position for the past four months.

Emphasizing the urgency of the CEO's appointment, committee

members underscored the necessity to adhere to the appointment protocol, urging swift action to fill the vacant position in line with regulations. In response to the prevailing challenges, the committee showed intent to call the caretaker Minister for Industry and Production and the Secretary for a subsequent meeting and the discussion on Pakistan Steel Mill-related matters was adjourned for two weeks.

The committee mandated a comprehensive briefing on theft prevention strategies, the future outlook for the mill, safeguarding employee welfare, protecting assets, and immediate plans.

The body stressed for the presence of the caretaker minister and secretary, issuing directives for their proactive involvement and readiness to address current issues. The meeting also addressed key financial matters and discussed outstanding and overdue payments to be made by

National Fertilizers Marketing Limited, and Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan to Trading Corporation of Pakistan.

Highlighting the urgency of resolving these payments, the meeting emphasized the importance of timely action to avoid accruing additional interest.

Moreover, officials from the National Fertilizer Marketing Limited presented insights on the issue of contract employees, shedding light on the proposal to increase the salaries of these employees and consider regularizing their services within the organization. They detailed the current status, mentioning a reduction in the number of contract employees from 600 to 300 due to attrition and lay-offs over time.

They stressed the importance of neither dismissing nor permanently hiring these employees due to their numbers exceeding the organizational requirement.

### Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at the Port where five ships namely, Seaspan Ganges, SpilKartini, Nord Vanquish, Kamome Victoria and Sheng Ping Hai carrying Container, Edible oil, Gasoline and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Oil Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on 21st December.

Meanwhile three more ships, Sheng De Hai, Estia and Silver Eleanor also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours to unload Coal and Edible oil respectively. A total of eight ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Seaspan Ganges and SpilKartini left the port on today morning and two more ships, Kouras Queen and Nord Vanquish are expected to sail on same day. Cargo volume of 150,799 tonnes, comprising 106,260 tonnes imports cargo and 44,539 tonnes export cargo carried in 2,040 Containers (603 TEUs Imports and 1,437 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

## Pakistan's textile exports reach \$6.88b in 5 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan exported textile products worth \$6,883.615 million during the initial five months of the current financial year (2023-24), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The exports of the product however witnessed a decline of 6.50 percent during July-November (2023-24) when compared to the exports of \$7,361,914 million during July-November (2022-23). The textile commodities that witnessed positive growth in trade included raw cotton, the exports of which grew by 253.10 percent, from \$11.253 million last year to \$39.733 million this year. Likewise, the exports of cotton yarn increased by 50.30 percent, from \$328.197 million last year to \$493.277 million this year, cotton carded or combed by 22.86 percent, from \$0.477 million to \$0.586 million and towels by 0.74 percent, from \$409.510 million to \$412.544. The textile commodities that witnessed negative growth include cotton

cloth, the exports of which declined by 13.35 percent, from \$903.685 million to \$783.087 million, yarn other than cotton yarn by 11.47 percent, from \$19.455 million to \$17.223 million, and knitwear by 13.11 percent, from \$2,112.818 million to \$1,835.782 million.

Likewise, the exports of bed wear declined by 5.62 percent from \$1,219.307 million to \$1,150.777 million, tents, canvas and tarpaulin by 5.72 percent, from \$51.514 million to \$48.568 million, ready-made garments by 9.45 percent, from \$1,513.719 million to \$1,370.736 million.

The exports of art, silk and synthetic textile also decreased by 18.55 percent by declining from \$179.327 million to \$146.068 million, madeup articles by 4.72 percent, from \$307.390 million to \$292.889 million whereas the exports of all other textile materials also went down by 4.23 percent, from \$305.261 million to \$292.345 million.

Meanwhile, on year –on-

year basis, the textile exports declined by 7.21 percent by falling from \$1,420.921 million in November 2022 to \$1,318.536 million in November 2023. On month-on-month basis, the exports declined by 8.26 percent when compared to exports of \$107.009 million in October 2023.

It is pertinent to mention here that country's merchandise trade deficit contracted by 33.59 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year compared to the corresponding period of last year.

The Trade deficit from July-November (2023-24) was recorded at \$9.378 billion as against the deficit of \$14.122 billion in July–November (2022-23), showing negative growth of 33.59 per cent. During the period under review, the exports increased by 1.93 per cent to \$12.172 billion compared to the exports of \$11.942 billion during the corresponding period of last year, according to the latest PBS data.

## Sale of second-hand winter clothes gains momentum

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sale of winter clothes, particularly second-hand, has gained momentum as many stalls selling woolies can be seen in different areas of the federal capital – the latest rising trend of second-hand stuff is going to overtake fast fashion in the next few years.

Heaps of second-hand quilts, blankets and rugs are up for sale at weekly Sunday bazaars. The main advantage of buying second-hand clothing is that it is much cheaper than buying new. All kinds of wear and accessories including gloves, woolen hats, mufflers, pullovers, sweaters, shirts and jackets are also seen hanging in front of shops and stalls of weekly bazaars. Crowds of people, both poor and rich, can be

seen bargaining with retailers in markets and Sunday bazaars. According to the World Economic Forum, the market value of second-hand clothing has reached \$24 billion by 2018 and is expected to double in the middle of the next decade.

Muhammad Khan, a buyer at H-9 Weekly Bazaar said that second-hand clothes were once affordable for the people but now the exorbitant rates of clothes in these bazaars have created a sense of frustration among them.

Ahmed Ali, another, second-hand clothes stall holder in the bazaar said that the variety of imported clothes is available at economical prices which is a great source to protect the dignity of white collar strata of the society.

He said that prices of second-hand winter stuff have registered a significant increase in the bazaars. He claimed that "we are already taking a minimum profit on selling these products despite price-hike situations in the country."

The shops for second-hand items are not always for poor or poverty-stricken people, many middle-class and wealthy individuals shop in the shops and also swap designer clothing on a regular basis. "Some people purchase second-hand stuff due to the economic problems." The bazaars second-hand clothes are found everywhere in the city and poor customers are looking for moderately priced warm clothes for the winter season.

### Gold rates up by Rs.1,800 to Rs 219,800 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 1,800 and was sold at Rs 219,800 on Friday against its sale at Rs 218,000 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 1543 to Rs 188,443 from Rs 186,900 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs 172,740 from Rs 171,325, 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 increased by \$19 to \$2,074 from \$2,055, the Association reported.

## PHDEC conducted a webinar

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Horticulture Development & Export Company (PHDEC) conducted a webinar on the topic of "Optimizing NARC-HG1 Garlic Production with Value-Added Processes & Examining Nutritional Contents". The aim of the webinar was to bring the maximum of the stakeholders on board to discuss nutritive composition, health benefits and value-added products of NARC-HG1 garlic.

Mr. Jafar Ali, Assistant Manager PHDEC, welcomed all the participants and informed the participants about the vision, mission, mandate and objectives of PHDEC. He briefed about product manual and product report developed by PHDEC and webinars

arranged on garlic. He extended PHDEC full support to the stakeholders in any product and export related matters.

Mr. Athar Hussain Khokhar, the CEO of PHDEC, extended a warm welcome to the participants, providing valuable context on PHDEC's active role in the horticulture sector and its wide mandate. He emphasized that PHDEC's commitment remains steadfast in supporting initiatives that strengthen the prosperity and well-being of horticulture cultivators and farmers.

Mr. Hasan Aziz Bilgrami, CEO of BioMasdar Limited, explained the that farmers may avoid post-harvest losses if they would manage proper transportation and effective storage after harvesting of garlic. He

provided a detailed overview of pre & post-harvest issues, drying and curing of garlic, packaging & storage related issues.

He briefed about the curing, bulb grading, and storage methods of garlic for value-addition purpose. He explained the step by step procedure for dehydrated garlic powder. He concluded with the appreciation to the PHDEC's initiative of preparing product manual for garlic and organizing such kind of capacity building webinars.

Dr. Surrya Ikhtiar, Chief Dietitian, Head of Diet Department, Allied Hospital, Faisalabad, explained nutritional facts, medicinal properties and beauty benefits of garlic. She stated that NARC-HG1 garlic contain active compound, ALLICIN, that help lower

blood pressure & reduce cholesterol level, contributing to heart health. Dr. Surrya Ikhtiar revealed that garlic reduces oxidative stress and inflammation in body, improving overall immune system.

