

Quake jolts Mingora

F.P. Report

MINGORA: A low intensity earthquake jolted Mingora and its surrounding areas on Monday but causality or damage was reported. According to National Seismic Monitoring Centre (NSMC), tremours measuring 4.4 on Richter scale were felt in Mingora and its adjoining areas. However, no loss of life or damage to property was reported from any part of the affected area so far.



KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi offering fateha at the Mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam.

# Islam teaches us lesson of peace

## COAS says nation to stand resolute & strong against enemies creating fissures

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Monday said that the nation would have to stand resolute and strong against the country's enemies who were creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities.

"Enemies of Pakistan are hell-bent towards creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities. We have to stand together and united to rise as a resolute and strong nation," the Army Chief said while speaking here at the Christ Church, where he joined the Christian community in Christmas celebrations.

The congregation welcomed the COAS and thanked him for sharing the festivity. The Army Chief wished Merry Christmas to the entire Christian community in Pakistan.

Gen Asim Munir expressed reverence for the religious community and stressed upon the need for promoting greater interfaith harmony in the society in order to follow the true



vision of Quaid-e-Azam of a united and progressive Pakistan. He said, "Islam teaches us the lesson of peace, friendship and encourages interfaith harmony which is the need of the hour."

The COAS stressed upon the importance of having correct perspective, truth and knowledge-based opinions about national issues rather than following rhetoric and propaganda, to address complex challenges and issues.

The Army Chief, paying glowing tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali

Jinnah's great vision and leadership on his 147th birthday, quoted his historical remarks made in his speech on August 11, 1947 while addressing the Constituent Assembly: "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 this State of Pakistan."

At the end, the COAS befittingly acknowledged the contributions and sacrifices made by the entire Christian community of Pakistan in all the fields and domains.

## PM pays tribute to Quaid

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday paid special tribute to the father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his 147th birthday.

"Today, we celebrate the 147th birthday of our great leader, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah," he said in a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office.

"His vision and unwavering commitment have been the guiding light for our nation. Let's honor his legacy by upholding unity, faith, and discipline!," the prime minister remarked.

The Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar also expressed grief and sorrow at the demise of prominent actor Nisar Qadri.

In a message of condolence, he prayed for the elevation of the departed soul in the ranks of Jannah. He sympathised with the bereaved family of the deceased artist. He said Nisar Qadri was among the experienced artists of Pakistan Television. The services of Nisar Qadri for Pakistan Television, film, radio and theatre would always be remembered, he added.

## ECP orders: IGP, DC removed

ISLAMABAD (INP): In line with the orders of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), IGP Islamabad Akbar Nasir Khan and Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon have been removed from their respective posts with immediate effect.

According to details, the ECP wrote three letters to the Prime Minister's Office seeking removal of the two officers. In October, the ECP had issued orders to remove the DC and IG from their posts.

## PIA int'l flight facing delays

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a recent incident involving Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), flight 741 bound for Jeddah experienced significant delays, causing inconvenience to the passengers.

According to the details, the PIA flight-741 scheduled to take off at 12:30 AM for Jeddah faced unexpected setbacks, leading to a delay of more than 12 hours. Passengers were informed of the delay, and the revised departure time was set for 12:50 PM, giving travellers an additional waiting period of more than 12 hours.

The PIA authorities cited operational reasons for the delay and assured passengers that the flight would take off promptly at 12:50 PM. However, to the dismay of passengers, the flight's schedule was changed once again, and it is now set to depart at 2:30 PM which marks the third time that the flight schedule of PIA-741 has been rescheduled.

# The Frontier Post

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said that the political struggle of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a guiding light for the politicians of the country.

"Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had firmly believed in the rule of law and his entire political struggle against colonialism was within the confines of the then laws," he said while speaking during a television talk show of a private news channel. The minister suggested that the peaceful struggle was the best option to bring change in the law in a democratic system.

To a query, he said the Election Commission of Pakistan had taken notice of incidents involving "snatching of the nomination papers" of the aspiring candidates. Internal communication between the Prime Minister's Office and the Establishment Secretary was a routine matter, the minister said while responding to another query.

Solangi asserted that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was an autonomous institution and empowered to take action in case of irregularities. He urged the people to keep trust in the institutions and called for focusing on the country's real issues.

The minister said all Pakistanis were needed to contribute to the national development. It was clearly stated in the Constitution that the country would be run by its elected representatives, he said, adding "The sooner everyone moves in that direction, the better it will be for everybody."

Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza

Solangi also said that all minorities, including the Christian community in Pakistan, enjoyed complete religious freedom.

In his message of Christmas greetings to the Christian community, the minister said the Constitution of Pakistan guaranteed protection to the rights of minorities. "Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah made it clear in his address to the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947 that the rights of minorities will be fully protected in the state of Pakistan," Murtaza Solangi added.

The minister said the Christian community had played an important role in the development and prosperity of Pakistan. All Pakistanis were united for the development and prosperity of the country, Murtaza Solangi maintained. He said, he equally shared the joy of the Christian community on Christmas.

Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi participated in the Christmas ceremony at the Pakistan Television and cut the Christmas cake.

Secretary Information and Broadcasting Shahera Shahid, PTV Managing Director Syed Mubasher Tauer Shah and other officers were also present on the occasion. The information minister, while offering Christmas greetings to the Christian community, especially the Christian employees of PTV, said, "We all share with you the moment of joy and happiness."

He said the PTV's payment of advance salary and Christmas allowance to its Christian employees before Christmas was a welcome step. On the occasion, the information secretary and the PTV MD congratulated the Christian employees on Christmas. They said that it had always been a tradition of PTV to organize a Christmas celebration cer-

emony on its premises. The PTV's Christian employees thanked the minister for attending the function.

**Solangi stresses on democratic means, adherence to rule of law to tackle issues:** Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi stressed on addressing the challenges being faced by the country through democratic means, negotiations, and adherence to the rule of law, as extra-constitutional measures could only lead to destruction.

Speaking at a speech competition organized by the Directorate of Electronic Media and Production (DEMP) among the students of model schools and colleges affiliated with the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) to pay tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his birth anniversary, he underscored that the pivotal solution to the country's urgent challenges laid in upholding democratic traditions.

"Respecting the Constitution is crucial as progress rests in following the law. Deviating from this may lead to chaos and a breach of constitutional principles," the minister said. Solangi asserted that the country could overcome its prevailing challenges by wholeheartedly embracing the principles advocated by Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The Quaid, a proponent of the rule of law, advocated for its application impartially, regardless of right or wrong, he said, emphasizing the importance of respecting diverse opinions. The minister observed that despite acknowledging the oppressive nature of British laws, Jinnah was steadfast in preserving the integrity of the legal system. He held the firm belief that all citizens were equal, emphasizing that genuine value was found in one's character and dedication to peaceful political pursuits.

## President urges children to adopt Quaid's principles

F.P. Report

KARACHI: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday urged children to contribute to the country by achieving high standards in education and adopting the Quaid-e-Azam's principles of unity, faith, and discipline. In an event titled 'Quaid and Children', the president said adhering to the golden values of the founder of Pakistan would make the country prosper in the comity of nations.

The colourful ceremony held here at the Presidency to celebrate the birth anniversary of the Quaid-e-Azam was attended by First Lady Samina Alvi, ministers, parliamentarians, and a large number of school children including the differently-abled ones. President Alvi recalled that during the Pakistan Movement, children were also among the population who loved their Quaid and steadfastly stood with him in his struggle for a separate homeland.

He read out a few pas-

sionate letters written by children to the Quaid-e-Azam where they penned their support to him besides sending him the money collected after savings. The president said Quaid-e-Azam was a strong believer in mainstreaming women and other marginalized segments of society to ensure economic prosperity. He emphasized providing equal opportunities to women and differently-abled people in the fields of education and employment.

He said the Quaid-e-Azam created this country with utmost dedication and commitment and stressed that it was the responsibility of every citizen to play a part in its development. President Alvi mentioned that the people in Kashmir were suffering at the hands of Indian occupation forces while the religious minorities faced continued persecution. "The current situation in India reinforces the significance of the Two-Nation theory that necessitated the creation of a sepa-

rate homeland for the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent," he said.

He said Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a great leader whose struggle led to bringing a change in the world. "This homeland was created after the sacrifices of thousands of people and it needs to be strengthened with hard work and commitment," he said. President Alvi and Samina Alvi cut the cake to celebrate the birthday of the Quaid-e-Azam among children.

The children clad in traditional dresses danced to the tunes of folk songs depicting the rich culture of the four provinces and Kashmir. A group of differently-abled children including the visually-impaired presented a tableau on the song 'Dil Dil Pakistan', which was highly appreciated by the audience that waved national flags during the performance. The entire ceremony was simultaneously presented in sign language to facilitate the differently-abled children.

## Govt releases all Baloch protestors

ISLAMABAD (INP): The government has released all the remaining 290 Baloch protestors, in light of the deliberations of the committee formed by Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

The decision to release the arrested protestors was taken in view of the directions of the honorable court, an Interior Ministry spokesperson said in a statement on Monday.

He said that peaceful protest was the right of every citizen, but no one was allowed to take the law into their hands. The security of the Capital's Red Zone, where constitutional institutions and the Diplomatic Enclave were located, would be ensured at all costs, the spokesperson added.

## PPP writes to CEC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In-charge central election monitoring cell of Pakistan Peoples Party, Taj Haider in a letter addressed to the Chief Election Commissioner has said that the permission of reshuffling of senior police officers in Sindh is in violation of the section 230 (f) of the Election Act 2017. He wrote that there was no obvious reason or any kind of emergency or expediency which may have warranted the wholesale transfer of senior police officers.

Haider further informed the CEC about the former DG FIA who is now the provincial president of PML-N Sindh against whom the PPP had complained in its Report submitted to Hon'ble Commission of massive rigging in General Election 2018. The fresh posting of SP District Matiari is especially significant, because it was in this district the Ex DG FIA while in uniform had been accused of using his influence to change results. It is obvious that the retired DG FIA, now the PML (N) president is using his old connections and influence to effect fresh illegal and unlawful postings.

## PTI hopes PHC will take up petition today

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Monday announced petitioning the Peshawar High Court (PHC) in a bid to regain the party's iconic 'bat' symbol.

The PTI is likely to play its election innings without the symbol as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had last week termed its intra-party polls "unconstitutional" and revoked its claim on the electoral symbol. Although it was unclear which court's door would the party be knocking on as it races against time with the election programme already underway, PTI central spokesperson Moazzam Butt told media the PHC would be moved today (Tuesday) and the petition's ready.

"We will try our best to ensure that our petition's taken up for a hearing tomorrow. We will be appealing to the court to

nullify the election commission's decision and term it illegal," the spokesperson said. The central spokesperson added that the election commission issued its directions on a petition of an "irrelevant person" — a reference to PTI ex-member Akbar S Babar.

In the wake of PTI's intra-party elections, held on December 2, Babar refused to accept the polls and moved the electoral authority against the irregularities. Following ECP's verdict that the polls were not in line with the rules, the party not only had its symbol taken away, but it was also left without a chairman — as Barrister Gohar Khan's polls election was declared illegal.

Talking about the decision last week, now-former chairman Gohar had lambasted the ECP for stripping the party of its bat symbol but hoped that the courts would back the PTI's

plea for its restoration. "[PTI's] electoral symbol will be restored," hoped Gohar, who is also a lawyer by profession.

Political analyst had 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 is not the only pressing matter for the PTI. Its former chairman, Imran Khan, is behind bars and he is the main driving force behind the party's votes.

Although he was granted bail in a cipher-related case last week by the Supreme Court, the PTI founder was arrested in two other cases before that and his release remains uncertain. Moreover, since he was convicted in a corruption case, he has been barred from contesting elections for a period of five years. His sentence is suspended, but isn't overturned so far.

## Nation celebrates Quaid's birth anniversary with zeal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The nation celebrated the 147th birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah with zeal and fervor. The day dawned with gun salutes at the federal and provincial capitals.

Special programs have been arranged by various social, political, governmental and non-governmental organizations and forums to celebrate the

birth day of the founder of Pakistan.

The participants of events will pay rich tribute to founder of Pakistan for his tireless efforts and visionary leadership. These observances of Quaid's birthday are being widely covered by Radio Pakistan and PTV focusing on his legacy. In Karachi, the day dawned with a 21 gun salute to the father of the nation while fateha khwani and Quran Khwani was held at the Mazar for Quaid and other

leaders of Pakistan Movement.

Change of guard ceremony was held at the Mazar-e-Quaid during which a smartly turned out contingent of the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul assumed the ceremonial guard duty. Commandant PMA Major General Iftikhar Hassan Choudhry inspected the guard of honour, laid a floral wreath at the Mazar and offered fateha. He also recorded his impressions in the visitors' book.





## PML-N workers celebrate Nawaz Sharif's birthday

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Quaid's Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif birthday celebration was held in constituency NA 119.

PML-N women members participated in the ceremony organized by PML-N nominated MPA Kanwal Liaquat. Speaking on the occasion, Kanawal Liaquat said that with the grace of Allah Almighty and under the dynamic leadership of Nawaz Sharif the country would start development journey once again.

She said that she was thankful to party leadership that it had reposed confidence in her. Party workers raised slogans in favour of their Quaid and cake was also cut.

## CM visits Churches

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd), Maqbool Baqar, along with Minister for Information and Minorities Affairs Ahmad Shah, visited St. Patrick's Cathedral in Saddar, met Bishop Benny Mario Trivas, and celebrated Christmas by cutting a cake. Later, the caretaker CM visited Holy Trinity Cathedral, gave a bouquet to Reverend Frederick John, Bishop of Karachi, and presented him with a cake to mark Christmas.

## 'Need to follow Quaid-i-Azam's principles'

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman said on Monday that minorities in the country were enjoying equal rights as per the vision of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

In his message issued here in connection with Christmas and 147th birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam, he said that Christian community had played significant role in country's development.

He said, "Quaid's principles of unity, faith and discipline should be guiding principles for all of us." He said, "Best way to pay tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah is to forge unity among our ranks."

Muhammad Balighur Rehman extended happy Christmas greetings to the Christian community.

## Fire break out due to gas leakage in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): A fire broke out due to a gas pipeline leakage in Dhanyal, Rawalpindi, on Monday. According to spokesperson Rescue 1122, six emergency vehicles, including three fire tenders, and more than a dozen personnel participated in the operation. Fortunately, there were no reported casualties, but a house was badly damaged due to the fire. Soon after the incident, Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chhatta, Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khuram Ali, Senior Superintendent of Police SSP Operations Flight Lieutenant (ret'd) Hafiz Kamran Asghar, and SP Saddam Muhammad Nabil Khokhar visited to review rescue efforts.

# Minorities must be treated with kindness: Naqvi

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi said on Monday that minorities must be treated with kindness as per the teachings of our beloved Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

He said this while addressing a prayer ceremony held at Cathedral Church here.

CM extended Christmas greeting to christian community.

Mohsin Naqvi said that Churches and houses damaged in Jaranwala incident had been repaired, while houses which had been burnt were provided financial assistance. He further said that 'after Jaranwala incident, 'Meesaq' centres have been established in all the districts for the protection of the rights of the minorities and the promotion of inter-faith harmony".

CM said that today biggest 'Mesaaq Centre' will be inaugurated in Lahore.

For the first time Punjab Cabinet meet-

ing was held in Jaranwala Church to express solidarity with christian community, he said and added that doors of Mosques were opened for Christians after Jaranwala incident.

Mohsin Naqvi said that Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah also emphasized on protecting rights of minorities.

He said that services of christian community in the field of education could not be denied. CM said, "Sacred heart, Convent and other educational institutions of christian community are source of pride for all of us."

He said, "Muslims deeply respect Hazrat Isa (AS) as one of the great messengers of Allah Almighty".

It is pertinent to mention here that Archbishop of Lahore Sebastian Francis Shaw welcomed the CM at the Church and presented flowers to him. Christmas cake was also cut on the occasion.

## Shehbaz Sharif urges nation to follow teachings of Quaid

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz President Shehbaz Sharif on Monday urged the nation to follow the guiding principles of the father of the nation to ensure progress and prosperity in the country.

In his message issued here on 147th birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, he said that separate homeland for the Muslims of sub-continent was created to ensure economic independence, besides providing education, health and social justice to all its citizens. He said, "the best way to pay tribute to Quaid-e-Azam is to make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state."

Shehbaz Sharif said that Quaid-i-Azam struggled for free and independent country till his last breath.

He said, "Vision behind creation of Pakistan has to be followed in letter and spirit to achieve real objective of making Pakistan."

It was very essential to overcome economic instability, poverty, division and ignorance to protect country's freedom, he added. PML-N President said, "Let us today on the anniversary of Quaid make the pledge that the entire nation will take guidance from the life of Quaid and follow his teachings to ensure development in the country."

## Muslims, minorities united for country's development: Ashrafi

KARACHI (APP): Special Representative to the Caretaker Prime Minister on Religious Harmony & Islamic Countries Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Monday said that Ulema and minorities, including the Christian community, were united for the peace and development of the country.

Ashrafi, who is also Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council, said the PUC and churches had always stood firm for peace in the country.

He stated this during his visit to Holy Trinity Cathedral to celebrate Christmas with the Christian community.

Ashrafi, felicitating the Christian community on the auspicious occasion, said that the Ulema believed in having respect for all religions.

The minorities including Christians, Sikhs and Hindus were free to go to their worship places in the country and their protection was the State's responsibility, he added. Ashrafi said that the Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir also visited

a Church today to join the Christian community in Christmas celebrations.

Referring to the Palestine situation, he said that the Christians opened doors of their Churches for the Muslims when the latter were attacked.

He said that the Christians were also being targeted in Palestine along with the Muslims. "We want peace and do not want war," he added.

Recalling the incident of Jaranwala, he said that no one had the right to destabilise peace in the country. "Islam does not allow anyone to force for marriage as well as does not allow any act with force."

Ashrafi said that due to the efforts of the caretaker prime minister and the COAS, activities had been restored in the Pakistan Stock Exchange and reduced Hajj expenses by Rs 0.1 million.

He announced to hold an International Conference on Religions between January 15-20. Later, Ashrafi cut a cake to mark the Christmas celebrations.

## Met Office forecast dry weather and colder night in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): The Met Office on Monday forecast dry weather with colder night in Karachi in next 24 hours.