A large number of participants from growers, processors, exporters, R&D and academia participated in the webinar and appreciated the PHDEC's initiative of conducting the webinar on an important topic of "Optimizing NARC-HG1 Garlic Production with Value-Added Processes & Examining Nutritional Contents." Mr. Khawar Nadeem, Manager (Agri Products), thanked all participants for attending the webinar and expressed PHDEC's full support in any product development related matters to the participants.





## In brief

## PCB clarifies stance on audit report

LAHORE (PPF): Pakistan Cricket Board has clarified that an impression is being created in electronic and print media that a certain audit report containing some audit objections concerning the current Management Committee has been issued by the Auditor General of Pakistan. According to a PCB report, it is pertinent to mention here that the audit report in question pertains to the period from 2019-2022 and is not related to the present Management Committee. The findings presented in this initial audit report are preliminary observations. In response to these observations, the relevant officials of the PCB have already provided clarifications along with documentary evidence as part of their institutional responsibilities. The feedback from the Auditor General of Pakistan is still pending. As and when any progress is made regarding these audits containing some observations, the PCB officials will respond accordingly.

## Inter Miami sign Suarez

MIAMI (Reuters): Inter Miami have signed striker Luis Suarez, the Major League Soccer club announced on Friday as the Uruguayan once again teams up with former Barcelona team mate Lionel Messi. "I'm very happy and excited to take on this new challenge with Inter Miami. I can't wait to get started, and I'm ready to work to make the dream of winning more titles with this great club a reality," Suarez said in a statement.

## Hope leads West Indies

TAROUA (Agencies): Shai Hope's unbeaten 43 led West Indies to a four wicket victory over England and secured a 3-2 Twenty20 series win in a tense encounter. England were bowled out for 132 in the decider and while West Indies never got into their rhythm, Hope held their reply together and then won the game with a powerful six over extra-cover off the second ball of the final over. The win is the third straight T20 international series win for West Indies in 2023 as they prepare to host the World Cup for the shortest format in June. It was a disappointing end to the mini-tour for Jos Buttler's England side, who had also lost the 50-over series in the Caribbean 2-1. The low-scoring contest was in marked contrast to Tuesday's game where England scored a team-record 267 but with conditions helping the bowlers, West Indies were able to add to their T20i series wins over South Africa and India. The surface at the Brian Lara Academy offered help to the spinners and slow left-armers. Gudakesh Motie took full advantage, picking up three wickets for 24 runs in his four overs. West Indies' other left-arm orthodox spinner, Akeal Hosein, chipped in with two for 20 in his four overs as the home side restricted England to the lowest target set in the series. England skipper Buttler was removed for 11 when he stepped outside the off-stump and tried to turn seamer Jason Holder down the leg-side but was caught by Oshane Thomas. Hosein then bowled Jacks before a beautiful delivery before Motie got significant turn as he claimed the prize wicket of Phil Salt (38). Salt had scored rapid centuries in both the last two games, won by England as they fought back to level the series at 2-2.

## Saud, Rizwan and Salman hit half-centuries on day one of the practice match against Victoria XI

MELBOURNE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan are facing Victoria XI in a two-day practice match at Junction Oval in Melbourne. Pakistan posted 323 for eight in 78.4 overs, on the back of half-centuries by Saud Shakeel, Mohammad Rizwan and Salman Ali Agha. In turn, Victoria XI got to 47-1 in 11 overs.

Imam-ul-Haq and Abdullah Shafique put up a 47-run opening stand, which was cut short when Abdullah (26, 58b, 4x4s) was caught off Sam Elliott's bowling. Imam (37, 67b,

4x4s) was the next batter to fall as Pakistan went to the lunch break at 95-2.

Saud Shakeel (70 retired, 87b, 9x4s) and Mohammad Rizwan (50 retired, 70b, 6x4s, 1x6) batted together to add 103 runs to the board. Salman Ali Agha (51, 73b, 6x4s, 2x6s) was the other major contributor with the bat, until he fell to Doug Warren. A 33-ball-35 from Sarfaraz Ahmed, including four boundaries, helped Pakistan take the total to 323-8 in 78.4 overs.

Shaheen Shah Afridi struck early to take out opening batter Will

Pucovski cheaply in the first over. Marcus Harris (18 not out, 32b, 3x4s) and Blake Thomson (25 not out, 30b, 6x4s) remained on crease as Victoria XI ended the day trailing by 276 runs and nine wickets in hand.

Scores in brief: Pakistan 323-8 (dec), 78.4 overs (Saud Shakeel 70 retired, Salman Ali Agha 51, Mohammad Rizwan 50 retired; Doug Warren 3-69, Matthew Fofia 2-44) Victoria XI 47-1, 11 overs (Blake Thomson 25 not out, Marcus Harris 18 not out; Shaheen Shah Afridi 1-16).

## Usman says armband for 'personal bereavement' not for Gaza civilians

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Australia opener Usman Khawaja says the black armband he wore during the first Test against Pakistan was for a "personal bereavement" and not in support of civilians in Gaza.

The 37-year-old was charged by the International Cricket Council on Thursday for wearing the armband. Khawaja says he will contest the charge but will not wear the armband during the second Test from 26 December. "I followed all the regulations and past precedents," Khawaja said.

"The ICC asked me what it was for, I told them it was for a personal bereavement - I never ever stated it was for anything else," he added. "Guys have put stickers on their bats, names on their shoes, done all sorts of things in the past without ICC approval and never been reprimanded."

"I will be asking them and contesting they make it fair and equitable for everyone and they have consis-

tency in how they officiate. That consistency hasn't been done yet."

In the days leading up to the first Test, Khawaja - who has posted on social media about the conflict in Gaza - was pictured wearing shoes with the words "all lives are equal" and "freedom is a human right" in training. He intended to wear them on the field but opted not to after the ICC told him they were against its regulations.

The ICC deemed him in breach of its clothing and equipment regulations for wearing the armband.

The ICC said: "Usman displayed a personal message (armband) 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."

Under ICC regulations, players cannot display messages of political, religious or racial causes during international matches.

"The shoes were for a different matter, I'm happy to say that," said Khawaja. "But the armband [reprimand] made no sense to me." Israel launched a major military campaign in Gaza in response to a cross-border attack by hundreds of Hamas gunmen on 7 October, in which at least 1,400 people were killed and about 240 others taken hostage.

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry says more than 20,000 people have been killed in the territory since Israel launched its retaliatory campaign. Khawaja, who is Muslim, has said his message is a "humanitarian appeal" and not a political statement.

Cricket Australia chief executive Nick Hockley said the organisation is working with Khawaja to find an alternative way to express his support for humanitarian issues. Australia lead the three-match series 1-0 with the second Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground starting on 26 December.

## Klopp glad of FIFA, UEFA 'shake' as Liverpool spurn Super League

LONDON (AFP): Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said Friday he was "100 percent" behind the club rejecting any involvement in a revised European Super League but added it was good football authorities had been given a "shake".

The Reds were one of 12 clubs, including six from the Premier League, who signed up to a breakaway league in 2021, though the project quickly collapsed.

Thursday saw the European Court of Justice rule UEFA, European football's governing body, had broken EU law by abusing its "dominant position" when trying to stop the upstart league getting off the ground.

The firm promoting the Super League seized on the court victory to announce plans for a new 64-team tournament to compete with or replace UEFA's flagship Champions League.

Liverpool, however, reiterated Friday their involvement in the Super League had been "discontinued" and Klopp, speaking ahead of Liverpool's second-placed

clash at home to Premier League leaders Arsenal, added: "I agree 100 percent with that statement."

"But I am delighted we finally get a bit of an understanding that FIFA (football's global governing body) and UEFA and other bodies cannot just do what they want."

The German coach added: "In the future we have to talk about a lot of stuff and if we just do the things they do - like putting in more competitions and playing more games -- and we don't have a real say in it and on what is going on, I like that they get a bit of a shake."

Earlier, six-time European champions Liverpool responded to the court decision by saying: "Yesterday's ruling by the European Court of Justice does not change Liverpool FC's previous stance on a proposed European Super League. Our involvement has been discontinued."

"We will continue to work with fellow clubs through the ECA (European Club Association) and participate in UEFA competitions."

Liverpool host Arsenal

in battle for Premier League Christmas No. 1: Liverpool and Arsenal will battle for the Christmas No. 1 spot when they meet on Saturday, each with a golden chance to open up a significant lead over absent champions Manchester City.

If there is not a winner at Anfield, third-placed Aston Villa could be top at Christmas for the first time since 1999 should their phenomenal home form continue against bottom-of-the-table Sheffield United.

The festive Premier League program also features Manchester United's trip to West Ham and inform Everton's visit to fifth-placed Tottenham.

Here are the three talking points ahead of the weekend action. Arsenal sit top of the Premier League table with 39 points from 17 matches, one ahead of Liverpool and five clear of Manchester City, who are on Club World Cup duty in Saudi Arabia. The defending champions' run of one win in six games prior to heading to the Gulf has opened the door to a fascinating title race.



LAHORE: Punjab Police Inter-range Weight lifting & Power Lifting Annual Champion ships Women Police Medalist Weight lifters with Chief Guest Rana Aasim & Aqeel Javed Butt Group.

### Punjab police annual inter-range weightlifting and powerlifting championship 2023

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab Police Annual Inter-Range Weightlifting and Powerlifting Championship 2023 was held at Police Line Qila Gujar Singh Lahore.

This competition was inaugurated by SP Headquarters Hasan Javed Bhatti, Aqeel Javed Butt International Weightlifter.

They were accompanied by Kashif Barkat, Muhammad Zahoar, Abdul Khaliq and Arif Bajwa, Muhammad Rizwan, Majid Hussain Dogar were present. Lahore, Special Branch, SPU, Gujranwala, Telecommunication, Faisalabad and Sahiwal teams participated in this competition.

Rabia Jahangir, Sonia Ashraf, Naveeda Mubarak, Hira Niaz, Muniba Imtiaz, Shahrbanu, Noreen Mushtaq, Rafia Ghazanfar and Ayesha Aslam participated in this competition among police women weightlifter players.

In the weightlifting championship, Lahore team won first, SP Utem second, and special branch team third position.

In the Powerlifting Championship, Lahore team first, Gujranwala team second and SPU team third, Guest DSP Saqib Butt, Rana Asim Gobbi's Paint Marketing Manager distributed prizes to the winning players.

### Dutch hockey club to visit Pakistan

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Top Dutch hockey club Billy Ozendaal will travel to Pakistan for a seven-day tour in February 2024 on the invitation of Khawaja Junaid Academy.

Coached by Fareed Ahmad, the club will play three matches at the National Hockey Stadium, Lahore.

It is the same Stadium that hosted Pakistan and Dutch World Cup 1990 final. It is for the first time in 21 years that any international club is visiting Pakistan for hockey matches. The last European club to visit Pakistan was Orange and Black in 2001. As part of the celebrations, a photo exhibition showcasing memorable moments from the matches between Holland and Pakistan, especially from the 1990 and 1994 World Cups, will be organised.

## S. Africa captain Dean Elgar to retire from int'l cricket

JOHANNESBURG (Agencies): Former South Africa Test captain Dean Elgar announced Friday that he will retire from international cricket after a Test series against India starting next week.

The 36-year-old, who has hit more than 5,000 Test runs including 13 centuries, will play his last Test at the Newlands ground in Cape Town starting January 3.

"As they say, 'all good things come to an end', and the Indian home series will be my last, as I have made the decision to retire from our beautiful game," Elgar declared. "The Cape Town Test will be my last. My favorite stadium in the world.

A place I scored my first Test run against New Zealand and hopefully my last too."

Media reports said his decision came after Elgar was told he was not part of coach Shukri Conrad's long-term plans. Elgar made his debut against Australia 12 years ago, failing to score in each innings.

Since then he has become known as a stubborn batter, his 5,146 runs making him South Africa's eighth highest scorer. He hit a career best 199 against Bangladesh in 2017.

Elgar was captain from May 2021 until January this year, leading South Africa to third place in last year's World Test Championship

with a notable 2-1 home series win over India. Cricket South Africa chief executive Pholetsi Moseki said Elgar has "represented his country with honor."

"His grittiness and determination are two qualities that really stood out; and these are attributes that all South Africans can relate to," Director of cricket Enoch Nkwe added that in the current age of power-hitting, "he is a real old-school cricketer that can dig in, absorb and fight. I have no doubt the game will dearly miss him."

"He has always given everything for his country and never showed any fear, no matter the opposition."



MELBOURNE: Usman Khawaja speaks to media during the launch of Cricket Australia's Multicultural Action Plan at Melbourne Cricket Ground.

## Belt Promotion ceremony held in Swat Taekwondo Academy

SWAT (APP): The colourful Taekwondo Belt Promotion ceremony was held on Thursday during the 21st Annual Day of the North school and College Swat.

Two international gold medalist female Taekwondo players Ayesha Ayaz Akasha Farman graced the occasion as guests to pay rich tribute to them so that to motivate the upcoming players to come and join the Game of Taekwondo, a Korean Martial Arts.

Since Akasha Farman has won gold medals by defeating players from India and the Philippines in Thailand, similarly Ayesha

Ayaz has defeated various players in countries like Dubai, Thailand and won bronze, silver and gold medals. Apart from this, Ayaz Khan, her father, a district level Taekwondo player, was also present.

The event started with a recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by National Anthem and Taekwondo demonstrations presented by the newly promoted boys and girls' players.

The players performed various martial arts in a very beautiful manner - in which the athletes broke the brakes with their hands. Meanwhile, com-

petitions were held between the players, including boys and girls.

Kamal Nasir, who is the coach of Kamal Nasri Taekwondo academy, also serves at the North School and College, opened the one-day Taekwondo Belt Promotion Ceremony and concluded with various martial arts - in which the athletes were highly disciplined, gave a beautiful performance by the participating kids and newly promoted to various categories. A cake cutting ceremony was also held, followed by belts awarding and certificates distribution ceremony.

## Peshawar Zone wins Throw Ball, Basketball titles in HED Inter-Zonal Women Games

PESHAWAR (APP): After winning the trophy of the Tchoukball, Peshawar Zone claimed the titles of the Throw Ball and Basketball in the Higher Education Department Inter-Zonal Women Games which concluded here at the Sports Complex of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Peshawar on Friday.

Peshawar Zone (Frontier College for Women) claimed the trophy after defeating Hazara in the final of the Tchoukball Girls Championship played. 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 Yakhya 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 Throw Ball final

Peshawar (Frontier College for Women) players played well and the players including Nagin, Afreen, Humaria, Farha Aysha, Iqra, Sidra, Maria played well against a strong Peshawar-B (Girls College Bacha Khan) team comprising Farishta, Saba, Sabreen, Maira and Ishrat.

Both the teams stretched to five sets and some fine and strong resistance were witnessed against each other for a single point, the score was 21-25, 27-29, 25-23, 25-20 and 25-17. It was all Peshawar zone affairs as both Peshawar-A and Peshawar-B played well and

reached the final after securing victories against Mardan and Kohat in the semi-finals.

It was the third position match in which Mardan recorded victory against Kohat in another tough battle, the score was 25-21, 22-25, 25-23 and 27-25. Mardan have faced tough resistance against very good Kohat team comprising Aleesha, Sabhana, Arwa Mir, Irish and Tania.

In the Basketball event Peshawar (team of Govt Degree College for Women Nowshera) defeated Mardan Zone (team of Post Graduate College for Women Mardan) in a thrilling 42-41 battle.

Both Peshawar and Mardan teams gave each other a tough fight and the final match provided great thrill for the sitting spectators.

Earlier, in the semi-final Peshawar handed a shocking defeat to defending champion Hazara in a thrilling battle, the score was 33-31. Both Peshawar and Hazara gave each other a tough fight and at the end Peshawar recorded victory. In the second semi-final Mardan defeated the Swat team by 37-31. The Mardan girls played well and defeated Swat after a hotly contested encounter.

At the end, the chief guest Miss

Rahim Bibi, Organizing Secretary Najma Qazi gave away trophies to the winners, runners-up and third position holders. The Women Kabaddi, Hockey, Football and Athletic events part of the HED Games would be organized in the month of January next year along with a grand presentation ceremony. Deputy Director Sports Higher Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Arshad Hussain told media men. He said the football, hockey and Kabaddi events would be organized in Peshawar Zone while the Athletic Meet would be organized in Kohat Sports Complex.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 61,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 61,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 36,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1474.77 feet and was 74.77 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,000 cusecs and 22,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1156.55 feet, which was 106.55 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,700 cusecs and 26,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 27,800, 31,600, 26,000 and 500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 6,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Police register 276 cases

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police have registered 276 cases against underage drivers during last 48 hours, said a police spokesman here on Friday. Total 4158 FIRs were registered under the campaign launched against underage drivers while 276 cases were registered during last 48 hours. All possible steps were being taken to improve the traffic situation on the city roads and facilitate the citizens, he added. He informed that police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were taking action by the law against underage drivers. The CPO had directed the officers concerned to take solid steps to control traffic rules violations and underage driving, he said. He urged the parents to keep a vigilant eye on their children to avert road accidents. Police were also conducting awareness campaigns in schools and colleges to educate the students about the legal age requirements for obtaining a driving license, he added.