The minimum temperature in the city was recorded 16.5 degree Celsius in the city, while maximum temperature will remain between 28 to 29 -degree Celsius, weather department said.

Forty percent humidity in the air recorded in the morning, Met Office said.

The northeastern winds blowing with the speed of

seven nautical miles in Karachi. The city's air quality index reading remained 171 in the hazardous zone and it ranked 8th most polluted city of the world at the index, according to the weather office.

The weather will remain cold and dry in most districts of Sindh with likely fog and smog in Jacobabad, Mohen Jo Daro, Sukkur, Larkana, Dadu, Ghotki and Padidan.

Cold and frosty weath-

er will prevail in most districts of Balochistan, while the northern districts of province will be hit by extreme cold weather.

The Met Office has forecast cold and dry weather for most parts of the country with chances of light rain at some places and snowfall at mountains in GB and upper

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The fog and smog will prevail in plains of Punjab, KP and upper Sindh.



KARACHI: Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony & Islamic Countries and Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi visiting Holy Trinity Cathedral Church.

## Jinnah's vision of a welfare state

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the nation celebrates the 147th birth anniversary of the founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, today (Monday), it will be appropriate to see what kind of state he envisioned for the people, who got independence after huge sacrifices.

Jinnah wanted Pakistan to be a progressive democratic welfare state based on Islamic principles and tenets where all citizens have equal opportunities. He stressed the importance of social justice and the need to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. He believed in providing equal opportunities for education, employment, and access to basic necessities for all citizens.

"It is not our purpose to make the rich richer and to accelerate the process of the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few individuals. Our ideal should not be capitalistic but Islamic," he said while speaking to the All India Muslim League (AIML) Planning Committee in Delhi on November 5, 1944.

He believed in creating a society where the government is responsible for the well-being and social welfare of its citizens regardless of their background, religion, or social status. He believed in upholding the principles of justice, equality, and

inclusivity. "We should aim at leveling up the general standard of living amongst the masses; our ideal should not be capitalistic but Islamic, and the interests and welfare of the people as a whole should be kept constantly in mind," he told the AIML Planning Committee. Quaid-e-Azam recognized the importance of economic development in creating a prosperous and welfare-oriented society. He believed in promoting industrial growth, creating employment opportunities, and reducing poverty and inequality. He was fully aware of the economic, social, and educational backwardness of Muslims. In October 1937, he underlined "a constructive and ameliorative programme of work for the people's welfare."

Similarly, on April 17, 1938, he emphasized devising plans to give Muslims "immediate relief from the poverty and wretchedness from which they are suffering more than any other section of the people of India." There are numerous occasions where the founder of Pakistan stressed organizing the people economically, socially, educationally, and politically.

He emphasized the significance of education and healthcare for the progress and well-being of a nation. He advocated for the provision of

quality education and accessible healthcare facilities for all citizens.

"Without education, it is complete darkness, and with education, it is light. Education is a matter of life and death for our nation. The world is moving so fast that if you do not educate yourselves, you will not only be completely left behind but will also be finished up."

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) had enjoined his followers to go even to China in the pursuit of knowledge. If that was the commandment in those days when communications were difficult, then, truly, Muslims, as the true followers of the glorious heritage of Islam, should surely utilize all available opportunities.

No sacrifice of time or personal comfort should be regarded as too great for the advancement of the cause of education," he said on an occasion. The above discussion shows that Quaid-e-Azam envisioned a state that would actively work towards providing social welfare programmes, including social security, housing, and assistance for the underprivileged sections of society. His vision of a welfare state aimed to create a just and equitable society where the government plays a proactive role in promoting the well-being and development of its citizens. His vision continues to inspire and guide policymakers in Pakistan today.

## Mirpurkhas first city in Sindh made load-shedding free

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar, Federal Minister for Power Muhammad Ali and Secretary Power Division Rashid Mahmood Langrial addressed the ceremony of declaring Mirpurkhas load-shedding free at Spreading Engineer HESCO office through a video link here on Monday. According to a CM House communique, Additional Secretary of Power Division Hasan Naqvi, Chief Executive Officer Bashir Ahmed Gujjar, Chairman HESCO BOD Jamil Gul Sheikh, Divisional Commissioner Mirpurkhas Faisal Ahmed Uqeli, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Rashid Masood Khan, SSP Adil Memon HESCO officers and local citizens as well as journalists were present at the ceremony.

In his address at the ceremony, the caretaker chief minister of Sindh said that elimination of load-shedding is

being done in the province and that the people should pay their bills on time as well as use minimum electricity so that along with saving electricity, the bills will be lower.

He said that the HESCO administration should work on providing an uninterrupted supply of power facilities in other big cities, and the government should establish institutions for public service. The CM said "As you all know today 25 December is the birthday of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. On this important day, the government is launching the facility of load-shedding free electricity for the people of Mirpurkhas".

He further passed his greetings to the management, and their entire team, especially the hardworking workers of HESCO.

Conducted combing work on all 16 feeders of Mirpurkhas, including

securing of meters, securing of transformers, correcting/straightening of poles and wires, and the development work, where the losses were 30 per cent was reduced by 17 per cent and the recovery has also increased, he said. The CM stated that the federal government had started a nationwide campaign against electricity thieves and defaulters on September 7, 2023.

"So that the financial conditions of the electricity distribution companies can be improved and by eliminating the evil like electricity theft, load-shedding-free electricity can be provided to the people", the CM said, adding: "Sindh government is fully cooperating with the entire administration of HESCO". Baqar appealed to the public that you also show your national responsibility and use electricity in a legal manner. He said: "People should fully cooperate in this government campaign against power theft and their facilitators."

## Fog prevents several flights from landing at Lahore Airport

LAHORE (INP): As dense fog engulfed the Punjab capital city in the morning, the planes faced difficulty in landing at Lahore Airport due to a decrease in visibility. Due to fog around the Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore, the visibility on the runway was reduced to a mere 50 meters. The foggy conditions led the aviation authorities to use the ILS Cat 3 System to let the plane safely land at the runway.

The Instrument Landing System (ILS) is a critical technology used in aviation for precision approach and landing operations. Among the various categories of ILS, Category 3 (CAT III) is of significant importance due to its capability to support landing operations in low visibility conditions, thereby enhancing flight safety and operational efficiency.

The flights that were not allowed to land at the Lahore airport included:

Flight 9P 840 of Fly Jinnah coming from Karachi to Lahore. The plane kept circling in the airspace of Lahore.

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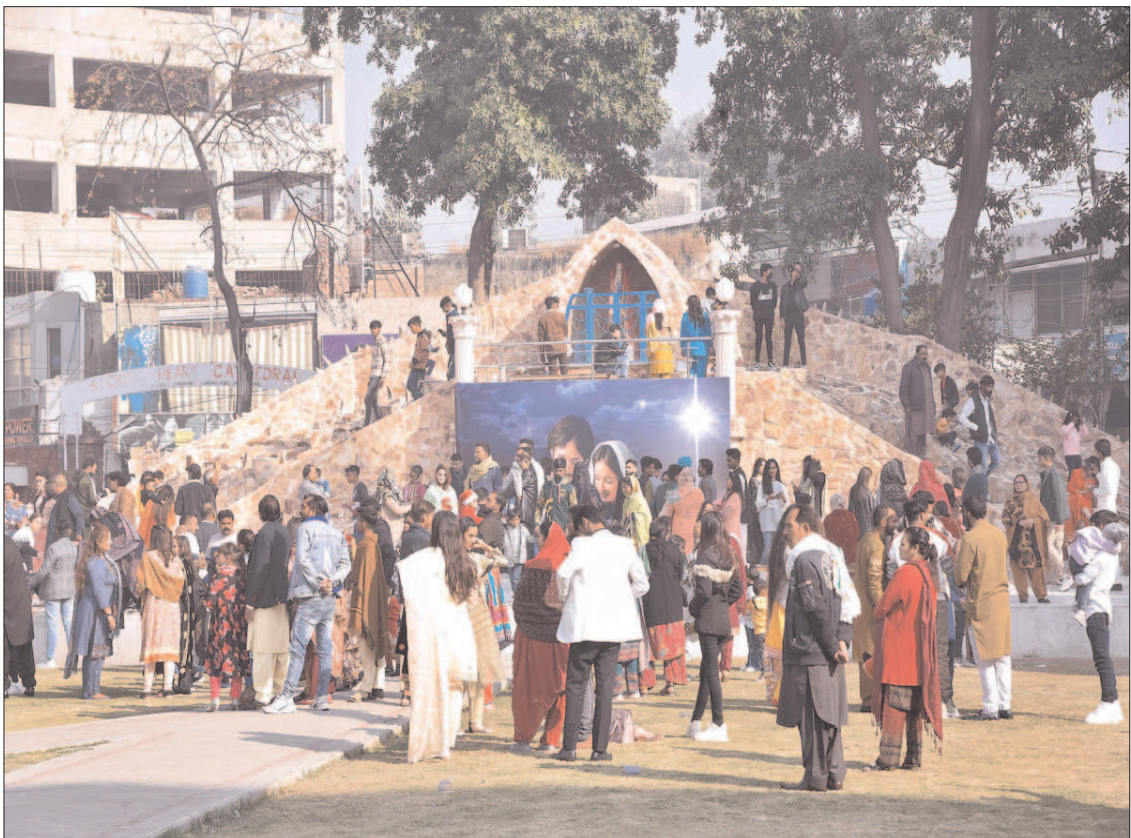
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LAHORE: Christian community members performing religious rituals on the occasion of Christmas Day at St. Anthony's Church, in the City.



Democratic struggle:

# Quaid-e-Azam changed map of sub-continent

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Monday said that the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had changed the map of the sub-continent and made the creation of Pakistan possible for Muslims through a democratic struggle.

In a message on the 147th birthday anniversary of the legendary leader, Ghulam Ali said that the ideology of Pakistan for Quaid-e-Azam was not acquiring merely a piece of land but the creation of a separate and sovereign state where they can live a free and dignified life.

Paying rich tributes to the great Quaid, the Governor vowed to make every sacrifice for Pakistan. "Pakistan is our pride and identity and every citizen has to play a constructive role for its prosperity and progress by strictly adhering to faith, unity and discipline principle of the

charismatic leader."

He called for results-oriented efforts for national cohesiveness and unity to make Pakistan more stronger and prosperous.

**CM KP extends warm wishes to nation on Quaid's Day**

Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, in commemoration of the birth anniversary of the founding father, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, extended warm wishes to the nation on this significant day and urged the nation to renew its commitment to making Pakistan an Islamic welfare state.

Chief Minister Syed Arshad Hussain Shah delivered a heartfelt message, addressing the entire nation. Chief Minister Arshad Hussain Shah acknowledged the relentless efforts and visionary leadership of Quaid-e-Azam in establishing a separate state.

He emphasized the enduring commitment and unwavering struggle that paved the way for the creation of the blessed country of Pakistan.

Reflecting on the principled and scholarly leadership of Quaid-e-Azam, the Chief Minister highlighted that the nation, under his visionary guidance, emerged as the manifestation of Allah's gift.

In the context of current crises, the Chief Minister stressed the need for the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to adhere to the principles of faith, unity, and discipline laid out by the founding fathers.

CM Arshad Hussain urged everyone to play their role in steering the country away from prevailing crises and towards the path of progress. He reiterated that adherence to the principles of Quaid-e-Azam is crucial for overcoming challenges and achieving national development.

Drawing parallels with neighboring India, the Chief Minister emphasized that the anti-Muslim stance of our neighbouring country underscores the correctness of the decision to establish a separate state for Muslims.

Chief Minister Arshad Hussain Shah declared the collective determination of the nation to make any necessary sacrifices to ensure that the beloved homeland remains invincible. The statement echoed a sentiment of unwavering patriotism and a commitment to Quaid-e-Azam's vision for a strong and sovereign Pakistan.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah cutting Christmas Cake.

## P&D employees threaten protest over unpaid salaries

PESHAWAR (APP): Over 200 employees of the Planning and Development Department (P&D) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are expressing their frustration and dissatisfaction on Monday as they have not received their salaries since September 2023.

The affected staff, which includes Assistant Directors (ADs) Monitoring, Assistant Monitoring Officers, and lower-level employees, are now warning of staging a protest against the caretaker provincial government's apparent neglect.

The employees, responsible for the implementation of the "Extension of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System to all Districts Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" project, have been facing financial hardships due to the delay in salary disbursement for the last four months.

The project aims to extend the monitoring and evaluation system to all districts in the region, focusing on improving efficiency and transparency in development initiatives.

Sources within the department reveal that the affected employees have made numerous attempts to seek clarification regarding

the unpaid salaries, but their queries have remained unanswered. This has led to growing frustration among the workforce, prompting them to consider collective action to voice their concerns.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, one of the employee of Monitoring stated, "It is disheartening to see that the very individuals responsible for implementing crucial projects for the betterment of our province are being neglected in such a manner. Our financial struggles are affecting not only us but also our families. We have been patient for months, but it seems we have reached a breaking point."

The affected employees

are now mobilizing to stage a peaceful protest to draw attention to their plight. They are calling on the government to urgently address the issue and ensure the prompt release of their pending salaries.

The situation raises questions about the financial management and oversight within the Planning and Development Department, as the delay in salary disbursement is hindering the progress of vital projects.

Critics argue that such issues could have severe consequences for the successful implementation of development initiatives in the province.

When contacted the concerned officer of Planning and Development, he said

that letters have been dispatched to Additional Chief Secretary and Finance Department to release maximum fund to pay the remaining salaries of the said project employees and start developmental projects. He said that there is no doubt that it is an important developmental project so the government should release budget in this regard to resolve the issue on priority basis. He informed that the department has decided to release their December salary this week.

The government has yet to issue an official statement on the matter, leaving the fate of the planned protest and the resolution of the salary issue uncertain, he added.



PESHAWAR: Chief Traffic Police Officer Dr. Zahid Ullah distributing helmets to a motorcyclist on occasion of Quaid-e-Azam day at Khyber Road.

## 135 male, 7 female for NA, 470 male, 22 female submitted papers

PESHAWAR (APP): As many as 135 male and seven female candidates have submitted their nomination papers for five National Assembly seats while 470 male and 22 female have submitted their nomination papers for 13 provincial assembly seats in Peshawar for General Elections 2024.

According to notification issued here on Sunday

by provincial election commission, said that 33 male have submitted nomination papers for NA-28 Peshawar-I, 21 male have submitted nomination papers for NA-29 Peshawar-II, 25 male and two female have submitted nomination papers for NA-30 Peshawar-III, 28 male and two female have submitted nomination papers for NA-31 Peshawar-IV

and 25 male and two female have submitted nomination papers for NA-32 Peshawar-V.

Similarly, for PK-72 Peshawar-I 35 male and 1 female have submitted their nomination papers. PK-73 Peshawar-II 33 male, 2 female, PK-74 Peshawar-III male 29, PK-75 Peshawar-IV 38 male, 1 female, PK-76 Peshawar-V 22 male, 2 female, PK-77

Peshawar-VI 29 male, PK-78 Peshawar-VII 32 male, 1 female, PK-79 Peshawar-VIII 46 male, 4 female, PK-80 Peshawar-IX 28 male, 2 female, PK-81 Peshawar-X 59 male, 5 female, PK-82 Peshawar-XI 39 male, 1 female, PK-83 Peshawar-XII 41 male, 3 female and PK-84 Peshawar-XIII 39 male have submitted their nomination papers.

## Nighat Orakzai annoyed with PPP

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader, Nighat Orakzai annoyed with party over neglecting her has announced to take back nomination papers.

According to details, in the list submitted by PPP for special seats of National Assembly, Asima Jehangir was of top and Nighat Orakzai was at sixth number.

The PPP leader said that the provincial leadership has neglected her due to which she had not submitted nomination papers for NA seat and now will also withdraw the papers filed for provincial assembly seat.

It should be mentioned here that Nighat Orakzai has been elected MPA three times.

PESHAWAR: The blue-eyed brothers of Sharidkhel tribe named Fawad Ullah Afridi and Junaid Ullah Afridi submitted nomination papers from NA 35 and PK 90 Dara Adamkhel for general election scheduled on 8th February 2024.

According to details, the

candidates are nephews of former Senator Haji Gul Afridi as well as former MNA Baz Gul Afridi and prominent businessman Islam Gul Afridi are their uncles.

The candidates are sons of late Majeed Gul Afridi and brothers of Samiullah Afridi. They are committed for development and wel-

fare of public.

The tribesmen appreciated both brothers for submission of nomination forms and hopeful for their victory in general election on the respective constituencies.

They are committed for supporting the candidates during election campaign and polling.

## Hadaf College grants' prizes to position holders

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Hadaf Group of Colleges Peshawar had arranged prize distribution ceremony position holders in intermediate examination and students obtained admission medical colleges during 2023 session.

Chairman Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Nasr Ullah Khan while Provincial Ombudsperson Rakhsh-

anda Naz, Vice Chancellor Iqra University were present on the occasion.

Moreover, Hadaf Group of Colleges distributed cheques among old students enrolled in medical colleges of Rs50 thousand as annual stipend scholarship while granted certificate and trophies in the students of medical university.

During the ceremony prizes and certificates were also distributed among



teachers for their hard work for the success of students of Hadaf Group of Colleges Peshawar.

## ANP's candidate Niaz dies of cardiac arrest

PESHAWAR (INP): Awami National Party (ANP) candidate for provincial assembly, Niaz Wali passed away of cardiac arrest on Monday.

Niaz Wali had submitted

nomination papers from constituency PK-70 of tehsil Bara for general elections to be scheduled on February 08, 2024.

The Awami National Party (ANP) candidate

Niaz Wali suffered heart attack which proved fatal.

The party leader has expressed deep grief and sorrow over death of their candidate.

## Quaid special fondness for ICP remembered on his birthday anniversary

PESHAWAR (APP): Islamia College Peshawar (ICP) is a unique alma-mater of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that was visited by father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah three times in his life to acknowledge historic role of its students during Pakistan Movement.

Impressed by its students' role during Pakistan Movement, the legendary Quaid had visited ICP in 1936, 1945 and 1948 as first Governor General of Pakistan where he highly praised their patriotism, commitment and devotion in completion of his difficult mission for Pakistan.

ICP was established by Muslim League leader Sir Abdul Qayyum Khan in 1913 and today it attained the status of a public sector university.