### FBISE annual intermediate results

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) has announced the results of second annual examinations of Intermediate for the year 2023, in which the overall success ratio of Class XI remained 79.99 per cent while Class XII was 75.10 per cent. According to the details, during the 2nd annual examination 2023 of the federal board, the 11th class regular enrollment was 56,643, out of which 45,008 students remained successful, with success ratio of 80.64 per cent. Furthermore, 1,030 ex-private students participated in the exams, out of which 358 students remained successful with the success ratio of 37.02 percent. The total annual enrollment of the eleventh class of the federal board was 57,673 out of which 45,366 students passed the exams with the overall success ratio of 79.99%. Similarly, in the 12th class, the regular enrollment of the board exams 2023 was 721, out of which 570 students had passed with success ratio of 80.51%. Meanwhile, in the same exam, the ex-private enrollment remained 20,096, while 13,738 students passed with success ratio of 73.59%. The total annual enrollment of the FBISE exams 2023 was 20,817 in class 12th, in which 14,308 students passed with overall success ratio of 75.10%.



ISLAMABAD: Vendors displaying sweet and salty stuff to attract customers at Faisal Masjid.

## Foolproof security to be ensured for Christian community on Christmas

RAWALPINDI (APP): Foolproof security would be ensured for Christian community on Christmas said Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta here on Friday while attending a Christmas function as a special guest.

In this cake-cutting ceremony organized for the Christian community, Additional Commissioner Coordination Syed Nidharat Ali, Pastor Adil Masih, Pastor Nadeem Kamran, Member Cantonment Board, pastors of other local churches and Christian community participated.

The Commissioner said that all the religions of the world teach love for humanity. "The security of Pakistan

is the security of all of us and this security depends on our attitude towards other religions and minorities," Liaquat Ali Chatta said adding, "Islam teaches unity and love and as Muslims it teaches us to respect each other's beliefs and opinions." Everyone has to play their active role for the peace and security of the country, he added. The administration was trying to maintain a pleasant atmosphere of law and order and ensure the safety of life and property of the citizens. Along with the administration, the scholars belonging to different schools of thought needed to play a special role in this regard, said Liaquat Ali Chatta.

"It is our best effort to get the salaries paid to the Christian people before Christmas so that they can celebrate it to the fullest," he added.

Pastor Adel appreciated the steps taken by the divisional administration to protect the rights of the minorities.

The cooperation of the administration to maintain law and order situation on the occasion of Christmas is appreciable, he added.

The administration was providing foolproof security for Christian. Pastor Adel said adding, "All the religions of the world teach love to humanity and by spreading this teaching we can make the world a peaceful place."

## Global peace can be achieved by uniting people across all faiths: Mushaal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, has emphasized that true global peace can be achieved through the unity of people from diverse faiths.

Speaking at a Christmas cake-cutting ceremony arranged by the Nazriya Pakistan Council, she underscored the importance of fostering harmony and understanding among individuals of different religious backgrounds.

Sabien Hussein Mullick (Focal Person to SAPM), Mian Javed (Chairman Nazriya Pakistan Council), Manzoor Maseh (Executive Member Nazriya Pakistan Council), Faisal Zahid Malik, Salahuddin (Former High Commissioner of Pakistan to United Kingdom), Ms. Nargis and Mr. Khalid Suleri were among the attendees.

Mushaal highlighted the universal values of love, sacrifice and peace embedded in every religion. She said that during her meeting with Vatican pope she had emphasized fostering Multi-Faith Harmony as a key driver for enduring global peace.

Mushaal asserted that the resolution of global conflicts, including those in

Kashmir and Palestine, lies in the propagation of the messages of love, peace, and harmony embedded in all religions. She stressed the need to stand in solidarity with people who were oppressed.

Mushaal underscored the unanimous condemnation from all segments of Pakistani society regarding the Jaranwala incident. She commended the measures taken by the Government in response to the situation. She also praised the peace rallies organized by civil society, noting the substantial participation of ordinary citizens in these gatherings.

Mushaal voiced deep concern over the persecution of minorities in India carried out on daily basis. She attributed it to the influence of Hindutva-inspired policies within the Indian government. She also brought attention to the atrocities and human rights violations perpetrated by India in the illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

Mushaal recognized the invaluable sacrifices made by the Christian community in the struggle for the creation of Pakistan. She also highlighted their dedication to supporting the Kashmir cause.

## ANF launches operation to rehabilitate drug addicts

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has launched an operation in Peshawar to rehabilitate drug addicts.

Operation "Da Haq Awaaz" was conducted with the support of Rehabilitation Center Peshawar. The operation was conducted in Hayatabad, Factory Market and Industrial Area.

Initially, 26 drug addicts were shifted to 'Da Haq Awaaz' Rehabilitation Center Peshawar and provided with clothes, food and bedding according to hygiene rules. Blood screening of these individuals was done to determine drug addiction.

The best medical facilities are being provided to these people during the rehabilitation process. Efforts are also being made to search for the families of the victims.

The district administration and social welfare department fully cooperated in the operation.

In the next phase, 100 more drug addicts would be rehabilitated.

## Pakistan Railways to expand 96 trains network till Monday

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to accommodate passengers, Pakistan Railways would expand the network of its express trains to 96 till December 25, running all over the country to better felicitate the commuters.

"Before completing the network of 96 trains over the entire railway network, the last year the figure of trains is 86 which will be improved after the concentrate efforts of the department," an official in the Ministry told APP.

He said the facilities being provided to the passengers at railway stations

include waiting rooms, vending stalls, station restaurants, wheel chairs, information desk, computer reservation facilities, public address system to inform public about arrival/departure of trains, provision of paramedics and 1st aid facility, online reservation facility, passenger insurance service and revival of help desks at stations facilities in trains.

To a question, he said the overall punctuality ratio of trains has improved from 76 to 93 percent in three months owing to close monitoring and stern measures taken by Pakistan Railways at the divisional and ministry levels.

"With the punctuality of trains and concrete measures taken by the department in last three months, the number of passengers has increased by over 20 million, which is ample proof of the department's achievement," he added.

He said, "Pakistan Railways is also set to introduce the 'Train Driver Assistant System' (TDAS) to help train drivers a clear view of the railway tracks up to an impressive distance of 700 meters."

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## Jinnah: A charismatic leader who crafts Pakistan on world's map by peaceful democratic struggle

ISLAMABAD (APP): Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the charismatic leader of the 20th century, whose matchless peaceful and democratic struggle not only changed the world geography in the shape of Pakistan on the globe's map but also won applause from across the borders.

Renowned US academics, historian and writer Stanley Wolpert, in his famous book 'Jinnah of Pakistan' published in 1984 while paying tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah said, "Few individuals significantly alter the course of history."

Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly anyone can be credited with creating a nation-state, Muhammad Ali Jinnah did all three."

Similarly, Nehru's sister Mrs. Vijay Lakshmi Pundit was of the view, "If the Muslim League had 100 Gandhis and 200 Azads and Congress had only one Jinnah, then India would not have been divided."

These remarks are solid proof that our great leader Quaid-e-Azam bravely fought the case of Muslims of the sub-continent and achieved historical success in the shape of Pakistan purely through a democratic and peaceful struggle. The renowned international experts had made a praiseworthy endeavour, to sum up different aspects of the life, personality, and leadership qualities of the great Quaid during the Pakistan Movement, who created a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Subcontinent on August 14, 1947, within seven years of adoption of the historic Pakistan Resolution at Lahore on March 23, 1940.

Pakistan Resolution had set a clear roadmap for the Muslims of the sub-continent and Quaid-e-Azam materialized it through his visionary leadership. The father of the Nation had laid always a great emphasis on education and constructive criticism on the government for the sake of improvement and reformation rather than for political and personal gains.

Seeing the charisma and strong determination of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Muslims got united under the flag of All India Muslim League (AIML) founded on December 30, 1906 gave new impetus to the Independence and Pakistan Movement. The historic movement witnessed further acceleration after the historic Allabad address delivered by the legendary poet Dr Allama Muhammad Iqbal during the 25th annual session of AIML in 1930 in which he outlined a clear vision of an independent state for Muslims majority provinces in northwestern India, thus becoming the first politician to articulate about two nation-theory that Muslims are a distinct nation and deserve political independence.

The independence movement had witnessed further momentum after Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah after formally joined the AIML. Dr. Allama Iqbal became the first politician to articulate the two-nation theory that Muslims were a distinct nation and deserved political independence from other regions and communities of the United India.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah had reorganized AIML by making repeated visits to all muslims majority provinces of the then British India.

Pakistan movement had passed through different phases and finally achieved its practical shape in 1933 during a high-level gathering in London where Chaudhary Rehmat Ali presented the name of Pakistan.

Recalling Rehmat Ali's famous saying 'now or never or perish forever,' Prof Hayat Khan of the Geography Department said the two former students, Aslam Khattak and Inayatullah Khan of Charsadda along with other Muslim leaders endorsed the name of Pakistan. "Pakistan's name and Allahabad's historic address had set a clear direction to the Muslims to achieve Pakistan, he said.

He said Quaid-e-Azam had also an

immense love for tribesmen Erstwhile FATA for their strong loyalty, supreme sacrifices and consistent support during the Pakistan Movement. Despite hectic official engagements as the First Governor General of Pakistan, he addressed a Grand Tribal Jira at Governor House, Peshawar on April 17, 1948.

During his historic address to tribal jirga with the overwhelming representation of tribal people, chieftains, and maliks from all tribal districts, Quaid-e-Azam highly praised the strong commitment, patriotism and support of tribesmen in the completion of his mission for Pakistan.

He laid great emphasis on education and social economic development of the tribesmen. He considered quality education especially technical education, science and technology as a pre-requisite for attaining goals of development and economic prosperity. Our Quaid told tribesmen that Pakistan has now been created and great responsibility rested on them to work tirelessly for its progress and development.

Regarding minority rights, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in his address to the first constituent assembly of Pakistan on August 11, 1947 said, You are free, you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in the newly born State of Pakistan. You may have an affiliation or if you belong to any sect, religion, caste or creed, that has nothing to do with the affairs and working of the state, the Quaid said clearly.

It is the right time for the people to play their active participatory role for the development and prosperity of Pakistan by strictly following the guiding principles of the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah ie unity, faith and discipline.

The nation is going to celebrate the 148th birthday of the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on December 25 (Monday) across the country, with traditional zeal and fervour.

## Ministry renovates 2,377 houses, flats in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Works Department (PWD), Ministry of Housing and Works has upgraded and renovated as many as 2,385 houses and flats in various sectors of Islamabad during the last five and half years.

"The PWD has carried out EM works of as many as 1,365 flats and houses while around 1,012 civil work is executed of different categories, an official in the ministry told APP.

The official said the ministry has owned as many as 5,253 houses and flats of categories-I to categories-V located in various sectors in the federal capital.

He said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was responsible for the maintenance and renovation of Pak Secretariat, Islamabad, therefore, no fund has been spent on ministry's renovation.

The official said the PWD has started sending notices to the allottees of government accommodation in Sector I-9/4 about payment of electric meter bills for water motors installed at residential blocks.

He said the Finance Division had allocated funds for payment of utilities in the relevant heads of accounts of the users while utility bills of the residential accommodation including hostels, rest houses and judicial residences should be paid by the users. To a question, he said the Ministry of Housing and Works has allocated an amount of Rs 5.80 million in the current financial year 2023-2024 for electricity bills of Qasr-e-Naz Lodge, South Zone Karachi due to financial constraints.

"Out of the total Rs 5.80 million, only an amount of Rs 0.87 million have been released at the rate of 15 percent in this regard so far," he added.

He said that the Karachi Electric Supply Company bill was Rs 7.26 million for the month of September, 2023 along with arrears and the electricity connection had been disconnected in June, 2023.

As per the statement of K-Electric, the official said that the electricity connection would be restored after payment of complete amount along with arrears.



ISLAMABAD: An aged woman displays household items to sell for livelihood outside H-9 weekly bazar in federal capital.



### 193 Afghan prisoners freed

KABUL (Agencies): Following the release of Afghan citizens from prisons in Iran and Pakistan, the head of the Nimroz Foreign Relations Office says that 193 Afghan citizens have been freed from Iranian prisons. Yar Mohammad Haqyar, the head of the Nimroz Foreign Relations Office, said on Monday that 193 Afghan citizens imprisoned in Iran were released from the Al-Ghadir prison in Zahedan.

## The Frontier Post

JAMADI-US-SANNI 10, 1445 — SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2023

### Over 800,000 Afghans returned

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate's spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said that since October, 2023, more than 800,000 Afghan immigrants have returned to the country. Mujahid told TOLONews that most of the returnees were from Pakistan, Turkey and Iran. "Since October, over 800,000 immigrants have arrived in Afghanistan; Half of them have come from Pakistan, the remaining are from Iran, Turkey, and other countries," the spokesman added.

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

# Muttaqi travels to Tehran for Palestine conference



KABUL (TOLONews): The Acting Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, at the head of a delegation traveled to Tehran. The deputy spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, Zia Ahmad Takal, said that the purpose of Muttaqi's trip to Tehran is to participate in the consultative and political meeting held on the sit-

uation of Palestinian.

Takal added that the Acting Foreign Minister will also give a speech about the challenges in Palestine in the meeting.

"The Acting Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi went to Iran at the official invitation of Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Iran's foreign minister. The

purpose of the foreign minister's visit to Tehran is to participate in the high-level conference on the resolution of the Palestinian issue, which is scheduled to be held tomorrow," he further added.

Some political analysts consider Muttaqi's presence in such meetings important for the stance of

the Islamic Emirate.

"Our foreign minister went to Iran. Iran is one of the supporters of the Palestinians, not only Iran, but also Lebanon and Yemen. We, the Muslims must stand against the oppression that is taking place in Gaza, which I must say is international terrorism," Moeen Gul Samkanai, a political analyst, told TOLONews.

"Iran is an influential country in regional politics, especially in the Middle East. If the Islamic Emirate, Iran and the countries of the region can have a positive and significant views about Palestine and other policies. It can have a good position and can have impact on both confidence-building policies and Afghanistan's legal status," Sayed Muqadam Amin, another political analyst, told

TOLONews. Previously, the acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, at the graduation ceremony of Kabul University, said that Afghan people are revolutionary people, they are people of action rather than words.

# Mujahid reacts to claims of Afghans involved in Pakistan attacks



KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate in response to the detention of Afghan citizens who are accused of involvement in the terrorist attack in Pakistan, said that the details of this detention have not been shared with the current Afghan government.

The Islamic Emirate's spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, noted that the crime is a personal matter and therefore this issue should not be linked to Afghanistan.

"It has been repeatedly done in Afghanistan, where we have arrested and killed nationals of Pakistan as followers of Daesh. We cannot claim that Pakistan committed this crime or that the government of Pakistan was involved in this. Anyone who committed an act, it is a personal and individual act," the spokesman added. Earlier, Pakistani media reported the arrest of 9 suspects in the Dera Ismail Khan suicide attack in this country, citing the Pakistan Counter-Terrorism Department, and added that six of the facilitators in Pakistan are from Afghanistan.

Earlier, Pakistani media reported that the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), arrested nine terrorists and seven facilitators involved in the deadly attack on the compound of security forces in Dera Ismail Khan, of which six terrorists involved in the attack come from Afghanistan.

"The Counter-

Terrorism Department (CTD) on Thursday arrested nine terrorists including the mastermind and seven facilitators involved in the deadly attack on the compound of security forces in Dera Ismail Khan that left at least 23 soldiers martyred earlier this month. According to the CTD documents available with Geo News, the mastermind involved in the terrorist attack belongs to Daraban area of DI Khan while six terrorists involved in the attack hail from Afghanistan," the report reads. "These remarks of Pakistan are political, and during the past fifty years, their goal was to implement their strategic plans. Today, when they cannot implement those plans in

Afghanistan, they want to distort public opinion by making such statements," said Mohammad Zalmay Afghanyar, a political analyst. Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesperson Muntaz Zahra Baloch in a "Weekly Media Briefing by Spokesperson" said that Islamabad cannot confirm the arrest of TTP members by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

In response to a reporter's question about the publication of reports about the arrest of 40 members of the TTP in Afghanistan, she added: "We are unable to confirm the existence, scale or effectiveness of any action along those lines."