The great Quaid received a rousing welcome when he came to Peshawar and ICP in 1945. The students of ICP and the Muslim Students Federation (MSF) present-

ed him Rs8,000 as fund for Pakistan Movement and after it the struggle for a separate homeland for muslims of subcontinent were moved towards its logical end," Muhammad Younas Khan, Chairman, Pakistan Studies Department, ICP, while talking to APP.

"The arrival of the great leader of 20th century to Peshawar was a historic occasion where the students and MSF assured him to present 8,000 committed educated workers when he came again to this great alma-mater," he said.

The legendary leader committed to the cause of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent had moved people of KP, who decorated their homes, bungalows, bazaars, markets, villages, towns and vehicles with national and Muslim League flags besides holding placards inscribed with different slogans of Pakistan Zindabad and Quaid-i-Azam Zindabad.

"The spirit and enthusi-

asm of people of KP was historic. Peshawar was beautifully decorated with national flags hoisted atop of all major buildings and vehicles wearing a festive look," he said.

All bazzars including Qisa Khwani, Hastnagri, cantonment, Firdus and Khyber were beautifully decorated with AIML flags hoisted a top of the buildings besides portraits of Quaid-e-Azam.

"I can easily recalled a sea of people with national flags and portraits of Quaid-i-Azam arrived from all districts of KP and erstwhile FATA to see glimpses of their beloved leader when he came here in 1945 and later as first Governor General of Pakistan on April 12, 1948," said Misal Khan, a retired Information Officer while talking to APP.

Besides senior citizens, the students, youth, labourers, farmers and people of all walks of life in cars, trucks, datsons and rickshaws thronged to Peshawar to welcome the

legendary leader who changed world map through purely democratic struggle after creating Pakistan on August 14, 1947.

He said the people of KP showed immense love for Quaid-i-Azam and that is why AIML secured a maximum number of seats in this province in the 1946 elections after that historic victory nobody could stop the independence movement of Pakistan from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The great Quaid also paid his last visit to ICP as the first Governor General of Pakistan on April 12, 1948, and presented glowing tributes to the services of its students towards making Pakistan in these words.

"I am indeed very happy to be present here today and to have the privilege of addressing students of this great Darul Uloom, who are the future builders of Pakistan."

He advised the students to develop a sound sense of discipline, character, and

solid academic background and devote themselves towards their studies.

"Remember your government is like your own garden. Your garden flourishes by the way you look after it and the efforts that you put towards its improvement.

Similarly, your government can only flourish by your patriotic, honest and constructive efforts to improve it," the great Quaid told students.

He desired construction of a University in Peshawar from where rays of knowledge spread to every parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Following a gap of one year, the Government established the University of Peshawar near ICP in 1949 in line with the Quaid's vision.

Quaid-i-Azam's love for ICP could be judged from his historic will written on May 30, 1939, in Mumbai in which he declared ICP, Muslim University Aligarh and Sindh Madrassatul Islam Karachi, as among the inheritors of his proper-

ty. Later, the Quaid Trust paid Rs10.81 million in different instalments to ICP.

The amount was later spent on the establishment of Quaid-i-Azam College of Commerce, University of Peshawar, the construction of Jinnah Residential Quarters for the college employees, Jinnah College for Women and the newly-constructed Takbeer block at ICP.

Quaid-i-Azam had an immense love for tribesmen of merged tribal districts (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, the great Quaid had visited Peshawar where 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, the great Quaid highly praised the strong commitment, patriotism and support of tribesmen in the completion of his mission for Pakistan.

"The Quaid-i-Azam's speech to students of ICP and tribal elders was historic. We can achieve every goal in life by strictly adhering to it," said Manzoorul Haq former Ambassador while talking to APP.

The great Quaid knew that students were future builders of Pakistan and that was why he made repeated visits to ICP despite his hectic engagements and poor health condition, he added.

Quaid-e-Azam had laid great emphasis on education, character building and constructive criticism on the government for the sake of improvement and reformation rather than making point-scoring for political and personal gains.

Ambassador Manzoor said that every goal in life

could be achieved by strictly following the Quaid's principles of unity, faith and discipline.

He said it was high time to revitalize the legacy of the father of the nation by equipping students with the ornament of education and supporting our government to adopt a culture of constructive criticism for the sake of improvement to take the country forward towards prosperity.

The students of different schools visited ICP where they paid glowing tributes to the charismatic leader on his 147th birthday anniversary.

"I came from Educators Pabbi campus to see the rare portraits of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Khyber Union hall of ICP where the great Quaid addressed students," said Malaika Bibi, a student of 5th grade.

She said that ICP's students historic role during Pakistan Movement and Quaid e Azam love for this great alma-mater has impressed her the most.





## In brief

### PPP to make election alliance Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) district of Nowshera has announced that we will form any political alliance as according to our party leadership the party remains a unifying force with continued voter support. On February 8, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is expected to present a gift through transparent elections in the dual constituency and five provincial seats of Nowshera. The party vows to resist any interference from other parties or authorities, emphasizing that the power lies with the people, not institutions. Speaking at a press conference alongside PPP's NA-33 candidate Pir Muhammad Islam, the occasion was attended by Mian Rashid Ali Shah Kaka, the general secretary of Peshawar Division, and Idrees Khattak, the hopeful candidate for NA-34, along with provincial candidates Dr. Nasir Khan Abdullah and Saeedullah Shibli. Pir Muhammad Islam affirmed that PPP has not yet decided on any electoral alliances and pledged to address all the issues of the local population after winning. He expressed his commitment to eradicate unemployment and kickstart a mission for providing jobs to the youth, officially launching his electoral campaign. He urged the youth not to fall for false slogans and promises, emphasizing the importance of transparency in the electoral leadership.

### Family deprived of cash, valuables

CHAKWAL (INP): Armed robbers deprived a family of one million rupees cash, cell phones and other valuables. According to details, five robbers barged into a house at Railway Road in jurisdiction of City police station Chakwal on Sunday-Monday night. The robbers took the residents hostage at gunpoint and took away one million rupees cash, cell phones and other valuables. The police after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

### Robbers snatch cash, cell phone

PATTOKI (INP): Armed robbers snatched cash, cell phone from a mini-truck driver and torture him over resistance leaving him injured and fled the scene. According to details, the robbers intercepted a mini-truck driver at Jamil Road near Punjab College in Phoolnagar and asked him to handover cash and mobile phone. Over resistance, the robbers tortured 25-year-old Ahsan s/o Abdul Ghafour injuring him and took away the cash and cell phone. The Rescue 1122 provided medical aid to the injured driver. The police registered a case into the incident and started investigation.

### Load shedding hits Bahawalpur

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Bahawalpur and adjoining areas were hit by prolonged loadshedding as 500 KV transmission line tripped due to dense fog. The power breakdown which started on Sunday night continued till Monday. MEPCO said that heavy mist resulting in tripping of transmission lines resulted in suspension of power supply.

### Four murdered

SHIKARPUR (INP): Four people including a man and his son were shot dead in two different incidents in Shikarpur on Monday. Two people were slain and two others injured when two rival groups clashed in Hazarao Chadio village in Shikarpur's suburban area of Dakhan.



FAISALABAD: People from Christian community greeting after taking part in X-mass celebrations at Catholic Church.

## Dr. Sawera to contest polls from PK-25

F.P. Report

BUNER: For the first time in the history of Buner a woman candidate from Minority community Dr. Sawera Parkash will contest elections for provincial assembly from constituency PK-25 on general seat on 8th February 2024.

According to details, Dr. Sawera Parkash also submitted nomination papers both reserved seats of National and Provincial assemblies. The family candidate affiliated with Pakistan People's Party (PPP) for 35 years while the party had requested Dr. Om Parkash to bring her daughter into politics.

The father of Dr. Sawera Parkash is active political and social worker ready to welfare of humans. As well as he had performed his role to serve humanity both public and private sector health centers. The candidate is hopeful that PPP will grant party ticket which will pave way for women to participate in politics actively as policy maker. She argued youth for support because the young has potential to change dynamics of political landscape in the country.

Moreover, Dr. Sawera Parkash has graduated from Abbottabad International Medical College Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) in 2022. She is also aspirant of Competitive Exams especially Central Superior Services.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sawera Parkash claimed that prioritizing the uplifting of the socio-economic of women folk will ultimately increase national growth. She claimed that participation of women in politics to change socio-economic dynamics of the country.

It is worthy to mention that PPP's senior leadership



had convinced Dr. Sawera father Dr. Om Parkash for bringing her daughter into politics from Buner district which is itself creation of historical event.

**AWP observes 5th anniversary of founder Fanous Gujjar:** The Qaid Fanos Gujor 5th death anniversary observed at Swari in Buner. The Qaid founded leftist political party form Awami Workers Party (AWP) central leadership the Khyber Pulhontkha leadership the Gilgit Baltistan leadership the Malakand division and Buner district leadership the nominated candidates the AWP workers and the Qaid Fanos comrades largely participated.

The leadership from stage and participants from ground time and again raised full throat slogans in memory of Qaid Fanos Gujor and the AWP and party manifesto Socialism as the sole and last option to all social evils especially the social injustices and poverty.

Those addressed included AWP central secretary general Bakhshal Khan Tlo the women wing central secretary general Dr. Farzana Bari the KPK president Haider Zaman the GB president Baba Jan the MKD president and political heir of Qaid Fanos Gujor and candidate NA 10 Buner Usman Fanos Gujor

district Buner president Jihanzeb Khan Gul Rehman Wahab Rashed Shehzad Gujor Raza Khan Gujor Advocate Jehanzeb Wahab Rashed and candidates PK 25 Engineer Sabir Khan candidate PK 26 Advocate Suleman Khan and candidate PK 27 Ali Mohamad Khan addressed.

The speakers highlighted key role of Qaid in left politic adding he was behind uniting leftist on single platform and formed Awami Workers Party Pakistan. They elaborated AWP was representing all of marginalized segments in the society. They shared valued informations about life and struggle of Qaid Fanos Gujor adding he was a revolutionary progressive leftist practical character who spend all his life for fighting and safeguarding rights of poor and stood firm on his stand for social-list system in the country till last breath. They remembered Qaid Fanos Gujor never achieved wish to be elected as member parliament for raising voice for poor in parliament for what he several times contested elections.

Meanwhile, as many as Total 111 candidates filed nomination papers for single NA and three PK seats in Buner. Total 25 candidates were filed their nomination papers for the slot of NA 10 Buner till ending time. The candidates for NA seat were affiliated to Awami National Party (ANP) Jamiat Ulema e Islam Fazal (JUIF) Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Jamaat e Islami (JI) Pakistan People's Party (PPPP) Awami Workers Party Pakistan (AWPP) Awami Democratic Party Pakistan (ADOP) Mazlum Ulasi Tehrek Pakistan (MUTP) Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTIP).

## 127 candidates submitted papers from Khyber F.P. Report

KHYBER: As many as 127 candidates submitted their nomination papers for contesting the general election of one National Assembly seat (NA-27) and three Provincial Assembly seats (PK-69, 70 and 71) from district Khyber.

Including mainstream political parties including Pakistan Muslim League, Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People Party (PPP) Jamiat-e-Islami (JI) Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazal (JUIF) Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), scores of independent candidates submitted their candidatures for competing of the upcoming general election scheduled on 08, February, 2024. According to the District Election Commission 22 candidates tendered their candidatures for contesting NA-27.

In the same way 33 and 37 contenders submitted their documents for the provincial assembly seat, PK-69 and PK-70 respectively. While 35 candidates filed their candidatures for competing election on PK-71.

In last election, district Khyber had two National Assembly seats (one for tehsil Bara and one for jointly tehsil Landi Kotal and Jamrud) however in fresh constituencies' demarcation; Khyber has got only one NA seat and three provincial assembly seats, each for one tehsil.

It is to be mentioned here that in 2018 general election both the two National Assembly seats (NA-43, 44) were won by the PTI while out of three provincial assembly slots (PK-105, 106 and 107 two seats got Tehreek-e-Islahat Pakistan (PIT) while one PTI candidate succeeded from Bara.

## PPP to secure majority in polls: Nisar F.P. Report

LARKANA: Pakistan People's Party Sindh Provincial President Senator Nisar Ahmad Khuhro has said that the opponents of PPP will be defeated in the upcoming general elections.

Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will form the federal government in the whole of Pakistan and in all the four provinces, talking to the media after submitting their nomination forms at PS-11, the Provincial President of People's Party Sindh added that Lahore People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's wonderful public reception in the streets is a proof of the people's trust in the People's Party, therefore, in the upcoming elections, the People's Party is seeing a majority in the Punjab province to win more seats.

The slogan of Rozgar laya ga is very popular among the people, while the PPP is starting the election campaign under the manifesto of this slogan. He further said that getting rights is the basic right of everyone. On the other hand, Senator Nisar Ahmad Khuhro, provincial president of Sindh People's Party, has submitted forms to the seats of one national assembly and two provincial assemblies, Nisar Ahmad Khuhro.

# High time to educate youth on Quaid's principles

Saqib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Naveed Akhtar inaugurated Jinnah Corner at Islamia University Bahawalpur. Professor Dr. Rubina Bhatti Focal Person Jinnah Corner said that this corner has been established in Sir Sadiq Muhammad Khan Library to educate the youth about the principles of faith, unity and organization in the light of the teachings of the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. To be prepared for the development and welfare of the nation.

Jinnah Corner has a lecture room, study area, research area, discussion area and books, audio and video documents related to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Naveed Akhtar appreciated the establishment of Jinnah Corner in the university and termed it as the best initiative to promote the teachings and ideology of Quaid-



i-Azam. Meanwhile, a special seminar was held at Jinnah Corner in connection with the birthday of Quaid-i-e-Azam under the auspices of the Department of Public Administration and Kamyab Jawan Markaz. The Vice-Chancellor said in his address that Q u a i d - e - A z a m Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a great leader of the Indian subcontinent who made the dream of an independent state come true for the Muslims of India with his vision.

Today, more than ever before, we need to follow the orders of the Quaid-i-Azam so that we can ensure a stable, glorious future Pakistan that stands tall among nations. On this occasion, Professor Dr. Rubina Bhatti Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, Dr. Shehzad Gill, Head of Department of Public Administration, Dr. Rubina Yasmin, Head of Department of Pakistan Studies, Chief Librarian Khalid Singhira, and faculty members also expressed their views.

## YTA announces sit-in at Peshawar on 27th

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Young Teachers' Association (YTA) on Monday announced to stage a protest sit-in at Peshawar on Dec 27 against the provincial government for implementing its contributory provident (CP) fund policy on teachers recruited after July 2018. The announcement was made by the YTA provincial president Attaur Rehman while speaking at a news conference at the Timergara press club. The YTA general secretary Muhammad Imran and other office bearers were also in attendance.

Attaur Rehman said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had amended the civil servant act 1973 in

2022 and under its section 19 (1) the government employees appointed on regular basis before the commencement of the KP civil servants (amendment) act, 2022 would be entitled to receive pension and gratuity as admissible to them under the pension rules. He said the civil servants appointed after the commencement of this act had been deprived of their regular pension and gratuity and they had been entitled to receive an amount contributed by them towards the CP fund along with the contribution made by the government to their accounts in the said fund.

The YTA leader alleged the KP finance department and the accountant general were violating not only the civil servants act 1973 and

the amended act 2022 but were also bypassing the Teachers' Regularization Act 2022. He said the YTA was not ready to accept the CP Fund policy and demanded the government to reverse its decision regarding it. He said the high ups of the finance department and Accountant General office were contacted again and again but to no avail. The YTA leader said that they had no option other than setting up a protest sit-in at Peshawar against the government's apathy to accept the demand of thousands of public sector schools. He said that male and female teachers from across the province would participate in the YTA proposed sit-in at Peshawar on Dec 27.



HYDERABAD: Members of government retired teachers association holding a protest rally in favour of their demands.

## Winter packages among orphans distributed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A ceremony was organized at Green Residency Mardan in connection with the distribution of winter package for 120 orphans and helpless children under the auspices of non-governmental organization Zamong Jazba Welfare Society.

Vice Chancellor Beacon House University Islamabad Fahad Ali Khan and District Social Welfare Officer Jamal Shah Mohmand, Woman Chamber Aqeela Sumbal, President of Radio Broadcaster Association Mardan Region Dr. Ali Khan, Ajmal Shah Yousafzai, Engineer Muhammad Shahab, Hasan Hassas, Female Tehsil Councilor Kosar Waseem Asfandiari Durrani also participated.

Chairman of Welfare Society Muhammad Pervaz and General Secretary Ghani-ul-Rehman while addressing the ceremony highlighted

the performance of the institution. Fahad Ali Khan Jamal Shah Mohmand and Engineer Muhammad Shahab while speaking said that children are our future if we want to reach our destination and progress, then these orphans and helpless children We have to play our role for a better future. He appealed to the public to help Zamong Jazba Welfare Society generously in this great work of service to humanity.

**Limitation of NA21&23 to confuse candidates:** The new constituencies of NA-21 and NA-23 have surprised not only the workers of the political parties but also the candidates. NA-21 has been added to where the candidates will have to cross three Union Councils which are Hatian, Jalala Parkho Union Council NA-23 while Makori Union Council NA located in the middle of these three Union Councils, has been added to the NA 21 and NA

23 political parties' nominees, but this unnatural constituencies have also surprised the workers of the political parties because the candidates and supporters do not know their constituencies.

From where do they start and where do they end in these two constituencies, half of the population of some union councils, half of the village council in one constituency, while half of the population of half of the village council has been included in the other constituency, political parties and political parties. The workers are suffering from intense mental conflict and pressure and they are facing serious difficulties in the election campaign because they do not know the boundaries of their constituencies and the division of these two constituencies has been done in a very complicated and unnatural way. Which the political parties and workers of the political parties here continue to call as a conspiracy.





# Rhetoric escalates in China-Philippines dispute

BEIJING: Chinese state media has warned the Philippines against “causing trouble and chaos” in the South China Sea, as tensions continue to boil over the disputed waters. State-controlled newspaper the People’s Daily issued the call in a commentary published on Monday, saying the Philippines has repeatedly infringed on China’s territory in the region and risked making a severe “miscalculation”.

The commentary singled out Philippine activities near Second Thomas Shoal, a resource-rich waterway that Manila occupies, but China claims as its own territory. China’s People’s Daily blamed the United States for encouraging the Philippines’ “provocative” actions in the area, which it says “irresponsibly escalate regional tensions”.