"Our issue right now that we are focusing on is the action that the Afghan authorities must take

against TTP elements and rein them in so that the terror threat against Pakistan from the Afghan soil is eliminated," Baloch added.

"Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan are deteriorating and I think that the main reason is that the internal political dynamics of Pakistan are encouraging the rulers of Pakistan to increase their accusations against Afghanistan," Wahid Faqiri, a political analyst said. Previously, Pakistani media had reported that Pakistan's Foreign Ministry had summoned the Islamic Emirate's charge d'affaires in connection with the recent attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an issue that the Islamic Emirate had denied.

# Qalandar Ebad: 150,000 women contribute to health sector

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting minister of public health of the Islamic Emirate said that 150,000 women are currently employed in the health sector in Afghanistan and that experienced women have been given jobs.

In his interview with a Malaysian news channel, Astro Awani, Qalandar Ebad said that the Islamic Emirate is not against women's rights in

Afghanistan and they are trying to create a safe environment for the education of girls above the sixth grade in the country.

"The number of women contributing to the health sector is 150,000 females working in health sector. Here is a huge number, if you see these numbers in the ex-administration, you will never see this number, because many of the females who have the expe-

rience in different areas we have given them jobs in the health sector. And we have institutes for nursing, for midwifery and also for the post-graduation in different programs. Through this way, what we want to clarify is that we are not against the rights of the women education, we have allowed and opened doors for all women," Qalandar Ebad said. The acting minister of public health added that the

government of the Islamic Emirate has the support of the Afghan people and it is time for the government to be recognized.

"In the last two years, we fulfilled all the requirements of the recognition. The UN has its own rules and regulations to recognize somebody or some country, and the international community they have rules and regulations. Look, the first priority inside Afghanistan is the peaceful condition. In last twenty years, there was not any peace inside Afghanistan; on a daily basis, there was killings, war and terror, hundreds of the people were killed at that time. But in the last two years, there has been hundred percent peaceful situation inside Afghanistan, this is a main thing," Ebad noted.

"The remarks of the acting minister of public health that they are interested in education, is beyond his authority," said Suraya Paikan, women's rights activist. This comes as more than 820 days have passed since girls above the sixth grade have been banned from going to school.



# Security of investors top priority: Deputy PM

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate said that ensuring the security of investors in the country was the top priority of the caretaker government.

In his meeting with investors, Abdul Salaam Hanafi asked Afghan investors to shift their investments to Afghanistan from other countries, adding that the Islamic Emirate is considering tax exemptions, customs exemptions, and the provision of land in industrial parks for the investors.

"Afghanistan is a better

place for investment, the Islamic Emirate has been providing facilities for all investors, particularly those who have recently returned to the country," said Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate.

The spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate said improved programs have been planned for newly returned investors in the country which include the provision of land in industrial parks and facilities in receiving business licenses.

In the meantime, businesspeople said the tax

exemption is positive in attracting more investments in the country. "The tax exemption for those who return to the country is a good hope and will attract businesspeople to invest in Afghanistan," said Omid Haidari, a businessman.

"The investment should be in the agrarian sector so that we have a standard and mechanized agriculture in the country. This will also enable us to pack our agricultural crops well to be accepted for the exporting countries," said Akhtar Muhammad Ahmadi, another businessman.

Economic analysts are of the view that good economic steps have been taken in the past two years and more investment has been attracted in Afghanistan's infrastructure. "If foreign aid is flown to Afghanistan, the requested 3 to 4 billion dollars are given to the country, Afghanistan's economic growth will increase because this will lead to investment immunity in infrastructure," said Sayed Masoud, an economist. Earlier, the Islamic Emirate announced facilities for the Afghan investors who had newly been returned to Afghanistan.

# Ministry says it is cooperating with Aynak Mine extraction

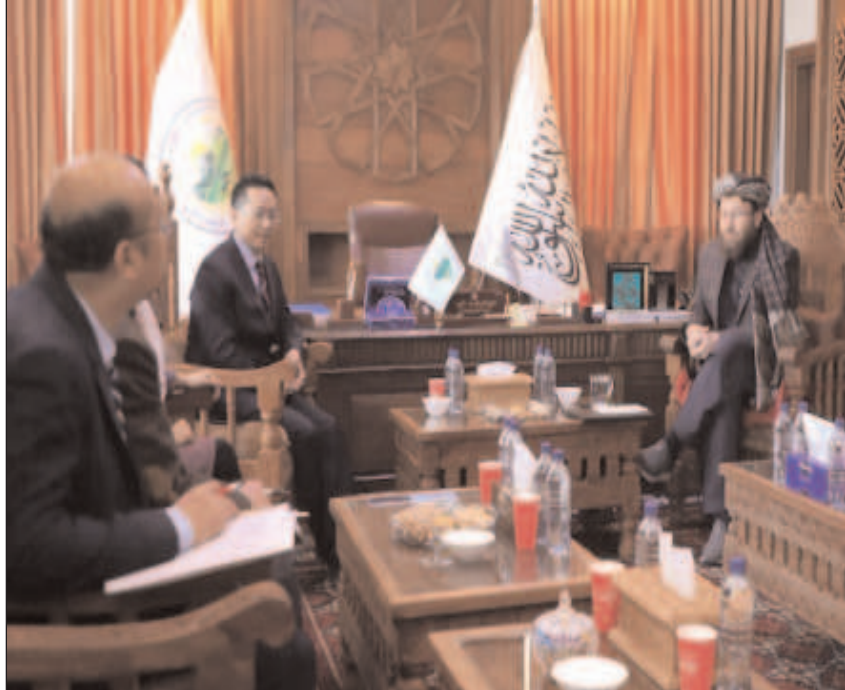
KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) said it helps the mine extraction of Aynak copper. Ataulah Omari, acting minister of MAIL, in a meeting with the head of the Chinese MCC company, pledged that he will cooperate in the acquisition of lands around the Aynak copper and Hajigak mines.

Mesbahuddin Mustaeen, the spokesperson of the ministry, said: "During this meeting, the two sides discussed the acquisition of lands around Aynak copper of Logar and Hajigak Mine of Bamiyan and the water needed by this company."

More than one decade has passed from the contract of Aynak copper with a Chinese company but why has the extraction process of this project not been practically implemented?

Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, said: "When this contract was signed, historical monuments were found there which are dated to two thousand years ago.

When these monuments were founded, it was more of a result of digging and the pause that



came was to prevent the destruction of historical monuments in the course of work."

A number of economic experts said that for the purpose of increasing the income in the country, after the extraction of Aynak copper of Logar its processing should also be done inside the country.

"With the implementation of this project, on the one hand, engineers and

workers will be provided with work, and on the other hand, it will lead to the beginning of commercial relations between China and Afghanistan," said Mohammad Nabi Afghan, an economic expert.

"This mine should not be extracted as a raw material and exported outside the country, if it is exported in the form of raw materials, it will not

have any benefit for Afghanistan," said Abdulnasir Reshtya, an economic expert.

Aynak copper of Logar province is one of the largest mines in Afghanistan, the contract of which was signed in 2008 with China's "MCC" company. With the start of this project, more than 6.8 billion cubic meters of copper will be transferred to China.





TI report on judiciary as second corrupt institution

# PHC seeks evidences from Transparency International

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan ordered Transparency International to evidences and report for declaring judiciary 2nd corrupt institution in the country while adjourned further hearing till 15th January 2024, on Friday.

Chief Justice PHC Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan inquired regarding evidences for declaring judiciary as corrupt institution in the country while directing Board Member Transparency International Hasmt Habib during hearing of court's notice in this regard.

The court will act as per law on availability of evidences of corruptions against culprit may its judges or other judicial staff, Chief Justice observed. He observed that Transparency International may announce withdrawal of the report if lacks evidence in this regard.

However, Board Member Hasmt

Habib informed that the reports are prepared on the ground of public's opinion after analysis and added that Transparency International neither issues report on its own opinion.

Meanwhile, Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan enquired for identification of malpractices in the High Court to initiate actions against this menace from PHC. He added that it will be continued to ensure accountability subordinate courts.

The chief justice continued his enquiry from Transparency International legal penal comprising of Kamran Hasmt, Burj Hasmt and Nadia Hashmt regarding evidences for declaring judiciary 2nd corrupt institution in the country while specifically inquire about malpractices in High Court for initiation of accountability.

PHC's chief Justice Ibrahim Khan observed that people are making fun of judiciary after publication of Transparency International report

labeling judicial system as corrupt institution. In the meantime, Board Member Hasmt Habib Malak argued that Transparency International had prepared the report on the basis of public opinion and added that the report has been submitted to registrar's office. He further added that the analysis of report by PHC will clear the situation.

Chief Justice observed that he will write against himself on availability of evidences of malpractices and no one is above all.

He added that the court will take actions on malpractices may it is judicial staff or judges on provision of evidences by Transparency International in this regard and directed to provide it in written form. Chief Justice PHC Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan observed that he will read Transparency International's report personally and ordered for provision of report while adjourned further hearing till 15th January 2024.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## IHC reserves verdict on PAC's powers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday reserved its verdict in cases pertaining to the powers of Public Accounts Committee to summon NAB officials in the Tayyaba Gul harassment case. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq reserved the verdict after hearing arguments from the two sides.

During the course of proceedings, Additional Attorney General Munawar Dogal said that the committee had the authority to summon the officials as per the rules. The chief justice inquired as to why Tayyaba Gul had approached the PAC instead of the Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) or anti-corruption department.

He said the PAC could not directly summon the head of any institution on the complaint of someone. The court reserved the verdict after the two sides concluded their arguments. It may be mentioned here that the PAC had summoned former National Accountability Bureau (NAB) chairman Justice (retd) Javed Iqbal and director general on the complaint of Tayyaba Gul.

## Jailed PTI leader Aliya to contest polls

LAHORE (INP): Former MNA of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Aliya Hamza who has been arrested in a May 9 riots case has decided to run in the forthcoming election.

The husband of the PTI leader, Hamza Jameel Malik, filed a petition in the Lahore High Court seeking permission to submit nomination papers of his wife to the Election Commission of Pakistan. Aliya wants to submit nomination papers for NA 118. LHC Justice Ali Baqir Najafi heard the case and ordered the superintendent of Central Jail Lahore to get Aliya's nomination papers signed by her in the prison. Additional Advocate General Ghulam Sarwar Nahang appeared in the court on behalf of the Punjab government.

The petition made the Election Commission of Pakistan, the district returning officer, and superintendent of Central Jail Lahore respondents in the case. It bears mentioning that today (Dec 22) is the last day for submission of nomination papers. Malik Muhammad Ashraf Khokhar is a senior court reporter with City News Network. He has been associated with the group since 2011 and primarily covers news related to the Supreme Court, and the judicial and administrative affairs of the Lahore High Court.

# JI Chief Siraj submits papers for NA-6 in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami chief and former senator Sirajul Haq submitted his nomination papers from his home town for NA 6 here on Friday. He was accompanied by the JI workers from the Balambat Ahya ul Uloom where he offered Friday prayer. The JI chief along with a large number of party workers presented his nomination papers to Dr Nida Iqbal, the returning officer for NA 6 Lower Dir. The JI nominated candidate for NA 7 Maulana Muhammad Ismail was also present on the occasion.

Talking to local journalists the JI chief said the Supreme Court of Pakistan had ended all speculations regarding the general elections. He said that free, fair and transparent elections were the only solution to all the problems faced by the nation. He said the ECP and the caretaker government both were duty bound to hold general elections on time. The JI chief demanded the ECP to provide level playing fields to all political parties.

"It will be a selection rather than election if all political parties are not provided with equal opportunities to contest the general elections", Siraj said, adding the ECP should quash the perception of pre-polls' rigging in the country. He said the courts should decide the cases of elements involved in the May 9 riots with merit and justice. The JI chief said the May 9 riots were condemnable and the people involved in targeting the state installations should be punished according to the law.

Also in the day the JI nominated candidate for PK 14 Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, for PK 15 Azizullah Khan, for PK 16 Shad Nawaz Khan, for PK 17 Izazul Mulk Afkari and for PK 18 Saeed Gul submitted their papers with the concerned ROS.

Majority of the nominated candidates in Lower Dir submitted their nomination papers for two national and five provincial assembly seats here on Friday. The ANP district president and former MPA Haji Bahadar Khan submitted his papers

for NA 6, central spokesman Zahid Khan for NA 7, Malik Muhammad Zeb for PK 14, Wasil Khan for PK 15, Malik Sajjad Yousafzai for PK 16, Haji Bahadar Khan for PK 17 and Kifayat Khilji for PK 18.

The PPP leader advocate Shahid Khan submitted his papers for NA 7, former minister of state Malik Azmat Khan for NA 7, advocate Muhammad Zamin for PK 14, Naemullah Khan for PK 15 and Kamran Zeb for PK 16. Similarly the PTI former lawmakers including Bashir Khan submitted his nomination papers for NA 6, former MPA Humayun Khan for PK 15, Malik Inam Khan for PK 16 and Abdullah Shah for PK 18.

The PTI-P leader Brigadier retired Saeedullah submitted his nomination papers for PK 14 and former provincial minister for finance Muzafar Syed advocate for PK 16. According to the amended schedule of the ECP, the party candidate can submit their papers till Dec 24 and the final list of the candidates would be displayed on that date.

# Five gunned down in attack on police station

F.P. Report

WANA: At least five labourers were killed after unidentified assailants attacked an under-construction police station in a remote area of South Waziristan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to police, the firing took place late Thursday night at the police station which also injured one of the labourers working at the station. The bodies and the wounded worker have been moved to a district hospital in Wana, the police added. Meanwhile, District Police Officer (DPO) Farmanullah said that complete details will be provided after investigating the incident. He added that no details can be shared at the initial level about the firing incident.

dent.

On October 31, four labourers and a cop in an attack on a police station in the Nasirabad area of Balochistan's Turbat by unidentified assailants which was labelled as a terror incident by the authorities. The labourers, according to an official, hailed from Punjab and were identified as Mohammad Uzair, Baqar Ali, Shehbaz Ahmed and Shehzad Ahmed.

In the same month, at least 6 labourers were killed in their sleep and two were wounded after gunmen targeted them in an overnight attack in Turbat city. According to the police, unidentified gunmen attacked the labourers who were sleeping in an under-construction house. The outgoing year witnessed an alarming rise in

terror-related incidents in the country in general and in KP in particular as at least 470 security personnel and civilians were killed in the province, so far.

Former President of Pakistan and President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari has expressed his regret and sorrow over the killing of five laborers in South Waziristan.

President Zardari in a statement said that the killing of the workers constructing the police station is a very brutal act. He demanded that the terrorists and planners involved in the killing of workers should be brought to justice. Asif Ali Zardari expressed sympathy and condolences to the families of the martyred workers.

# 15 dengue cases reported

F.P. Report

LAHORE: As many as fifteen new dengue cases were reported in Punjab on Friday. The latest Health Department data reveals a total of 15,128 confirmed dengue cases across Punjab this year, with Lahore leading the unfortunate tally at 6,993 cases, followed

closely by Rawalpindi with 2,654, Gujranwala with 1,590, Multan with 1,460 and Faisalabad with 914 cases.

In Lahore, 10 more cases were reported on Friday, and three in Multan in last 24 hours. Meanwhile, Sheikhpura and Bahawalpur reported one case each during the last 24

hours.

Currently, 21 dengue patients are undergoing treatment in various hospitals across Punjab, with 14 of them in Lahore district hospitals. Health Secretary Ali Jaan Khan called upon people to maintain clean and dry surroundings as a preventive measure against dengue fever.

# 20,000 Palestinians killed in Israel-Hamas war

RAFAH: Health officials in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip say more than 20,000 Palestinians have been killed in the war between Israel and Hamas. The figure, amounting to nearly one percent of the territory's prewar population, is a new reflection of the staggering cost of the war, which in just over 10 weeks has displaced more than 80 percent of Gaza's people and devastated wide swaths of the tiny coastal enclave.

Gaza's health ministry said Friday that it has documented 20,057 deaths in the fighting. It does not differentiate between combatant and civilian deaths. It has previously said that roughly two-thirds of the dead were women or minors.

Meanwhile, the United Nations warned the Israel-Hamas war was pushing Gaza toward famine, ahead of an expected Security Council vote Friday on a resolution to boost aid to the Palestinian territory but not call for a ceasefire. Separate diplomatic efforts were also under way for a fresh pause in the worst-ever Gaza war, which was triggered by an unprecedented Hamas attack on Israel in October.

With conditions deteriorating in the territory, the UN Security Council has been locked in negotiations on a resolution that would boost aid deliveries. The latest draft seen by AFP, set to face a vote Friday, calls for "urgent steps to immediately allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access, and also for creating the conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities."