“The Philippines relies on the support of external forces, ignores China’s goodwill and restraint, and repeatedly provokes China’s principles and bottom line,” said the editorial. Written under the pen name Zhong Sheng, or “Voice of China”, the column is often used to offer headline views on foreign policy matters. “This behaviour is extremely dangerous and has seriously harmed regional peace, stability, prosperity and development,” the piece reads.

The pointed remarks come amid months of tension as Beijing and Manila have traded accusations over a spate of run-ins in the sea. In the latest incident on December 10, the Philippines accused China of ram-



ming a supply boat that was carrying Manila’s chief of staff near Second Thomas Shoal.

The China Coast Guard, however, said the Philippine boat had “deliberately collided” with the Chinese vessel after “disregarding our multiple stern warnings”. Beijing claims Second Thomas Shoal and almost the entire South China Sea on the basis of its “nine-dash line”. The U-shaped marking featured on a new version of its national map earlier this year.

The map caused upset among Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, as it stakes Chinese claims to the waters lying close to their coasts. An international tribunal

ruled as far back as 2016 that the map provided no legal basis for China’s claim, but Beijing has ignored that decision and continues to insist on the line’s legitimacy.

In an unusually direct warning, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said last week any miscalculation in the dispute with the Philippines would bring a resolute response from China and called on Manila to “action with caution”. The souring of bilateral ties coincides with Manila bolstering military relations with Japan and the United States, its former colonial power and defence ally of seven decades. China expressed anger at the US this month for sending a navy ship into waters near the contested area. — Aljazeera

## Kremlin foe Navalny located in jail weeks

MOSCOW: Jailed Russian opposition politician Alexey Navalny has been tracked down to a prison north of the Arctic Circle, his spokeswoman says after supporters lost touch with him for more than two weeks. Kira Yarmysh on Monday said Navalny is in the IK-3 penal colony in Kharp in the Yamal-Nenets region, about 1,900km (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow.

Navalny’s lawyer managed to see him on Monday, Yarmysh said, adding: “Alexey is alright.” The Kremlin critic’s whereabouts had not been known since December 6, triggering concern from his allies, rights groups and Western governments. There was speculation that he was undergoing a prison transfer, which can take weeks in Russia because prisoners are slowly moved by rail between far-flung facilities.

They had been preparing for his expected transfer to a “special regime” colony, the harshest grade in Russia’s prison system. The district of Kharp is home to about 5,000 people and is located about 60km (40 miles) above the Arctic Circle. His new home, known as the “Polar Wolf” colony, is considered one of the toughest prisons in Russia. Its inmates are convicted of grave crimes. Winters are harsh there with temperatures due to drop to about minus 28 degrees Celsius (minus 18 degrees Fahrenheit) there over the next week.

“It is almost impossible to get to this colony. It is almost impossible to even send letters there. This is the highest possible level of isolation from the world,” Navalny’s chief strategist, Leonid Volkov, said on X, formerly Twitter. Navalny has been behind bars since January 2021 when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin.

Before his arrest, he campaigned against corruption and organised major anti-Kremlin protests. He has since received three prison terms and spent months in isolation in Penal Colony Number 6 for alleged minor infractions. Russian authorities view Navalny and his supporters as “extremists” with links to the CIA, the United States intelligence agency, and say they are seeking to destabilise Russia. A court extended Navalny’s sentence to 19 years on extremism charges and ruled that he be moved to a more secure, harsher prison.

He has rejected all charges against him as politically motivated. Navalny’s supporters believe he was deliberately being hidden after President Vladimir Putin announced he is seeking reelection in March, a vote in which he is expected to easily secure a fifth term. Moscow has for years sidelined opposition figures from elections and political life, a clampdown that has ramped up since the Kremlin ordered Russian troops to invade Ukraine in 2022. — Agencies

# Serbia police fire tear gas against opposition activists

BELGRADE CITY: Riot police in Serbia have fired tear gas and pepper spray at opposition supporters demanding the annulment of elections marred by claims of widespread fraud. Hundreds of protesters attempted to storm Belgrade City Hall during demonstrations against the results of parliamentary and local elections on December 17, which international observers say were marred by vote buying, ballot stuffing and the improper influence of President Aleksandar Vucic.

Opposition supporters, some chanting, “Vucic thief” and “Vucic is Putin”, used flagpoles and rocks to break windows as they tried to break into the capital’s administrative building but were repelled by riot police. Vucic’s ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) were returned to power with a parliamentary majority after winning nearly 47 percent of the votes, according to preliminary results announced by electoral authorities.

The centre-left opposition alliance Serbia Against Violence received 23.56 percent of the vote, followed by the Socialist Party of Serbia with 6.56 percent, according to electoral authorities. Serbia Against Violence has claimed it was the rightful winner, espe-

cially in Belgrade, where there were reports of non-residents being recruited to vote.

In a letter earlier this week, Serbia Against Violence told European Union institutions, officials and member nations that it would not recognise the outcome and called on the bloc to do the same as well as to initiate an investigation. “Police are everywhere, also on the roofs. It is obvious that they do not want to recognise [the] election results,” said Serbia Against Violence leader Nebojsa Zelenovic. “We will continue with our fight.”

Vucic has rejected opposition calls to rerun the vote, blasting claims of irregularities as blatant “lies”. In an address aired by pro-government Pink TV, Vucic said the protests were “not a revolution” and those seeking to destabilise the state would not succeed. “This was an attempted violent takeover of the state institutions of the Republic of Serbia,” Vucic said, while claiming there was evidence that “everything was prepared in advance” with assistance from abroad.

The Serbian leader said more than 35 people were arrested and more would follow. “Nobody has the right to destroy our house,

to destroy the property of our country and our citizens, not to mention causing serious injuries to our police officers,” Vucic said. Vucic and his party were rattled by antigovernment protests in May, which began as demonstrations against back-to-back mass shootings that killed 18 people, including nine children, before morphing into a broader antigovernment movement taking aim at issues such as rising inflation and perceived government corruption.

On Monday, Russia accused Western countries of stirring up tensions in Serbia. “The attempts of the collective West to destabilise the situation in the country are obvious,” Russia’s foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told state-run news agency RIA Novosti.

Serbia, entirely dependent on Russia for gas, did not join international sanctions against Moscow after its Ukraine offensive. However, Serbia’s condemnation of the Russian offensive in the UN has sparked controversy. The Kremlin had welcomed the election results, with spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying Moscow hoped the result would lead to the “further strengthening of friendship” between the countries. — Aljazeera

# Has the US-led Red Sea force calmed shippers amid Houthi attacks?

SANAA: The United States-led multinational naval force that was to protect and secure maritime traffic through the Red Sea from attacks by Yemeni Houthi rebels appears significantly weakened – even if not quite dead in the water – before it ever sailed together. Less than a week after the announcement of Operation Prosperity Guardian (OPG), France, Italy and Spain have pulled out of the nearly fully-created force touted to include warships from more than 10 nations.

The decision to cobble together what is essentially an anti-Houthi coalition was almost forced on Washington. In early November, a US destroyer shot down several missiles fired from Yemen but the US tried to maintain a business-as-usual pose and not advertise that it was engaging the Yemeni group.

As long as the combative Houthis tried, unsuccessfully, to lob missiles at Israel, a country attacking Yemeni’s Arab and Muslim brethren, the US could maintain that the whole affair was not a serious regional escalation. But when their repeated attacks on ships headed to and from the Suez Canal threatened the security of international maritime routes, the US was forced to act. The US Navy already has a huge number of ships in the region, so why would it need to ask friendly nations to contribute more?

One reason is that even with such a large force, the US cannot spare many ships for the task. The other is political unwillingness to be the only nation attacking Yemen as it would likely be interpreted, especially in the Middle East, as direct military action in aid of Israel. US political and military dilemmas are largely conditioned by geography and Yemen’s control of the strategically important choke point where the Indian Ocean funnels into the Red Sea. The Bab el-Mandeb passage is only 29km (16 nautical miles) wide at its narrowest point.

Its approaches are bristling with warships: More than 35 from at least 12 nations that do not border the Red Sea are now in positions from which

they could reach the strait in less than 24 hours. Nations along its African and Arabian shores have at least as many in their harbours. Many of these ships were already in the region before 7 October. The northwestern parts of the Indian Ocean leading into the Gulf of Aden and the Bab el-Mandeb are probably the most notorious pirate-infested waters of the 21st century.

The civil war and breakdown of Somalia’s central government created maritime piracy on an unprecedented scale. Somali pirates venture out to sea in fast small boats, armed with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades and intercept commercial shipping heading towards and from Bab el-Mandeb in three directions: from the Far East, passing south of India; from the Gulf, sailing around the Arabian Peninsula; and north to south along African shores. Shipping companies demanded protection and the international community, aware of the need to keep shipping lanes open and secure, provided it. Every month, 200 ships cross the Suez in each direction carrying no less than 3 million containers.

Since 1990, the Combined Task Force 150 (CTF-150) had been engaged in anti-piracy missions. More than 30 nations, mostly Western but also including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Thailand, Singapore and Turkey, took part and usually kept at least four warships on station, rotating every three to four months. In 2022, a new force, the CTF-153, took over. When the latest war in Gaza started, the force was comprised of US destroyers USN Carney and USN Mason, Japanese destroyer JDS Akebono and a South Korean one, ROKS Yang Man Chun.

In anticipation of the arrival of stronger assets, the US ships immediately moved into the Red Sea, and both have on several occasions intercepted Houthi missiles and drones. The US Navy hurriedly deployed two aircraft carrier task groups – which include anti-aircraft and anti-submarine cruisers and destroyers, helicopter carriers, assault ships and other

offensive and defensive assets – to the wider region. It is almost certain that the White House did not immediately have a concrete action plan for involvement in the Gaza conflict, but the decision to deploy to the region naval and air power capable of taking on all potential adversaries was militarily prudent.

Meanwhile, the White House also engaged in diplomacy. The US and Iran exchanged indirect statements, assuring each other they did not seek confrontation. Iran announced that it had not been informed of the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel, and the US did everything to avoid alienating Iran. In return, Tehran nudged the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah into refraining from a full-scale offensive. The de-escalation seemed to be working. But then the Houthis, considered to be an Iranian proxy in much the same way as Hezbollah, decided to attack in the Red Sea, demanding Israel end its war on Gaza. They launched long-range missiles at Israel and naval missiles at US Navy destroyers that had entered the Red Sea.

Both operations failed, with all missiles and drones being on several occasions intercepted and shot down. The US Navy was convinced that its two destroyers could handle the situation, possibly being reinforced in time by a couple more. But when tankers and container ships in the Red Sea started taking hits almost daily, the escalation was undeniable. Many of the world’s biggest shipping companies shifted from going through the Suez Canal to the longer and more expensive route around Africa. Commercial carriers now introduced a \$700 surcharge on each container sailing the longer route.

Counting just those laden with Asian manufactured goods heading to Europe, the additional cost is a staggering \$2bn per month. That increase gets passed on to the final customers – leading to inflation. In addition, the longer travel will soon cause distribution delays, shortages and general disruption of the economy, which every nation will feel. — Aljazeera

# Kyiv secures desperately needed funds from WB

KYIV: Ukraine has received a vital \$1.34bn in funds from the World Bank. The funding has been paid out to support non-security related financial and economic stability, Ukraine’s Ministry of Finance said on Monday. The cash boost will be welcomed by Kyiv, which warns that its ability to defend against the Russian invasion could soon be impacted by delays in funding from the United States and the European Union.

In a statement, the ministry noted that the financing, which is the Sixth Additional Financing under its Public Expenditures for Administrative Capacity Endurance in Ukraine (PEACE) project, consisted of a \$1.086bn loan from the World Bank, a \$190m grant from Norway, a \$50m grant from the United States and a \$20m grant from Switzerland.

The funds are expected to be used to partially compensate for non-security and defence-related expenditures of the Ukrainian state budget, including old-age social payments and payments to employees of the state emergency service, the ministry added. “International financial assistance is a significant contribution to maintaining Ukraine’s financial and economic stability and allows us to provide priority social expenditures during the war,” said Ukrainian

Finance Minister Serhiy Marchenko.

“Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the governments of Japan, the United States, Norway and Switzerland have repeatedly demonstrated their unwavering support and solidarity for Ukraine. I am grateful to our partners for their willingness to cooperate and help us at a crucial time for Ukraine.” It has been nearly two years since Russia invaded Ukraine, and as the war continues to rage uncertainty is growing over Western backing for Ukraine.

Earlier this month, the White House warned the United States Congress that funds designated for providing aid to Ukraine would run out by the end of the year, amid Russia’s intensifying campaign to knock out the country’s energy infrastructure. The US, Ukraine’s biggest single-country donor, has sent more than \$40bn in aid since Russia’s invasion in February 2022. But right-wing congressional Republicans have expressed increasing scepticism towards approving more funds for Ukraine.

The United States Senate has said they will vote on an aid package for Ukraine in 2024. But Congress could continue to hold up the money. The impasse over US aid to Kyiv is mirrored in the European Union, where Hungary is blocking a 50 billion euro (\$55bn)

aid package. The bloc is due to revisit the issue in January.

The difficulties in securing the funds in Washington and Brussels have raised concerns in Kyiv that Western backers are experiencing “fatigue” with the drawn-out battle, as fighting on the front line becomes bogged down. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has noted that Kyiv’s “foreign policy will be active” with many international activities in January.

“We make every effort to strengthen Ukraine and ensure that everyone is confident about the coming year, about military aid, macro-financial assistance, and political support,” he said. Russian attacks against Ukraine continued over Christmas. On Monday, the Ukrainian military said that Russia launched 31 drones and two missiles from the annexed Crimean Peninsula overnight.

The military said the attack mostly targeted the south of Ukraine. Kyiv’s air defences “destroyed 28 Shahed attack drones in Odesa, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Donetsk, Kirovohrad and Khmelnytskyi regions” and also destroyed the missiles, it said. Meanwhile, Russian-installed authorities reported one person killed in the Ukrainian shelling of the Russian-occupied eastern town of Horlivka. — Aljazeera

# Amid uptick in kidnappings, Colombian family receives ‘biggest gift of all’

CHIA: Decnis Diaz was at home in Chia, Colombia, on November 18 when she received a call from her siblings: Her beloved younger brother, Jhon Jairo Diaz, had been kidnapped. A 34-year-old store manager, Jhon Jairo was ending his shift at a meat market in Cucuta, a border town near Venezuela, when four masked men held him at gunpoint and dragged him inside a black sedan. Security cameras captured the vehicle speeding away.

“I couldn’t believe it. It always seemed to me that kidnappings were a terrible crime, but I never thought that our family would be a victim of it,” said Diaz. Jhon Jairo was the latest victim in an unexpected crime trend: The number of kidnappings has shot up recently in Colombia. Between January and October, a total of 287 people were abducted, a 73-percent increase over the same period the previous year, according to the Defence Ministry.

Once a widespread tactic in Colombia’s decades-long internal conflict, kidnapping has long been a source of income for the country’s armed groups, who charge an extortion fee in exchange for the hostage’s safe return. The ransom, in some cases, can amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars. But the rate of kidnapping had plunged following a 2016 peace deal between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country’s largest rebel group at the

time.

The practice is once again on the rise, though. The number of abductions this year – expected to be the highest since 2016 – has shocked many Colombians, some of whom believed the crime had all but died out. “We thought that kidnappings were something from our parents’ generation,” said Ana de la Peña, whose husband Fabián Arias was kidnapped on October 2 outside his mother’s house in Ocaña. “But the dark past that we didn’t want to remember has returned.” For decades, the FARC had been the primary perpetrator of kidnappings in Colombia, responsible for an estimated 40 percent of the abductions between 1990 and 2018.

But the 2016 peace deal resulted in the FARC disbanding as an armed force. Immediately afterwards, kidnappings started to dip, reaching a low of 92 in 2019. That downward trend, however, reversed as Colombia experienced renewed violence. Rival armed groups and criminal networks rushed to fill the power vacuum the FARC had left behind, capitalising on the opportunity to take over its illegal drug and mining ventures. Kidnapping, experts say, became an important tool to finance their growing ranks.

Critics have also blamed the increase on President Gustavo Petro, who took office in 2022 as Colombia’s first left-wing leader. A former rebel fighter himself, Petro

pledged to improve security through peace talks, a strategy he calls “Total Peace”. To participate, armed groups had to agree not to murder, torture or “disappear” civilians during the negotiations. But the agreement does not explicitly ban kidnapping – a loophole that critics say groups may be exploiting to maintain control over populations and turf.

“What we’ve seen in a lot of cases is that [armed groups] have traded that overt, visible violence for much more silent and invisible social control,” said Elizabeth Dickinson, a senior analyst for the think tank Crisis Group. Kidnappings are “extremely powerful in silencing the population because you create an atmosphere of fear and of compliance”, she added.

Many abductions unfold without much public pushback because they are often kept out of the news, said Tatiana Prada, a researcher at the Ideas for Peace Foundation. Relatives are usually afraid to speak out, for fear their words could endanger the hostage’s life. But one high-profile case catapulted the issue to national attention. In late October, the National Liberation Army (ELN) – Colombia’s largest remaining rebel group – kidnapped the parents of Liverpool FC striker Luis Diaz, a popular Colombian football player.

While his mother was found within hours, his father remained missing for 12 days, sparking a nationwide manhunt. Public outrage reached such a fever pitch that the ELN

released Diaz’s father, calling the abduction a mistake. “It brought to light what was already the reality, which is that kidnappings had continued unabated despite negotiations,” said Dickinson. “The question that comes up is: ‘Why are we negotiating with these groups if they’re not changing their behaviour?’”

Fearing government inaction, families have since taken it upon themselves to organise grassroots campaigns to bring their loved ones home. Diaz, for instance, spoke about her brother Jhon Jairo on the Senate floor, calling on politicians to act faster to save her brother. If public pressure could help secure the release of a football player’s father, she figured it could work for her brother, too.

“With all my heart and tears in my eyes, I beg you to help me,” Diaz told a room full of senators. “Do not leave us alone.” Jhon Jairo’s family and friends also hosted a vigil in his hometown Cucuta, using hundreds of candles to spell a message: “Liberate him.” The local priest even held a mass in his name. De la Peña, whose husband Arias was kidnapped, likewise launched a campaign to push for her spouse’s freedom.

On the social media platform X, de la Peña shared photos of their five-month-old daughter wearing a white onesie stamped with a picture of Arias and a message: “Free my dad. We want him home.” The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace

confirmed in November that Arias was being held by the ELN – the same group that kidnapped the football player’s parents.

The ELN had long rejected demands to stop kidnapping civilians, citing its use as a revenue stream. On social media, Antonio Garcia, the ELN’s top commander, even questioned whether the term itself applied to the group’s actions. “The ELN does not carry out kidnappings,” Garcia wrote, saying his group “only takes prisoners and detainees”. He also described kidnapping as the “withholding” of civilians for “tax purposes”.

Defence Minister Ivan Velasquez was quick to rebut that framing. He told reporters that detaining civilians unlawfully, even for economic purposes, was still kidnapping. “There is no discussion in this, nor can we debate the terms,” Velasquez said. “It is what it is.” However the ELN and other armed groups have since shifted their stance. On December 11, the Estado Mayor Central (EMC), an armed group composed of former FARC members, signed a bilateral agreement with the government to end kidnappings for ransom.

The ELN followed suit. On December 17, its leaders likewise agreed to suspend kidnappings for ransom once a temporary bilateral ceasefire is reinstated in January. But the breakthrough was not without criticism. Neither the EMC nor the ELN said if they would release

hostages already in their custody, a fact which provoked scepticism – even within the government. “It’s not enough to say that they are going to stop kidnapping. They have to hand over hostages,” said Velasquez.

According to the Ministry of National Defence, the ELN is currently believed to be holding 38 hostages. A total of 91 civilians remain in captivity across all of Colombia’s armed groups and criminal gangs, according to the Ombudsman’s Office, although underreporting is common. Amid the uncertainty, however, the Diaz family received some unexpected good news this month, just weeks before the Christmas holiday: Jhon Jairo had been released.

“He came back traumatised, but we’re thrilled to have him home,” Decnis Diaz told Al Jazeera a day later. De la Peña likewise saw the return of her husband Arias a day later, on December 12. “Welcome to freedom, love of my life,” she wrote on social media, posting a beaming selfie with her arms wrapped around him. This Christmas, Diaz said her relatives were travelling from every corner of Colombia to Cucuta to spend the holiday together as a family, with Jhon Jairo. “Neither money nor material goods can replace the feeling of love and family unity,” said Diaz. “To have Jhon Jairo back home for Christmas is the biggest gift of all.” — Aljazeera



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FOUNDER  
Rehmat Shah Afridi  
JALIL AFRIDI  
Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at  
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,  
Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

# Yemen conflict and prospect for peace

THE Yemeni warring groups, the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and Iran-aligned Houthis have both committed to steps towards a ceasefire and expressed readiness to move forward to conclude a truce through negotiations under UN auspices. According to the UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg, both parties are currently committed to a set of measures to implement a nationwide ceasefire, improve living conditions in Yemen, and engage in preparations for the resumption of an inclusive political process under the UN.

Yemen conflict began in late 2014 between Iran-backed Houthi rebels and the internationally recognized government of President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi when Houthi militia seized the capital Sanaa and a larger chunk of Yemen's land-mass. A Saudi-led coalition backed the Yemeni government and launched a military offensive against Houthi militia to liberate Yemen and help restore a globally recognized Yemeni government in the country. Unfortunately, the Arab coalition could not liberate Yemen from Houthi occupation but the years-long conflict escalated into a devastating civil war exacerbated by regional rivalries between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran. Historically the conflict has caused widespread suffering leading to a severe humanitarian crisis. Over the years, the Yemeni people faced mass displacement, food insecurity, famine, lack of healthcare, and limited access to clean water. However, global humanitarian organizations have been struggling hard to provide for conflict-hit Yemeni people but violence and resistance by the warring armed groups significantly undermined the humanitarian work throughout the past.

Over the years, the United Nations and the global community had been engaged in talks with warring groups to realize peace in the war-hit country but this dream could not be visualized until both groups struck an UN-brokered peace deal in April last year primarily for two months. The peace deal was revived once by the parties but later Houthi rebels refused to extend the peace deal and put forth maximalist demands including payment of salaries to Houthi fighters, which subsequently led to a collapse of a temporary truce. The peace talks again took momentum after the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran re-established their ties and Houthi officials visited Riyadh in September this year. That followed a first round of Omani-mediated consultations between Riyadh and Sanaa, running in parallel to UN peace efforts. The months-long efforts and negotiations of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen with regional governments and warring groups including Houthis and the Yemeni Presidential Council have finally borne fruit once again and a truce seems to be becoming a reality.

According to the UN Special Envoy Hans Grunberg, the parties will now engage to work on a consensus roadmap for a ceasefire, which will also include the two sides' commitment to resume oil exports, pay all public sector salaries, open roads in Taiz and other parts of Yemen, and further ease restrictions on Sanaa Airport and the Hudaydah port. The global endeavours have achieved landmark success and the scope for sustainable peace in war-hit Yemen is very high because the backers of Houthis and the Yemeni government are now on friendly terms and are unlikely to spoil the negotiation at this crucial phase. The Yemeni people have paid a heavy price for regional rivalries and the selfishness of their leaders' hopefully they will also grasp the dividends attached to the truce and lasting peace in their country.

# Quaid's Day and national obligation

THE Pakistani nation celebrated the 147th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah with extreme respect, zeal, and fervor. The day started with special prayers for the security, progress, and prosperity of the country, while the national flag was hoisted on principal government buildings throughout the country.

Quaid's birthday commenced with gun salutes in the federal and provincial capitals followed by a graceful change of the guard's ceremony, which was held at Jinnah mausoleum in Karachi. The government dignitaries, higher-ranking officials, representatives from the tri-services, and public leaders visited Quaid's tomb to lay a wreath, pay homage, and offer Fatiha on his birthday. Special programs have been arranged by various social, political, governmental, and non-governmental organizations to celebrate the birthday of the founder of Pakistan with great enthusiasm and devotion.

Undoubtedly, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a great politician, successful lawyer, and visionary leader, who not only stamped undying marks in the political history of the Indo-Sub-continent but also left an unforgettable legacy in the world after droving a successful political movement that craved a new Muslim state on the map of the world. Quaid was a world-known personality, and his legacy continues to inspire Pakistanis. He will be remembered for his unwavering commitment and achieving a separate homeland for Muslims in the Indo-Sub Continent., while his leadership and vision remain integral to Pakistan's identity and history throughout the world.

Besides paying homage and respect to the father of the nation, we must think on Quaid's birthday about how much we have implemented Quaid's vision in our national life. From the top political leadership to the common citizen, all used to refer to Quaid's quotes but never implemented them in our daily lives. Quaid's vision and legacy are completely absent from the national scene and citizenry life, and that is why our nation is lagging in every field. Corruption, dishonesty, abuse of power, and misuse of public office are common. It is more important that alongside paying traditional homage to our great Quaid, we reinvigorate his principles, and uphold his legacy in our practical life so we can succeed as a nation according to the aspirations of our beloved leader.

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# Navigating landscape of climate mitigation

Adnan Shafqat

IN the relentless battle against climate change, the concept of climate mitigation has become a focal point in global dialogues. The deployment of carbon credits has emerged as a mechanism to incentivize industries to reduce and diminish carbon footprint, however with it comes the lurking shadow of greenwashing—a practice that threatens to undermine the authenticity of these initiatives and poses a challenge to the authenticity environmental efforts.

In Pakistan, a country witnessing a growing evidence of climate change effects, the discourse on climate mitigation has taken center stage. The utilization of carbon credits, while offering a potential avenue for sustainability, raises questions about the prevalence of greenwashing—a concern that may undermine the sincerity of environmental initiatives in the country.

Climate mitigation refers to the strategies and actions implemented to reduce or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases, thereby mitigating the impact of climate change. It encompasses a wide range of initiatives, from transitioning to renewable energy sources to enhancing energy efficiency and implementing sustainable land-use practices.

Pakistan, like many other nations, faces the severe consequences of climate change, including rising temperatures, erratic weather patterns and the increased frequency of extreme events. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the country has once again committed to meet ambitious climate mitigation goals by 2030, seeking to reduce carbon emissions and foster sustainable development.

The Utilization of Carbon credits has emerged as a promising mechanism for Pakistan to offset its carbon emissions. Projects spanning from renewable energy initiatives to reforestation programs contribute to the generation of carbon credits, enabling the

country to manage its environmental footprint while concurrently fostering economic growth. Pakistan intends to set a cumulative ambitious conditional target of an overall 50% reduction of its projected emissions by 2030, with a 15% reduction from the country's own resources and a 35% reduction subjected to the provision of international grant finance.

One of the key tools in the climate mitigation toolbox is the use of carbon credits. These credits represent a quantifiable reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, often achieved through projects that contribute to sustainable development or the removal of carbon from the atmosphere. Companies can purchase these credits to offset their own emissions, effectively neutralizing their carbon footprint.

Various projects contribute to the generation of carbon credits, such as renewable energy projects, afforestation initiatives, and methane capture programs. The concept is that by investing in these projects, companies can offset their emissions, resulting in a net-zero or potentially even a carbon-negative impact.

As Pakistan adopts carbon credits as part of its climate mitigation strategy and the concept of carbon credits appears promising, however, its increasing popularity may bring forth the looming specter of greenwashing. The risk becomes apparent when companies and industries, in their pursuit of an environmental and greener image, engage in symbolic carbon credit purchases without tackling the root causes of their emissions. This not only undermines the effectiveness of climate action but also raises questions about the authenticity of sustainability efforts implementing substantive changes in their operational practices within the region.

Greenwashing can take various forms, including vague or misleading advertising, unsubstantiated claims of carbon neutrality, or the selective highlighting

of environmentally friendly practices while neglecting harmful ones. In some cases, companies may invest in carbon credits without disclosing the full scope of their emissions or the methodologies used to calculate their carbon footprint.

Various projects in Pakistan contribute to the generation of carbon credits. From the expansion of renewable energy infrastructure, such as wind and solar power, to afforestation initiatives in vulnerable regions, these projects aim to align economic development with environmental sustainability.

Transparency emerges as a crucial element in the fight against greenwashing. In order to navigate the challenges posed by greenwashing, Pakistan may increasingly emphasize transparency and accountability in its climate mitigation initiatives. Stricter regulations, coupled with the development of clear reporting and verification mechanisms, are being considered to ensure that carbon credits purchased and utilized in the country genuinely contribute to sustainable development goals.

Companies engaging in climate mitigation through carbon credits must be forthcoming with data, methodologies and progress reports. Third-party verification and certification agencies play a pivotal role in ensuring the credibility of carbon credits, assuring stakeholders that purchased offsets genuinely contribute to global sustainability goals.

In the effort to counteract greenwashing and guarantee the credibility of carbon credit utilization, there is a mounting demand for standardized reporting and verification procedures. It is crucial to establish clear criteria for the creation and certification of carbon credits, along with transparent disclosure of methodologies. Industry-led initiatives and public-sector regulations are being considered to set the standards necessary to separate authentic climate action from deceptive greenwash-

ing. A key aspect of sustainability lies in the involvement of local communities. Educating consumers about carbon credits and greenwashing tactics empowering them to make informed choices. As awareness grows, consumers can scrutinize companies' claims, demand transparency and support businesses that exhibit a genuine commitment to sustainability.

Pakistan is recognizing the importance of engaging communities in the planning and implementation of carbon credit projects, ensuring inclusive benefits aligned with the unique needs and circumstances of each region. Educating stakeholders, from government officials to businesses and the public, is a critical step in fostering a culture of genuine sustainability. Increasing awareness about carbon credits in general, greenwashing tactics and promoting a nuanced understanding of carbon credit usage will empower stakeholders to make informed decisions and hold entities accountable for their environmental claims.

In the pursuit of genuine sustainability through climate mitigation, Pakistan faces both opportunities and challenges. In the complex landscape of climate mitigation, carbon credits represent a powerful tool, but their effectiveness hinges on the integrity of the practices surrounding them. Carbon credits offer a valuable avenue for balancing economic development with environmental responsibility. However, the prevalence of greenwashing demands a vigilant approach, emphasizing the need for stringent standards, transparency, and a collective commitment to authentic sustainability, accountability, and community engagement. As Pakistan navigates this complex landscape, the commitment to authentic sustainability will be crucial in achieving meaningful progress in mitigating the impacts of climate change and securing a resilient future for the nation.

# Nuclear war could wipe out all of humanity

Philip Johnston

BARBIE or Oppenheimer was the weekend cinematic pick, so lacking anything chink to wear, or not in public at any rate, we opted for the Christopher Nolan biopic of the father of the A-Bomb. It was a sobering experience, a three-hour trip through the mind-boggling weirdness of quantum physics and Oppenheimer's tortured soul, with a cacophonous soundtrack characteristic of the director (Batman, Dunkirk, Inception and so on) the one downside. The events were dramatic enough without overlaying them with loud music that sometimes made the dialogue hard to hear.

Nonetheless, this is a powerful film, especially to those of my generation. We grew up during the Cold War under the shadow of the bomb, although, to be honest, Oppenheimer's name never featured a great deal in my childhood. The individual we most associated with the bomb was Harry Truman, because he dropped it on Japan. Indeed, there is a scene in which the US president gets annoyed with Oppenheimer because the scientist feels he has blood on his hands for developing the weapon. The president tells him that using it was a political decision and Oppenheimer should stop playing the martyr. It's not about you, says Truman. But it was, and about all those other scientists tasked with turning the miracle of nuclear fission into a weapon of mass destruction.

Oppenheimer's guilt at having unleashed this horror is the central theme of the film. His famous words on realising the consequences, taken from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita, feature prominently: "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds." His biggest concern after the war was the development by his erstwhile friend and Manhattan Project colleague Edward Teller of the hydrogen bomb, a device far more powerful than its predecessor, and the subsequent creation of a stockpile of weapons capable of wiping out mankind. As Churchill observed, while an A-bomb was manageable as an instrument of war, an H-bomb "carries us into dimensions which have never confronted practical human thought".

From 1950 onwards, the ramifications became a key point of division in politics as well as the central diplomatic issue throughout the Cold War. In this country, the former manifested itself in the growth of movements such as CND, which had a big influence on the development of Labour Party policy. It was accompanied by farcical civil defence announcements which no one took seriously since we would have just four minutes' warning of an attack. Hiding under the kitchen table seemed pointless. When a Coventry policeman in 1984 accidentally triggered a siren that sounded for 30 seconds, everyone stayed in bed.

By the 1980s, Labour was committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament, a policy still espoused by the party's previous leader Jeremy Corbyn. Arguably, the prospect of leaving the UK defenceless was more responsible for the party's heavy defeats in the 1980s than anything else. In 1987, it inspired one of the great Tory election campaign posters: a British soldier with his hands held high in surrender alongside

the slogan: "Labour's Policy on Arms." Internationally, Cold War diplomacy was defined by the realisation that both sides had enough weapons to obliterate each other, so talks were needed to limit their production and ensure they were never used.

Watching Oppenheimer was to be struck by the fact that the threat remains as real as ever and yet no one seems to take it seriously anymore, not in the way they once did. There are no marches to Aldermaston, no women chained to the railings at Greenham Common, and no extant talks between the countries that possess these weapons over how to limit them. Once we all knew the acronyms, like Start and Salt, aimed at controlling strategic arms development; now we rarely hear of them. Pivotal meetings, including the summit between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik, seem to belong to another age.

Yet there is a war in Europe in which the aggressor is armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons, while Ukraine is being supplied by Nato countries that rely on the US nuclear umbrella for their security. Why is there so little concern about the prospect of Armageddon when with Putin in the Kremlin it seems more likely now than it did back in the Soviet days? Perhaps we just don't want to think about it; but misunderstandings can bring nuclear war perilously close to reality. In 1983, a real-time Nato wargame codenamed Able Archer so spooked the paranoid Soviets that they prepared their nuclear weapons for a strike on America.

Then again, nearly 80 years have passed since the only occasion these weapons were used in combat. Perhaps the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction is such a powerful disincentive to their use that it is no longer worth fretting about. Let's worry instead about climate change or AI as the likely harbingers of the Apocalypse. But for all that our children are being told the world is about to go up in flames, it isn't. We can always adapt to global warming, just as we can harness artificial intelligence to our great benefit. But a nuclear war really would mean the end of life as we know it, which was why Oppenheimer spent his remaining years after the war arguing for controls.

Of course, it might help if we stopped fixating on the end of the world at all, though existential angst has been part of the human condition since we lived in caves. But while the war in Ukraine and Putin's mad ravings make any dialogue problematic, the fact remains that nuclear deterrence requires keeping open lines of communication even to potential enemies and embedding codes of conduct into formal treaties. Alarming, however, we seem to be going backwards. Russia's reckless decision in February to suspend its adherence to the 2010 New Start treaty has put decades of progress in this field in jeopardy. Meanwhile, China is building up massive stockpiles and Iran is close to developing a bomb. Arms control was once a key objective of foreign policy and must be again, whatever else is happening in the world. The stakes are too high to let the process falter, as Oppenheimer well understood.

The Telegraph

# Ukraine has weeks to reach sea and end Putin's war

Robert Clark

THIS week marked an inflection point in the Ukrainian counteroffensive, and perhaps the war. As Ukrainian troops appear to have broken through the first line of Russia's heavily fortified defences in the south and east of the country, the possible road to Crimea has come into sight. Ukraine must now exploit this early breach if it is to sever the land bridge that connects the Russian mainland with Crimea. To do this will mean a hard fight to reach the sea, recapturing the key Russian-held towns of Tomak and Melitopol in the process.

Just to penetrate the initial Russian fortifications has been a painstaking

process, as brave Ukrainian sappers have navigated some of the most heavily mined ground in the world. The Russian minefields are covered by tank traps, air power and mass artillery. On average, it is assessed that each square kilometre of this land is laced with 1,500 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. Once clear of these, the first of three stages of Russian trench networks run several kilometres deep, where some of Russia's best fighters are stationed to ensure that the Ukrainian assaults fail. Ukrainian reports have confirmed the minefields and forward defences around the village of Robotyne, south of Orikhiv in the

Zaporizhzhia oblast, have just been successfully navigated by Ukraine's 47th Mechanised Brigade.