It does not call for an immediate end to fighting. Backed by its ally the United States, Israel has opposed the term "ceasefire." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday there would be no ceasefire in Gaza until the "elimination" of Hamas. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US ambassador to the UN, told reporters that Washington would support the resolution if it "is put forward as is."

The war began on October 7 after Hamas militants broke through Gaza's militarized border and killed around 1,140 people in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures. Hamas also abducted about 250 people. Vowing to destroy the group, Israel began a relentless bombardment of targets in Gaza,

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alongside a ground invasion, which the territory's Hamas government on Wednesday said has killed at least 20,000, mostly women and children.

The entire population of Gaza faces "an imminent risk of famine," according to a UN-backed global hunger monitoring system on Thursday, with more than half a million people facing "catastrophic conditions." "We have been warning for weeks that, with such deprivation and destruction, each day that goes by will only bring more hunger, disease and despair to the people of Gaza," UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths posted on X, formerly Twitter.

The UN estimates 1.9 million Gazans are now displaced, out of a population of 2.4 million. With their homes destroyed, they are living in crowded shelters and struggling to find food, fuel, water and medical supplies. Diseases are spreading, and communications have been repeatedly cut. Displaced Gazans are pleading for a ceasefire. "My message is to put an end to this humiliation," said Fuad Ibrahim Wadi, who found refuge at a greenhouse in Rafah. — Arab News

# IHC CJ reprimands IGP

(Continued from Page 1)

demanding that contempt proceedings be initiated against him. For his part, the police chief claimed the detained women protesters were provided with transport facilities to go wherever they wanted to.

When asked how many protesters were in police custody, the IGP replied that 216 Baloch men and women were at the Kohsar police station of which some had been sent on judicial remand. Out of these, 19 women were released, he added. Protesters at the Tarnol police station were released by the local magistrate while 162 detainees were sent on judicial remand, said IG Nasir.

The court also asked about the number of women who were sent home, those released and the ones staying at the hotel. It also directed the police chief to arrange a meeting of the women with their counsels. "You have to convince them that not one person is missing," Justice Farooq emphasised.

At one point during the hearing, journalist Hamid Mir appeared in court. He

said that during a press conference yesterday, a trio of caretaker ministers — Fawad Hassan Fawad, Murtaza Solangi, and Jamal Nasir — had said all the protesters were released. "But we found out that none of them were released. I went to the police station to check myself," he said. "Women and children were being forcefully dragged and pushed into buses outside the Women Police Station."

Mir said he had also reached out to Fawad over the matter. "A little girl came to me and kept saying she didn't want to go back," he recalled. "But when I reached out to the police, they cursed at me and snatched my mobile phone," the journalist said. Meanwhile, Ahmed Butt of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said the women were being filled into buses "like sheep" and highlighted that protests were a constitutional right of every person in a democracy.

"The treatment meted out to our children and women in the past few days has never been seen in history," he said. "Whoever did this should be punished."

On the other hand, the court inquired why a press conference was held by three ministers, to which the police chief replied that the government had formed a three-member cabinet committee to negotiate with the protesters.

"So if a committee was formed what was the need to hit them or forcefully send them home?" Justice Farooq asked. "They came here for a protest and you are forcefully sending them home. Why?" The IHC CJ further expressed displeasure over Wednesday night's events, regretting the police action on protesters. "What kind of a society are we living in? Even if a common person is being unjust, public officeholders should always be careful," he remarked.

The court then instructed Kundi to oversee the entire matter and contact the IHC registrar office if there was a problem. It further said that all the women staying at the I-10 hostel be released. "I will issue a detailed order of Friday's proceedings," Justice Farooq said, adding that the next hearing would be conducted by Justice Miangul Hasan Aurangzeb.

# Household pollution posing serious threats to public health, environment

PESHAWAR (APP): The increasing level of household pollution both in the shape of biomass and solid waste generation is posing serious threats to public health and the environment of the city. The air quality index in Peshawar in the current winter season has belled the alarm by recording a dangerous stage of more than 236 pollution levels; raising the status of the city to the most polluted in the country.

According to environmental experts, the major source of air pollution is vehicular emission followed by household pollution in shape of the burning of fossil fuel, wood and waste for cooking at home. A recent study by Peshawar Clean Air Alliance (PCAA), a volunteer association of civil society individuals, found that transport is contributing 58.46 percent in air pollution and is followed by household pollution making a contribution of 11.66 percent while waste burning 4.1 percent and dust 17.67 burning.

It showed that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has one of the highest

proportions of wood fuel usage, particularly in rural households and about half of Peshawar population lives in rural area. According to 2017 census, about 138000 households in Peshawar used wood as fuel for heating. The study titled 'Status of Air Pollution in Peshawar' finds that the annual Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5) in Peshawar has ranged between 61.40 ug/m3 and 80.09 ug/mg3, exceeding the current national and provincial standards by 4 to 5 times and WHO air quality guidelines by 12-16 times.

High level of PM 2.5 have a considerable impacts on the population of Peshawar as the Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) estimates that citizen of Peshawar can add up to 2.3 years to their life expectancy if air quality level meets the WHO's guidelines. "Peshawar has been declared as the third most polluted city in Pakistan and the 9th most polluted in the world in the 2021 World Air Quality report," says Dr. Adil Zareef, a public health expert and convener of PCAA. Talking to APP, Dr. Adil said while

evaluating the current year data of Peshawar air quality, the city has jumped from third most polluted city in Pakistan to number one. In November and December 2023, sometimes the air quality index of Peshawar crossed the pollution level of Lahore, the most polluted city of Pakistan. He said according to Health Department Report, around 93,000 cases of pneumonia have been reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the current year, an indication of an increase in chest and respiratory problems mainly due to toxic air.

"It's time for chalking out a multi-sectorial policy to air pollution and safe public from different health-related ailments connected with poor air quality," Dr. Adil stressed. "Introduction of 'Environmental Green Police' can be given a regulatory authority under Environment Protection Agency (EPA) KP to impose environmental penalties on the offenders as is practiced in many countries," he suggested.

Green policing can also help in implementation by the regulatory

authorities, as the visibly emitting vehicle should be considered a public crime and banned from plying on streets through strict administrative measures. "Improving air quality is a long-term effort and requires a shared vision that's longer than the political cycle and a multi-sectoral approach," opined Dr. Asif Khan, a consultant on Climate Change and Water for Asian Development Bank (ADB).

An interactive partnership among the civil society, academia, and public health experts and government can realize the vision for a healthy Peshawar, Asif added. "Apart from air pollution, accumulation of solid waste is also a big issue regarding household pollution," observed Fawad Prizada, a young environment activist from Peshawar. Fawad has developed a mobile app for lifting garbage from homes and its proper disposal to keep the city's environment clean.

Holding BS degree in Computer Science (CS), Fawad Prizada, a city dweller, obtained training from the National Incubation Center (NIC) and developed the app to continue

with his passion of protecting the environment and also make some earning through it. Titled as 'The Kabari' (Garbage collector), the app provides a facility to people at their doorstep for removal of garbage gathered in their homes causing a nuisance for inmates.

Fawad said the app is launched around two months earlier and is restricted to a specific area of Peshawar. He said Peshawar is generating around 1000 tonnes of solid waste on daily basis and proper disposal of such a huge quantity waste not only requires resources but also scientific approach. Fawad stressed spreading awareness about income generation from solid waste through its segregation. He said he is also earning from Kabari App and such initiatives needed to be taken by a large number of people in other parts of the city.

Fawad said the charges he made for scarp collection and for payment of used items is very reasonable and up to the satisfaction of customers. "The population of Peshawar is more than four million and at the same

time, the city's solid waste generation almost doubled in the last few years from 580 tonnes per day in 2014 to more than 1,000 tonnes," shared Sajid Ali, an official of Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar.

The Peshawar Cantonment Board, an independent municipality on military-controlled land, produces an additional 60 tonnes of waste on a daily basis. Under this growing burden, the city has struggled to find a suitable site to dump its waste. However, the scientific way of disposal of solid waste requires a lot of financial resources, he added.

Sajid also urged Peshawar dwellers to take part and cooperate with public sector entities in the resolution of these problems posing severe threats to public health. He said without the cooperation and support of people, WSSP alone cannot remove all the dirt and waste left by people. Citizens have to show responsibility regarding proper disposal of waste by avoiding litter and making their environment clean and green, he added.