If the defences around Robotyne are defeated, then the Russian-garrisoned town of Tomak lies within sight, less than 30 kilometres away. Several more defensive lines lie between Robotyne and Tomak, but these are likely far less heavily guarded than the initial ones the Ukrainians have pushed through. All of a sudden, Russia's prized land bridge is looking extremely vulnerable to a massed Ukrainian mechanised exploitation, made even more deadly with the arrival of the American-

supplied Abrams tanks by September.

This may all be promising, but time - that most unforgiving of battlefield considerations - is sadly not with the stoic Ukrainians. The next phase of the counteroffensive, the swift recapture of ground across Zaporizhzhia and Melitopol oblasts, will involve many weeks of hard fighting. However, the infamous Ukrainian "rasputitsa", or "mud season", will soon be upon us, as the torrential rains and flash floods of high summer turn the ground in eastern Ukraine into a marshy bog, making offensive armoured manoeuvres and assaults difficult and slow-going. These were the

conditions facing Napoleon's troops in their early-19th-century invasion of Russia, and Hitler's advance on Moscow in autumn 1941, which ultimately proved disastrous for both attacking armies. Now on home soil, the Ukrainians will, by autumn, have to deal with this enemy in addition to the Russian invaders.

Ukraine will be left with little choice but to double-down during the harsh winter months and make swift armoured advances across the frozen ground as the Russian conscripts freeze in their static trenches. By spring, the rasputitsa will be back. This will likely be the end of the counteroffensive phase. With forthcoming elections across the West

likely to absorb political capital, and war fatigue expected to kick in, Ukraine may only have a few short, precious months to recapture as much ground as swiftly as possible. Diplomatic pressure for Ukraine to accept some form of peace will mount next year, which will please a rearming Russia and its Chinese sponsors intent on a frozen conflict. Ukrainian control of Melitopol and the Azov Sea will leave Kyiv in a far stronger position if it is to deal with international pressure next year. We must now ensure that the Ukrainian fighting forces have everything that they need - and, crucially, expedite everything that we have already promised.



# Next phase of Russia-North Korea cooperation may be coming

Anthony V. Rinna

**R**USSIA'S economic relationship with North Korea seems poised to rebound after years of sanctions and border closures. This revitalized partnership has scope to expand into trading natural resources including metals and critical minerals, which have become increasingly weaponized in geopolitics. Such a move could be highly consequential if it is in fact possible.

Following Kim Jong Un's visit to the Russian Far East this September, North Korean Premier Kim Tok Hun met with Russia's Natural Resource Minister, Alexander Kozlov, in Pyongyang. The meeting, which was the first since 2019, saw the countries reach a tentative agreement to jointly explore and extract natural resources including rare earth minerals and iron ore.

Moscow's current interest in North Korea's natural resources has deep historical roots going back to the earliest days of the DPRK's very existence. When Stalin learned in 1950 that the North was planning to invade its southern neighbor, he ordered his officials to offer Pyongyang military assistance in return for access to the country's lead reserves. It is worth remembering that discussions between Moscow and Pyongyang frequently prove fruitless. Plans to build a gas pipeline running from Russia across the entire Korean Peninsula have been repeatedly hobbled by sanctions against Russia and the DPRK and inter-Korea tensions may never produce results. The \$20 billion Moscow planned to invest in modernizing North Korea's railway network ultimately proved fruitless.

Furthermore, the inability of outsiders to verify the nature and extent of North Korea's natural resources, begs the question of how workable any North Korea-Russia cooperation in resource extraction really is. Even though Russian elites have traditionally enjoyed closer contact with North

Korean officials than most other states, they still face significant difficulties in acquiring information about the country. Following November's meeting between Kim Tok Hun and Alexander Kozlov, the Russian government acknowledged that it was still waiting for Pyongyang to provide geological maps before any joint exploration and extraction could take place.

The DPRK's lack of transparency highlights a contrast between the rising political ties between

manufacturing technologies like electric car batteries. Although such designations appear to be primarily aimed at ensuring the United States' competitive edge over China, Washington's decision to include both North Korea and Russia indicates that the US sees both countries as players in the competition over natural resources. Moscow has already faced accusations of laundering North Korean coal exports to Russia. Potentially, Russian companies could acquire

***Having disguised the true origins of iron ore imports from North Korea, Russia could, as the eighth-largest explorer of iron ore in the world, export iron ore of North Korean origin while passing it off as its own. Uranium is another resource where North Korea and Russia could potentially cooperate.***

Moscow and Pyongyang with the practicality of actually enacting concrete economic cooperation. Yet the fact that Moscow has made such proposals for decades seemingly indicates that Russia feels it has reason to believe such cooperation would be viable. In any case, the potential for North Korea-Russia cooperation in the field of natural resources extraction is fraught with risk regarding sanctions against North Korea and compliance on the part of Russia's foreign trading partners therein.

Around the time North Korean and Russian officials agreed to pursue cooperation in natural resource extraction last month, the US raised concerns that Russia is helping North Korea build its weapons program despite sanctions. Similarly, the US recently designated North Korean and Russian companies as "foreign entities of concern" concerning the acquisition of critical minerals used for

other natural resources from the DPRK and sell them to customers who are unaware of the materials' true origins. North Korea is thought to possess deposits of lithium, a metal that is seeing increasing global demand for use making rechargeable batteries. This so-called "white gold" may have factored into Russia's decision to invade Ukraine, and could continue to motivate Moscow's foreign policy even if the country can meet its needs through domestic production by 2030.

Likewise, Russian firms could acquire iron ore for domestic use. This could potentially be done at prices below global standards given that North Korea and Russia have taken steps to conduct their transactions in rubles instead of dollars. Having disguised the true origins of iron ore imports from North Korea, Russia could, as the eighth-largest explorer of iron ore in the world, export iron ore of

North Korean origin while passing it off as its own. Uranium is another resource where North Korea and Russia could potentially cooperate. North Korea currently produces amounts of uranium in excess of its current needs and has the capacity to produce even more. Pyongyang is clearly aware of the potential for leverage these resources hold, having reportedly offered Russia exclusive rights to its uranium reserves in exchange for support during the Six-Party Talks over denuclearization.

Despite the war in Ukraine, the US and Europe have continued to purchase uranium from Russia, leaving them exposed if the Kremlin decided to reduce supplies as a political weapon. Should Moscow and Pyongyang reach an agreement for trading uranium, the risk that Russia could include uranium of North Korean origin among its own exports likewise cannot be ignored. Even if the Kremlin doesn't provide North Korea with a route to circumvent sanctions to the extent that it allows materials from the DPRK to reach markets outside of Russia, the two countries themselves can still benefit from cooperation over natural resources.

Metals and minerals transferred from North Korea to Russia could help Russia continue manufacturing weapons for the war in Ukraine. In return, Russia could provide Pyongyang with the energy it needs to keep its own economy and weapons program afloat. Ultimately, the Kremlin has no interest in instability in North Korea, which has experienced economic contraction for the past three years. Resource cooperation between Russia and the DPRK has not yet proven to be viable. But that has not stopped either country from pursuing it. Now, perhaps more than at any point in time, the possibility for Moscow and Pyongyang to turn warm words into concrete action to subvert the rules-based order is something that the world cannot ignore.

# Britain's pathetic defeatists are cowering

**E**T tu, Sir Tony Blair? For a man who moves in the highest levels of global statecraft, our éminence grise is remarkably out of touch on the geo-economics of the energy revolution. He falls for every fallacy of yesteryear. After reading his New Statesman interview I am forced to conclude that he does not understand the elemental threat staring us in the face: that clean tech will entirely change the global economic system, not at some distant date but this decade; and that China is currently (but not irreversibly) running away with the great prize of the 21st century.

Any country that ducks this challenge and props up an uncompetitive legacy system will lose its economic footing and slide into irrelevance. Such a course is akin to opting out of the early industrial revolution, sticking to horse-power as others embrace the steam engine. The Sunak government is dangerously close to going down this route. I have no problem with its confetti of drilling licences for oil and gas. It is better to produce gas in the North Sea rather than to import liquefied natural gas (LNG) derived from fracking in West Texas, with horrendous methane leakage, and added CO2 emissions from liquefaction and shipping. Local production reduces the insidious wealth loss of the UK's structural trade deficit, but the scale is marginal and will not move the needle on oil and gas prices in the UK.

The North Sea is mostly depleted. It has a high cost of extraction. Capital markets are unfriendly. Who will invest, knowing that Labour intends to reverse course? My concern is that this Government is losing the plot on the much more important future of clean tech, carelessly undermining the greatest British success story of the last 15 years. It has imposed a discriminatory and retroactive surtax on renewable companies that risks killing the goose that lays the golden egg. It has surreptitiously halved the UK's effective carbon price, which plays to the worst caricature of Brexit and will lead to a showdown with the EU over level-playing clauses. The surprise is that even Sir Tony has been gashed into thinking that net zero - i.e. upgrading to better technology - imposes a "huge burden" on this country. He remains stuck in an outdated mental universe, seeming to regard green energy as a pious luxury for rich Western states while the rest of humanity belches out carbon because it must, incapable of remediation

China will soon have a 95pc share of the next generation of heavier sodium-ion batteries, which do not need lithium, cobalt or nickel, and which open the way for cheap home-energy storage on a mass scale. Nothing so confuses the Western debate on net zero as China's coal expansion. The point to understand is that a) Xi Jinping has ordered 1GW of new coal plants for every 6GW of renewables as back-up power, so the two go hand in hand; b) that the levelised cost of coal power in China is \$74/MWh compared to \$34/MWh for onshore wind (BNEF data), and cannot compete; and c) that the regime is building redundant coal capacity as an insurance policy.

It fears that the US could cut off maritime gas supplies in a future conflict. It was also traumatised by blackouts in 2021 and 2022. If these plants are ever used, they will mostly sit idle. S&P Global says capacity use was 70pc in 2000s, 53pc last year, and will fall to 26pc by 2050 as they are converted to peaker plants, and most will have carbon capture by then. The larger point is that Britain needs green energy rearmament as a matter of national economic survival. It is not clear to me where Sir Tony discerns his huge burden, or how Lord Hammond conjures his £1 trillion bill for net zero. A joint report by the International Monetary Fund and the IEA concluded that decarbonisation will halve energy costs worldwide from 4pc to 2pc of disposable income by mid-century. It said a rapid switch to clean tech raises global economic growth by 0.4pc a year this decade, and is therefore a gain, not a cost.

It cuts average household energy and fuel bills from \$2,800 to \$2,300 a year by 2030 in advanced countries, and is even better for the world's poor - the cheapest way to reach 800 million people with no electricity. This is an unstoppable global juggernaut. It does not require lavish state spending. Markets are already doing the job with the right regulatory signals. The more that the British establishment succeeds in keeping the old order going for a bit longer by sending the wrong signals, the greater the damage to UK's clean-tech leadership, and the greater the risk that this country will exclude itself from the prime growth accelerator of the next 40 years. Sir Tony Blair laments that Brexit is an economic dead end. The utterly disastrous dead end is if the UK loses its nerve and clings to obsolete technology. He should watch his words.

# Beneath the surface, Prigozhin's mutiny has changed everything in Russia

Tatiana Stanovaya

**A** month after Wagner mercenary boss Yevgeny Prigozhin's short-lived uprising, it's clear that the fallout has been quite different to what many expected. Wagner has not been radically restructured, Prigozhin has not been murdered or jailed, and there has been no purge of Wagner sympathizers in the army, nor any major moves against the country's "ultra-patriots" (apart from the arrest of the former Donbas separatist commander Igor Girkin).

Russia has more or less resumed "normal" life. Still, it's hard to shake the feeling that the regime will never be the same again. Prigozhin's insurrection has changed how the Russian elites see the world, and will color the country's political trajectory for years to come. When asked after the event why he decided to seize a military headquarters in Rostov-on-Don and send a column of troops toward Moscow, Prigozhin reportedly said: "I had a meltdown." That seems plausible. Wagner's highly controversial practice of recruiting new soldiers from Russia's prisons had been stopped back in January, and the private army was allegedly being starved of ammunition, while Prigozhin's communication channels with Putin had been cut off. It seems the last straw was the demand for Wagner fighters to sign a contract with the Defense Ministry.

The insurrection itself unfolded with dizzying speed: Wagner's deployment; Putin's angry reaction; Prigozhin's panic at finding himself on the brink of seizing Moscow; the deal brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko; and Wagner's decision to stand down. The final act was a June 29 meeting with Putin at which Wagner commanders were apparently obliged to apologize and agree to relocate to Belarus. Looking back, it all appears to have been a misunderstanding. On the one hand, Putin failed to understand how radicalized Prigozhin had become and

allowed the conflict to escalate with deadly consequences. On the other, Prigozhin overestimated his own importance, mistakenly believing he could strongarm Putin into reshuffling the military leadership and saving Wagner from irrelevance. At least on the surface, it all seems now to have been resolved. Prigozhin understands that his attempt to use force was a mistake, and Putin has decided Prigozhin was just a patriot who momentarily forgot himself amid the horrors of war, rather than a dangerous traitor.

Nevertheless, Prigozhin lost assets in the wake of the rebellion (his media empire, part of his business, and-most importantly-his reputation as a war hero) and has been exiled to Belarus. And the Kremlin appears to be trying to break up Wagner. Its commanders are being pushed to serve under a new leader, Alexei Troshev, who has apparently signed a contract with the Defense Ministry and, according to Putin, been designated as a successor to Prigozhin. How several thousand Wagner soldiers will occupy themselves in Belarus is a dilemma for Putin and a headache for Lukashenko. But the Kremlin appears to have decided that the former mutineers cannot stay in Russia. Even before the dust has fully settled, it's clear that Prigozhin's mutiny was nothing less than the most significant domestic political event in Russia since Putin came to power nearly a quarter of a century ago. The main beneficiary, many people rightly believe, was the Defense Ministry. Indeed, it handed Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu an opportunity to investigate Prigozhin's allies inside the Armed Forces (most notably General Sergei Surovkin, who was the main intermediary between the Defense Ministry and Wagner). Yet the mutiny also damaged the reputation of Russia's military leaders and helped bring to the surface unhappiness that has accumulated further down the ranks. After a disagreement earlier this month with

Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, Major General Ivan Popov, the widely respected commander of Russia's 58th Combined Arms Army, was removed from his post and sent to serve in Syria. Russian Telegram channels are also rife with rumors about the removal of Major General Vladimir Seliverstov, leader of the 106th Airborne Division, and Colonel General Mikhail Teplitsky, commander of Russia's Airborne Forces.

These changes look more like the result of damage to Gerasimov and Shoigu's authority than a purge of Prigozhin allies. It's possible that with time, Putin will need to replace the two men. There was speculation that the position of Viktor Zolotov, the head of Rosgvardiya, Russia's National Guard, would be stronger in the wake of the mutiny. It's true that following the uprising, the Russian parliament passed a law allowing Rosgvardiya to acquire heavy military equipment, and it was also announced that an anti-narcotics special forces unit would be subsumed into Rosgvardiya. But that does not amount to major new authority for Zolotov. To buy heavy military equipment you need a budget and, even if the money is forthcoming, the state will prioritize the needs of the Armed Forces in Ukraine. And there have also been some reversals for Zolotov, such as the passage of legislation earlier this month allowing governors to create their own military units.

Although many thought the Kremlin would seek to reclaim a monopoly on violence after the uprising, it looks like the opposite is taking place, and indeed it could be said that a "fragmentation" of Russia's security services is underway. Growing fissures in the country's security architecture will create new conflicts and intensify inter-agency competition, with all their destabilizing consequences. The true beneficiaries of the mutiny were in fact Russia's spy

agencies. The Federal Security Service (FSB) was at last able to arrest Girkin, one of the most radical "ultra-patriots." While in the West, he has been sentenced (in absentia) to life imprisonment for his part in the downing of Flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine back in 2014, in which 298 people were killed, in Russia he stands accused of extremism, having criticized Putin over the way the campaign in Ukraine is being fought. Meanwhile, the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) has been able to advance its old idea about the "Polish threat" (Poland's supposed desire to occupy western Ukraine and Belarus). Putin recently held forth about Poland's insidious intentions at a Security Council gathering and in a meeting with Lukashenko.

Whatever the talk about Poland, it seems unlikely that Wagner will be involved in any sort of armed incursion into northern Ukraine or near the Polish border. Nor is a major crackdown against the "ultra-patriots" on the cards. The Kremlin still sees them as a key part of the pro-war consensus, which it wants to nurture ahead of presidential elections in 2024. The person who suffered the most as a result of the mutiny was Putin himself. However confident he may feel in the aftermath, he messed up. He created a monster that escaped from his control and spooked the elites. Everyone saw that the Kremlin was paralyzed with indecision, and that Prigozhin escaped any real punishment. Many are currently wondering whether Putin is the leader Russia needs in difficult times. Putin's much-hyped "power vertical" has disappeared. Instead of a strong hand, there are dozens of mini-Prigozhins, and while they may be more predictable than the Wagner leader, they are no less dangerous. All of them know full well that a post-Putin Russia is already here - even as Putin remains in charge - and that it's time to take up arms and prepare for a battle for power.

# China has made its first strike on West

Matthew Henderson

**I**T is becoming increasingly clear that Chinese computer hackers may have penetrated American military and civil critical infrastructure in ways that could cripple a US response to Chinese armed aggression from the outset. Certainly that would align with Beijing's strategy, familiar from Sun Tzu's "Art of War", which is to win the war before a shot is fired.

In the modern digital context this entails preemptive cyber attacks not just against its enemies' military forces, but also on the pillars of social and economic security, including communications, transport, energy, water and health systems. The aim is to damage opponents so badly that battle would never be joined, or only briefly before they collapse into domestic disarray and disaster. To achieve this, China must first access data on the targets it wants to disrupt, and then devise cyber attacks that will

avoid preventive measures and create sudden, irreversible havoc. The US is now desperately hunting for malicious software discovered inside the power grids and communications systems that supply its military. The tools for a pre-emptive first strike against the West could already be in place.

It seems that US intelligence became aware of a serious threat to national security in February, around the time of the spy balloon episode. Since May, according to Microsoft, Chinese hackers have been secretly accessing data from the State Department and Commerce Department, among other targets including Western European entities. These developments are part of an established pattern. A Chinese attack in 2021, compromising the Microsoft exchange server, was blamed by the UK Foreign Office and National

Cyber Security Centre on the Chinese Ministry of State Security. A year later, the directors of the UK and US security services together announced that China "posed the biggest long-term threat to our economic and national security". At the same time Nato, at its 2022 Summit, declared that "the PRC's malicious hybrid and cyber operations and its confrontational rhetoric and disinformation target allies and harm alliance security".

The US military is scrambling to find out how badly Chinese cyber warfare has compromised America's defences. The UK lags far behind; despite years of clear warnings by the intelligence and security community, there has yet to be a proper UK response. However uncomfortable it may be to accept for beneficiaries of the faux "Golden Era" when Beijing bought its way into the UK estab-

lishment, the CCP was then, and is now, waging relentless hybrid warfare against us and our Allies and partners. Beijing was shamefully welcomed into our nuclear sector, and deeply embedded in much else. It is to be assumed that they are hoovering up vast quantities of British data, encrypted and unencrypted. What they can't read now, they are believed to be storing against the day that evolving quantum computer technologies crack the codes.

Before it's too late, not only America but all of its Western allies and partners must grasp that the Chinese Communist Party - and not the unfortunate citizens it rules over - looks like an enemy and acts like an enemy because it is our enemy. Will it take catastrophic cyber attacks on our civil critical infrastructure and our militaries being brought to their knees before a shot is fired for our politicians to wake up?

# US sanctions Malian officials

Annie Risemberg

**T**HE United States imposed sanctions on several top Malian officials this week, saying they facilitated activities of the Wagner Group, the Russian mercenary unit that recently staged a brief mutiny against Russian President Vladimir Putin. Analysts say the sanctions are meant to send a message to the Malian government. Mali's military government Wednesday criticized the sanctions on high-ranking members of the army accused of facilitating Wagner Group activities in the country, as Mali continues its decade-long fight against Islamist militants.

A statement was read on state TV station ORTM by presenter Mah Camara, and later posted to the station's Facebook page. "These new measures, contrary to international law, which we strongly condemn, add to the long list of aggressive measures, acts of intimidation, blackmail and hostile campaigns against Mali," the statement said in French.

The statement also accused the United States of having "actively contributed to the spread of terrorism and weapons in the Sahel." On Monday, the US Department of the Treasury announced the travel and financial sanctions against Mali's minister of defense, Colonel Sadio Camara, as well as Colonel Alou Boi Diarra, Mali's chief of staff of the air force, and Colonel Adama Bagayoko, the Malian Air Force deputy chief of staff. The statement says the officers were sanctioned for "facili-

tating the deployment and expansion" of the Wagner Group's activities in Mali. Mali has been under military rule since a 2020 coup, and Wagner has been present in the country since 2021, assisting the junta.

The US sanctioned the head of Wagner in Mali in May, after the United Nations released a report on a 2022 massacre in Moura, Mali, allegedly committed by the Malian army working with Wagner soldiers. Daniel Eizenga, a researcher at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies in Washington, spoke via a messaging application about the sanctions. He said the sanctions will add a layer of scrutiny for any US person or anyone engaged with the US financial system wishing to do business in Mali or with the Malian government, but that the sanctions are also largely symbolic. "This is really about recognition," Eizenga said. "The United States government is making a decision in these sanctions to say that we do not recognize these authorities as a legitimate government. In fact, we are sanctioning them, and refusing to do business with them, because they have acted in a way that is contrary to the interests of Malian citizens." The junta has widespread support in Bamako and in much of southern Mali but several outspoken critics of the government have been arrested. Additionally, reporting on the army's alleged participation in massacres and extrajudicial killings in the center and north of the

country has been censored. The military government took France 24 and Radio France International off the air in Mali after they reported on another massacre, this one around the Diabaly area of central Mali, in 2022. Authorities also asked the UN peacekeeping mission to Mali, MINUS-MA, to leave the country following a report this past May from the UN human rights office on the Moura incident.

Kailou Sidibe, political analyst and professor of political science and international relations in Bamako, told VOA that he considers the Malian government response "measured" compared to past actions toward France. During a months-long diplomatic falling out with France, the Malian government expelled the French ambassador, asked French troops to leave the country, and accused France of spying. Sidibe said that the US remains one of Mali's largest development partners, and he believes relations between the two countries, and popular views on the US in Mali, are not likely to worsen significantly because of the sanctions. Malian public opinion is not going to change suddenly, he said, because these sanctions don't target the population directly, they target certain leaders. Malian leaders, including interim President Assimi Goita, went to St. Petersburg, Russia, this week for an African leaders' summit. Mali has received several shipments of weapons and equipment from Russia since the junta took over in 2020.





# PRGMEA, Customs hold interactive session — to facilitate garment exporters

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers & Exporters (PRGMEA) held an interactive session on Monday in collaboration with the Model Customs Collectorate to facilitate the exporters to enhance value-added textile exports, contributing in the economic uplift of the country.

Participated by a number of PRGMEA members, during the interactive session Customs Collector Ms. Azmat Tahira along with her team including Ms. Farah Farooq, Deputy Collector Customs Ms. Syeda Sidra, ADC Additional Deputy Collector Customs, briefed the exporters about various issues including Rebate Calculations, Pending DTRE Cases, Bonded Warehouse Soft Clearance, Vender Registration for EFS, HS Code Approval, Maintenance of Customs Record in Duplicate both in manual and electronic and Access of different Analysis Certificate etc.

Addressing the meeting, Central Chairman PRGMEA Mubashar

Naseer Butt said that enhancing exports is the only way for Pakistan to achieve sustainable growth, as Pakistan's balance of payment sustainability depends on innovation and diversity in the structure of the economy. We all need to penetrate in exports, as it is the only way for sustainable growth of Pakistan, he said.

Mubashar Butt said that with a view to bring this fundamental shift, there is a need to remove anti-export bias, with the industry to anchor itself on competitive principles in support of the government, he added.

PRGMA North chairman Ahmed Hanif, addressing the meeting said the country needs to diversify its export market as more than 50 percent of our exports rely only on four markets i.e. USA, EU, China and Afghanistan, he said and added that the government should help the industry make a difference in diversifying the market.

Ahmed Hanif thanked the Customs officials for taking their precious time and introducing the new systems and answering

member's queries. He also said that in order to increase our exports it is imperative that both public and private sectors should join hands and hold such discussions regularly for the benefit of exporters. He emphasized on the development of such systems, with the use of technology, to increase the efficiency of the exporters and bring down the cost and time of doing business. For this he stressed on the need for studying the system already developed by our regional competitors such as, Bangladesh, China, India and Sri Lanka.

On this occasion, the Customs Collector Azmat Tahira, assured the PRGMEA members of removing the glitches in all kinds of Customs facilitation schemes to make them business friendly with a view to improve the inflows of foreign exchange in the country.

Addressing the leading exporters of garment sector, she said the FBR believed in maximum facilitation to exporters enabling them to enhance exports to ulti-

mately benefit the country to earn foreign exchange.

She apprised that the Customs had been continuously working to improve and develop the taxation system through reforms and automation. He apprised that the FBR had been continuously working to improve and develop the taxation system through reforms and automation. In this connection, automation had been enhanced and public dealing had become limited particularly for the exporters.

Azmat Tahira appreciated that PRGMEA, saying the Customs believed in facilitating the exporters to contribute in the economic prosperity of the country, as the government and the PRGMEA were working closer like hands in gloves to facilitate the taxpayers and exporters.

She gave a detailed presentation on the Customs facilitation schemes, highlighting the accomplishments made by the department so far. She also pointed out that the department had set up help desks to facilitate exporters.

## Gas theft crackdown: Another 238 illegal connections disconnected; Rs3.41m fine imposed

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Kh- yber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 238 connections; Rs 3.41 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 26 connections on illegal use of gas while another 9 on use of compressor and also imposed fine of Rs 0.26 million against gas theft cases. In Rawalpindi the team

disconnected 4 connection on illegal use of gas while another one on use of compressor.

During the operation in Islamabad team disconnected eight connections on illegal use of gas.

In Multan 3 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas while another 10 on use of compressor.

In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 80 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 2.4 million against

gas theft cases. The team also lodged 2 FIRs against gas pilfers.

In Sahiwal, one connection was disconnected on illegal use of gas.

In Sialkot the team disconnected two connections on illegal use of gas and amount of Rs0.09 million have been booked against gas theft cases.

In Sheikhpura 35 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas while another 2 on use of compressor and amount of Rs 0.03 million booked against

gas theft cases.

The regional team of Sargodha disconnected 34 connections on illegal use of gas while another 20 on use of compressor and also booked an amount of Rs 0.3 million have been booked against gas theft cases.

In Gujranwala the team disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed fine of Rs 0.33 million against gas pilfers.

The team of Gujrat disconnects one connection on illegal use of gas.

## Power sector adding to public miseries instead of giving relief

ISLAMABAD (INP): The former President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt has said that the power sector has become a problem for the people and the business community.

In a statement issued here on Monday, he said that the electricity price was increasing continuously, while new tactics were being adopted to rob consumers, which we strongly condemn.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that in the recent electricity bills, the due date has been changed from the 25th of the month to the 22nd, which will force millions of customers to pay a collective penalty of billions of rupees.

He said that banks were closed on the twenty-

fourth and twenty-fifth of this month due to the holidays; therefore, the bill payment date should be extended to December 27 and penalties should be abolished.

The business leader said that people were already worried about inflation, and the ever-increasing cost of electricity was bankrupting them while businesses were facing a disaster.

Production and exports of the country's largest textile industry were also continuously falling due to the wrong policy of increasing power tariffs, he said.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that by increasing the price of electricity continuously, its use was decreasing, but the government was forced to pay

the power plants according to their production capacity.

He noted that the entire burden of wrong policies will be put on the public as usual, which was unfortunate.

The business leader said that people were not responsible for corruption and mismanagement in the power sector, but they were punished, which was sad.

NEPRA has decided to increase the electricity rates by more than Rs 3 per unit as part of the October fuel adjustment that will be charged in December bills, which means that consumers will be charged despite lower electricity consumption in December.

He said that the increase in electricity prices was

being done at a time when there have been revelations of overbilling in electricity supply.

Everyone is concerned about household budgets and the current state of the economy, which was being affected by skyrocketing charges for utility services, especially electricity.

The tough conditions have cast a looming shadow over the economy, underscoring the need to find a holistic solution, and, surprisingly, various government initiatives to address the pressing issues have been lacking direction.

The practice of robbing consumers should be stopped immediately, and instead of putting them in more trouble, they should be given relief, he demanded.

## Tokyo shares rise in quiet Christmas trade

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks advanced Monday in thin Christmas trading, following gains by US tech shares last week.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 0.26 percent, or 84.98 points, to 33,254.03, while the broader Topix index edged up 0.04 percent, or 0.97 points, to 2,337.40.

While trading slowed heading into Christmas, global investors generally continued to buy shares in the belief that the US economy will achieve a "soft landing" and that the Federal Reserve may turn to rate cuts in the coming year, Nomura Securities said.

Many markets were expected to stay quiet over the Christmas holiday period, with stock markets throughout most of Asia closed on Monday.

Some players may be looking for an opportune time to sell stocks, as US shares have gained steadily in recent weeks, Nomura added.

High-tech shares attracted buyers after the Nasdaq advanced last week, while players also cheered the forex market regaining relative calm, IwaiCosmo Securities said.

"The market opened higher in the morning, but it gradually came to face selling pressure as investors sold their shares to adjust positions with only a limited number of participants," the brokerage said.

The relative strength of Shanghai shares provided support for Tokyo shares, it added.

The Shanghai Composite Index shed earlier losses and ended up 0.14 percent or 4.04 points to 2,918.81.

The Taiwan Weighted Index edged up 0.05 percent, or 8.21 points, to 17,604.84.

Among major Tokyo shares, Toyota added 0.83 percent to 2,537 yen.

SofBank Group rose 1.25 percent to 6,099 yen.

Sony Group added 1.04 percent to 13,120 yen.

Nintendo gave up earlier gains and fell 0.17 percent to 6,934 yen. Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group also lost 0.74 percent to 1,207 yen.

Energy developer Inpex rose 0.29 percent to 1,934 yen.

Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing firmed 0.62 percent to 35,830 yen.

**Toyota's Daihatsu to compensate suppliers over output halt**

Toyota Motor's (7203.T) small car unit Daihatsu Motor will compensate 423 domestic suppliers with which it has direct business relations as its plants in Japan remain idled due to a safety scandal, a spokesperson said on Monday.

The small car specialist has halted production in Japan until the end of next month, the spokesperson said.

The company will consider compensating suppliers based on past business volumes and is working to assess the impact of the stoppage on its sprawling

supplier network, he added.

Daihatsu said on Wednesday it halted shipments of all its vehicles after a safety investigation found issues involving 64 models, including almost two dozen sold under Toyota's brand.

The company will work with its main suppliers to address the fallout from the scandal and may also help smaller subcontractors that do not receive compensation to access support funds from the industry ministry, the spokesperson added.

Daihatsu's overseas operations focus heavily on Southeast Asia. It has resumed production of Perodua brand cars at two joint venture plants it operates with Malaysian automaker Perodua after getting regulatory clearance, the spokesperson said.

The company, which is fully owned by Toyota, said last week it had resumed shipments on Friday from its subsidiary in Indonesia, PT Astra Daihatsu Motor.



PARIS: Chairman CCP Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu addressing Global Forum on Competition.

## Chambers of Commerce sign agreement

MAKKAH (APP): The Makkah Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Services of Beni Mellal Khenifra in Morocco signed a partnership agreement to strengthen economic and commercial cooperation.

The agreement was signed in the presence of the Assistant Consul General at the Moroccan Consulate in Jeddah, Hassan Dalloul, the Moroccan delegation, business owners from both sides, the Secretary General of the Makkah Chamber, Abdullah Hanif, and various officials.

The head of the Beni Mellal Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services delegation, Abdel Ghani Al-Sharqawi, confirmed that Saudi Arabia is Morocco's largest trading partner. In 2022, the volume of Saudi exports reached \$4.6 billion, while the value of imports was \$87 million.

Member of the Board of Directors of the Makkah Chamber of Commerce, Khalid bin Dubai, explained that the mutual visits and agreements concluded on the economic side have helped trade exchange achieve rapid growth in recent years.

## Japan automakers to invest \$4.3b

BANGKOK (Reuters): Major Japanese auto manufacturers will invest 150 billion baht (\$4.34 billion) in Thailand over the next five years, a Thai government spokesperson said on Monday, supporting the Southeast Asian country's transition to making electric vehicles.

Toyota Motor (7203.T) and Honda Motor (7267.T) will invest about 50 billion baht each, while Isuzu Motors (7202.T) will invest 30 billion baht and Mitsubishi Motors (7211.T) 20 billion baht, spokesperson Chai Wacharoke said, adding this would include the production of electric pickup trucks.

Thailand's Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin concluded a trip to Japan last week.

Southeast Asia's second-largest economy is the largest car producer and exporter in the region. Japanese manufacturers have dominated the Thai auto sector for decades, but Chinese EV makers have recently been making large investments.

The investment by the Japanese automakers will support the government's policy of transitioning from combustion engine vehicles to EVs, Chai said.

Toyota, Honda, Isuzu and Mitsubishi did not respond immediately to requests for comment.

Thailand is aiming to convert about a third of its annual production of 2.5 million vehicles into EVs by 2030 and is preparing incentives to encourage more investment and conversion into EV manufacturing.

Tax cuts and subsidies rolled out by Thailand have already drawn a raft of Chinese carmakers, including BYD (002594.SZ) and Great Wall Motor (601633.SS), which have committed to investing \$1.44 billion in new production facilities in the country. Srettha this month showed executives from US EV maker Tesla industrial estates in Thailand for potential investment.

The Japanese govern-

## Chairman attends OECD Forum

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu participated in the Global Forum on Competition. It was held by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on 7-8 December 2023 in Paris. The Forum brought together heads of competition authorities from over 110 countries worldwide.

Chairman Sidhu also acted as a moderator in the breakout session on "Use of Economic Evidence in Cartel Cases on how can competition authorities

effectively communicate economic evidence in court and to non-experts."

The other speakers in the session were Cristina Camacho, Head of Cabinet and Head of International Relations, Portuguese Competition Authority, and John Davies, Member, Competition Appeal Tribunal, United Kingdom.

In his remarks, Chairman Sidhu highlighted the CCP's shift from traditional evidence-gathering methods, such as dawn raids, to a more proactive approach.

The Commission has introduced a new Market

Intelligence Unit (MIU) to leverage advanced technology and data analytics. The MIU aims to assess market data effectively, identifying collusive practices and enhancing the Commission's enforcement capabilities, he said.

He emphasized that given the increased market concentration and higher vertical integration in Pakistan's markets, establishing a dedicated department for data gathering and analysis became imperative.

The creation of this department will effectively address challenges in gathering cartel evidence.

## Govt urged to resolve tax issues of furniture industry

ISLAMABAD (INP): Vice President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar on Saturday urged the government to resolve the tax issues of furniture industry to increase its better growth.

In his press statement he said that tax authorities and field formations of FBR are issuing notices to furniture showrooms, shops to register as Tier-1 retailers, which is not practicable for all furniture businesses and urged that the furniture showrooms, shops covering area less than 2000 square feet should be exempted from sales tax registration to ease their problems.

He said while talking to a delegation of Pakistan Furniture Association that visited ICCI led by its Chairman Zahid Hussain. Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul

Islam Zafar said that the small furniture retailers should not be subjected to Sub-Sec-43A of Sec-2 of Sales Tax Act 1990 as they purchase furniture from unregistered manufacturers of the cottage industry and cannot provide input invoices.

He said that those retailers who occupy even one square foot less area than 2000 sq. ft. are exempted, which creates an anomaly. He assured that ICCI would cooperate with the Pakistan Furniture Association in resolving key issues of the furniture industry.

Speaking at the occasion, Zahid Hussain, Chairman, Pakistan Furniture Association stressed that the government should introduce fixed sales tax of Rs.5000/month for furniture showrooms, shops covering area of above 2000 sq. ft. up to 5000 sq

ft., Rs. 10,000/month for showrooms, shops covering area of above 5000 sq. ft. up to 10,000 sq. ft and Rs.15000/month for showrooms, shops covering area of above 10,000 sq. ft up to 15,000 sq. ft.

He said that such a fixed tax regime would protect the furniture businesses from unnecessary harassment and facilitate better growth of their business activities.

Mian Muhammad Ramzan, Convener, ICCI Tax Committee said that the furniture showrooms, shops which are not part of a national or international chain store nor are they located in air-conditioned malls, should be excluded from the category of Sub-Sec-43-A of Sec-2 of Sales Tax Act 1990 and should be declared as cottage industry with inclusion in Tier-2 regime.

## BOJ's Ueda signals chance of policy shift

TOKYO (Reuters): Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda said on Monday the likelihood of achieving the central bank's inflation target was "gradually rising" and it would consider changing policy if prospects of sustainably achieving the 2% target increase "sufficiently".

While companies are becoming more open to raising wages and prices, the key is whether wages will continue rising next year and lead to further increases in service prices, Ueda said.

"If the virtuous cycle between wages and prices intensifies and the likelihood of achieving our price target in a sustainable and stable manner rises sufficiently, we will likely considering changing policy," Ueda said, offering the clearest sign to date of the chance of ending ultra-easy monetary policy.

Ueda said the BOJ had not decided on a specific timing to change the loosest monetary stance of any major central bank, due to uncertainties over economic and market developments.

"We will carefully examine economic developments as well as firms' wage- and price-setting behaviour, and thereby decide on future monetary policy in an appropriate manner," he said.

The language differed slightly from Ueda's usual phrase calling for the need to "patiently" maintain ultra-loose policy for the time being.

The Japanese govern-

ment bond market shrugged off Ueda's remarks, with yields falling as the BOJ conducted a regular bond buying operation across the curve.

With inflation exceeding the target for well over a year, many market players expect the BOJ to lift short-term interest rates out of negative territory next year, with some betting on higher rates as early as January.

Ueda said Japan's prolonged experience of low inflation and stagnant wage growth likely heightened public perceptions that prices and wages would remain stuck around zero.

Changing such perceptions and creating a cycle in which wages and prices rise in tandem would have benefits such as leading to more efficient allocation of labour, he said.

Achieving positive inflation will also push up nominal interest rates and give the central bank room to substantially lower rates when needed to prevent the economy from slipping back to deflation, Ueda said.

He pointed to recent progress, such as a gradual acceleration in service inflation and signs of change in the way companies set prices and pay.

## Yandex's restructuring deal expected to be delayed

MOSCOW (Reuters): The completion of Nasdaq-listed Russian tech company Yandex's (YNDX.O) restructuring is expected to be delayed into next year, two sources familiar with the negotiations told Reuters on Monday.

Dutch holding company Yandex NV has been working on a restructuring for months, as it tries to ensure some of its businesses retain access to Western markets despite sanctions against Moscow over the conflict in Ukraine.

The deal was initially expected to be reached in December. Any deal ultimately requires approval from shareholders and Russia's government.

Yandex declined to comment on restructuring process.

The company is aiming to recoup shareholder funds through the sale of its main revenue-generating Russian businesses, such as its search and ride-hailing operations. It then plans to develop four other business lines internationally. One of the sources, speaking on condition of anonymity because the information is not public, said the company had made "great progress" and handed all the documents to lawyers, but it was not clear the work would be completed this month.

Another source said the goal now was to complete the deal in the first quarter.

On Monday, Russia's central bank registered an issuance of ordinary and preferred shares of a new company called MKAO Yandex, which is being set up in the city of Kaliningrad as part of the restructuring.





## In brief

## PCB hosts Christmas dinner

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board hosted a Christmas dinner at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore, attended by the Chairman Management Committee Mr Zaka Ashraf along with top PCB officials and Christian employees. Addressing the guests on this occasion, Chairman PCB Management Committee Mr Zaka Ashraf said, "I extend my heartfelt greetings to all those celebrating Christmas in Pakistan and around the world. We are delighted that you are part of the Pakistan Cricket Board. "You have served Pakistan cricket with utmost dedication and the PCB appreciates your efforts. I hope that you and your families celebrate with joy and I wish you well."

## 'Do not get used to suffering' in Gaza

CAIRO (Agencies): Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah said on Monday that families grieving for their loved ones in Gaza should not be forgotten, as he issued an emotional Christmas message marking only his second comment on the war in the enclave. Salah posted a black-and-white picture of a Christmas tree on his social media pages, saying he was approaching Christmas with a heavy heart amid the fighting in Gaza, which has been under intense bombardment by Israel since Hamas militants launched an attack on Oct. 7. Israel says Hamas militants killed 1,200 people and took around 240 people hostage in their attack. Israel's ensuing bombardment of Gaza has killed more than 20,400 people and wounded at least 50,000, according to authorities in the Hamas-ruled strip. "With the brutal war going on in the Middle East, especially the death and destruction in Gaza, this year we get to Christmas with very heavy hearts and we share the pain of those families who are grieving the loss of their loved ones," Salah said. "Please do not forget them and do not get used to their suffering. Merry Christmas," Salah wrote to his more than 63 million followers on Instagram and almost 19 million on X. Egyptian Red Crescent officials said in October that Salah had made a "significant donation" to help the people of Gaza. In his first comments on the conflict in October, less than two weeks after the war started, Salah called for an end to what he described as "massacres," appealing for humanitarian aid to be allowed into Gaza. The 31-year-old is one of the leading scorers in the English Premier League this season.

## Shohei Ohtani gifts luxury wheels

LOS ANGELES (Reuters): The wife of Los Angeles Dodgers reliever Joe Kelly received an early holiday gift from her husband's new teammate, Shohei Ohtani. A video she posted to social media on Saturday night showed Ashley opening the front door to see a silver Porsche parked at the curb, with the delivery driver telling her, "It's yours. From Shohei. He wanted to gift you a Porsche." During the Dodgers' courtship of Ohtani, the two-way star who signed a record \$10-year, \$700 million deal with the team earlier this month, Ashley offered up her husband's No. 17 to the Japanese slugger. In her #Ohtake17 social media campaign before Ohtani's signing, she comically reached out to Ohtani, showing him all the No. 17 garb in the family's closets that could be converted for use by him and his family.

# Skipper Cummins backs Khawaja on Gaza views



MELBOURNE (Agencies): Australia captain Pat Cummins threw his support behind star opener Usman Khawaja Monday, saying his bid to bring attention to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza was "not offensive."

Khawaja has been denied permission by the International Cricket Council (ICC) to have a sticker showing a black dove holding an olive branch on his bat and shoes during the second Test against Pakistan.

The logo, which he displayed during training on Sunday, also had the words

01:UDHR — a reference to Article One of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — written on it.

The 36-year-old, a Muslim, was stopped from wearing shoes emblazoned with the hand-written slogans "Freedom is a human right" and "All lives are equal" during the first Test in Perth. The ICC said they flouted its rules on messages that relate to politics, religion or race.

"We really support Uzzy. He's standing up for what he believes and I think he's done it really respectfully," Cummins told reporters on

the eve of the Test in Melbourne. "As I said last week, 'All lives are equal', I don't think that's very offensive and I'd say the same about the dove."

"That's Uzzy. I think he can really hold his head high with the way he's gone about it. "But obviously there's rules in place and I believe the ICC have said they're not going to approve that. They make up the rules and you've got to accept it."

Khawaja wore a black armband during the Perth Test and was reprimanded by the ICC, but insisted it was for a "personal bereavement" and not politically motivated. Last week, he spoke about how Israel's war had affected him.

"When I'm looking at my Instagram and seeing innocent kids, videos of them dying, passing away, that's what hit me the hardest," he said. "I don't have any agendas other than trying to shine a light on what I feel really passionately, really strongly about."

# Liverpool need slice of luck amid injury crisis, says Klopp

LONDON (Agencies): Liverpool will wrap Joe Gomez in cotton wool and pray the defender does not become yet another addition to the snowballing injury crisis at the Premier League club, manager Jurgen Klopp said.

Liverpool's Kostas Tsimikas sustained a broken collarbone in their 1-1 draw with Arsenal on Saturday, leaving the Merseyside outfit with few options at left back, with first-choice defender Andy Robertson also sidelined due to a shoulder injury.

Gomez, who is right-footed, is likely to fill in at left back until Robertson returns.

"It is for us obviously really tough, it's really tough. You have injuries sometimes and we accept all of them, but a broken collarbone is really bad because it just takes (so) long," Klopp told reporters ahead of Tuesday's clash against Burnley at Turf Moor.

"Same what Robbo (Robertson) had, a different injury but that takes long as well, how we all know."

"We all know we need luck in these moments to get through and now we will have Joey (Gomez) there and just have to make sure we put him in cotton wool and we have to make sure he is always ready for the games."

Liverpool, second in the standings, next face 19th-placed Burnley, who beat Fulham 2-0 in their last league match to move off the bottom of the table.

Klopp said he believes Burnley are better than their results show. "I have watched quite a few Burnley games and I am pretty impressed by what they are doing — and on Saturday they got them the reward," he said.

"We all know if you win once and you have a chance to play in three days again then you will want to win again and that's exactly what we expect — and a pretty good atmosphere as well. We better be, and will be, ready."

# Australia retain lineup, Pakistan replace Sarfaraz with Rizwan

MELBOURNE (Monitoring Desk): Australia named an unchanged XI for the Boxing Day Test against Pakistan, but the touring side replaced veteran stumper Sarfaraz Ahmed with Mohammad Rizwan for the second match of the three-Test series.

Scott Boland missed out in his home ground as Australia retained the pace trio of captain Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood, who bowled them to a comprehensive victory in the opening Test in Perth.

"We're a huge fan of Scotty, I don't think that's a secret," Cummins told reporters on Monday.

"It's very rare that you're going to get through seven Test matches with the same (fast) bowling line-up. There's

always niggles or things that pop up.

"He's ready to go if anything happens, so I'm sure he'll play a part at some point."

"The message (to Boland) is always 'We love what you're bringing, unfortunately you miss out on this one but don't change... and stay ready'."

Pakistan would confirm their playing XI only at the toss on Tuesday but Sarfaraz has been dropped after managing seven runs in Perth.

Skipper Shan Masood said Rizwan, an attacking batter, needed time to shift to red-ball cricket, which was a key factor in playing Sarfaraz in the opening Test.

"We think Rizwan is ready and we can give Sarfaraz a little bit of a

break to recoup and come back," Masood told reporters.

"It was more of a tactical decision in terms of the conditions and getting the best out of each player in those conditions."

Pakistan's bowling looked depleted as they seek to level the series in Melbourne.

Noman Ali has been ruled out of the last two matches having undergone appendicitis surgery, while fellow spinner Abrar Ahmed will continue to sit out with a leg injury he suffered during a tour game.

With a recovering Naseem Shah still not fit for action and Haris Rauf opting out of the series, the lack of firepower in their pace attack has also been a major concern for Pakistan.

# Umar Akmal heroics inspire WAPDA to four-wicket win

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The second round of President's Trophy Grade-I came to an end as Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) secured the game against Higher Education Commission (HEC) with a four-wicket win on day four.

Umar Akmal scored back-to-back fifties in the game to inspire his team to second win of the tournament. Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) and Sui Northern Gas Pipelines (SNGPL) had won their respective games the previous day.

WAPDA continued from their overnight score of 114-4. They lost two more wickets while chasing the 220-run target. Umar Akmal (85, 203b, 10x4s) and Ayaz Tasawar (65, 125b, 10x4s) stretched their fifth-wicket partnership to 98 before the former fell to Aqib Liaqat. Bismillah Khan (17 not out, 22b, 2x4s, 1x6) hit the winning runs as WAPDA got home with two sessions remaining and four wickets in the bag.

HEC's Mohammad Junaid picked up three wickets to keep his team in the game but it went in vain. Aqib Liaqat also bagged two wickets while Mohammad Azab's lone wicket came on day three. At the end of second round, WAPDA skipper Iftikhar Ahmed is leading the batting chart with 386 runs while his fellow teammate Asif Afridi sits on top of leading wicket taker's list having taken 11 wickets.

The third round of the tournament will kick off on 28 December. Scores in brief: WAPDA beat HEC by four wickets at National Bank Stadium. HEC 327-7, 80 overs (Awais Zafar 178 not out, Mohammad Mohsin Khan 43, Jahanzaib Sultan 20; Iftikhar Ahmed 3-88, Irfanullah Shah 2-67,



Naqeeb Masood 1-61, Asif Afridi 1-83) and 283 all out, 67 overs (Ghazi Ghouri 110, Mohammad Mohsin Khan 60, Awais Zafar 57; Irfanullah Shah 3-39, Iftikhar Ahmed 3-40, Naqeebullah Masood 2-56, Asif Afridi 2-83)

WAPDA 391-4, 80 overs (Iftikhar Ahmed 123, Mohammad Saad 102 not out, Umar Akmal 87; Aqib Liaqat 2-124, Mohammad Azab 1-56) and 221-6, 79.2 overs (Umar Akmal 85, Ayaz Tasawar 65; Mohammad Junaid 3-81, Aqib Liaqat 2-35, Mohammad Azab 1-25)

KRL beat Ghani Glass by one wicket at State Bank Stadium

Ghani Glass 363-7, 80 overs (Saeed Malik 105 not out, Shahbaz Javed 74, Saad Naseem 58; Kashif Ali 3-61, Arshadullah 2-117, Sirajuddin 1-35, Shayan Sheikh 1-93) and 79 all out, 26.2 overs (Kashif Ali 19, Shahbaz Javed 17; Sirajuddin 4-7, Kashif Ali 4-33, Arshadullah 2-37)

KRL 320-8, 80 overs (Maaz Sadaqat 84 not out, Ali Zaryab 65, Sarmad Bhatti 54; Niaz Khan 4-107, Ahmed 3-88, Irfanullah Shah 2-67,

41, Bilawal Iqbal 1-63) and 123-9, 35.2 overs (Kashif Ali 30 not out, Abdul Faseeh 15, Rohail Nazir 13; Ghulam Mudassar 4-32, Niaz Khan 4-61, Bilawal Iqbal 1-24)

SNGPL beat PTV by eight wickets at UBL Sports Complex

PTV 317 all out, 79.2 overs (Uzair Mumtaz 108, Hasan Mohsin 59, Ahmed Safi Abdullah 46; Arif Yaqoob 4-97, Mohammad Awais Anwar 3-47, Bilawal Bhatti 1-31, Mohammad Ali 1-50, Mubasir Khan 1-73) and 189 all out, 49.1 overs (Hasan Nawaz 69, Nasir Nawaz 62, Mohammad Suleman 21, Jahandad Khan 21; Arif Yaqoob 6-80, Mohammad Ali 2-43, Bilawal Bhatti 1-25, Mohammad Awais Anwar 1-33) SNGPL 424-7, 80 overs (Abid Ali 121, Omair Bin Yousuf 120, Haseebullah 76; Adil Naz 3-83, Ahmed Safi Abdullah 1-86, Jahandad Khan 1-90) and 85-2, 21 overs (Sahibzada Farhan 51, Abid Ali 18, Asad Shafiq 9 not out; Faisal Akram 1-19, Ahmed Safi Abdullah 1-34).

# India chase history in test series in South Africa

PRETORIA (Reuters): India go in search of history when they face hosts South Africa in two tests starting in Pretoria on Tuesday, hoping to claim a first ever series victory in a country where they have come close before only to fall agonisingly short.

South Africa have been victors in seven of India's eight visits since the first in 1992 with one series drawn in 2010/11, but six of those successes have been by a single win margin.

The tourists may now feel they have never had a better chance. This South African side does not have the experience and quality with bat and ball of those of years gone by, and their top six in particular can be brittle.

They also face late fitness tests for key fast bowlers Kagiso Rabada and Lungi Ngidi, who could be a handful on what is expected to be a lively Centurion Park pitch in the first test, before the tour moves to Newlands in Cape Town for the second fixture from Jan. 3.

"If it was possible to make this even bigger, the fact that India have never won here does that," South Africa coach Shukri Conrad said. "We certainly want to hold on to that proud record."

"There are so many matchups that this series hinges on. It's two tests, so it's high pressure. You go 1-0 down and you can't win the series. You go 1-0 up, you can't lose. It's going to be like a heavy-weight boxing bout."

India have some injured absentees but remain a formidable side with back-to-back series successes in Australia giving them the belief they can conquer this particular Everest.

# Arafat named Pakistan's high-performance coach for New Zealand T20Is



Following Hafeez's appointment, Umar Gul was announced as the fast-bowling coach, Saeed Ajmal as the spin-bowling coach, Adam Hollioake as the batting coach, and Helmut the high-performance coach.

All of those appointments needed to be short-term because of circumstances - this is an interim PCB set-up and formal elections have not yet been held; it lacks the constitutional ability to make long-term appointments.

Arafat, who has previous coaching experience in New Zealand as well as in England, played 27 international matches, including 13 T20Is, and was a part of Pakistan's victorious 2009 T20 World Cup squad, though he played just one game in the tournament. The T20I series against New Zealand begins on January 12, with the final game on January 21.

LAHORE (INP): There's been another change in the Pakistan coaching set-up, with Yasir Arafat joining the crew for the side's five-match T20I series in New Zealand. Arafat has been appointed high-performance coach, and will replace the current man in the role, Simon Helmut. It was a relatively late decision on the part of the PCB, and Arafat will fly directly to New Zealand with Pakistan's T20I specialists. It is understood that he has been assigned to the national side for just that one series for the

moment. Helmut had been named as part of the coaching staff for the ongoing Australia series, but according to a PCB source, he has personal commitments.

This marks yet another change since Mohammad Hafeez was given the role of team director and head coach for Pakistan's tour of Australia, replacing Mickey Arthur and Grant Bradburn. Arthur and Bradburn are still on the PCB's books, but did not travel to Australia, and have not yet been assigned elsewhere.

# British billionaire Ratcliffe agrees deal to buy 25 percent of Man Utd

LONDON (AFP): British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe has agreed a deal to buy a 25 percent stake in Manchester United for about \$1.3 billion, vowing to return the Premier League club to the "top of world football".

United also announced in a statement on Sunday that Ratcliffe's INEOS company would take control of football operations after years of under-achievement under the Glazer family. And the 71-year-old chairman of the global chemicals giant will provide substantial funds for future investment in the club's outdated Old Trafford stadium.

It brings to an end a lengthy saga that began 13 months ago when United's unpopular US owners said they were considering "strategic alternatives" to help the club grow.

The American family bought the club for £790 million (\$1.47 billion at the time) in 2005, loading the 20-time English champions with debt. Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani and Ratcliffe made offers in the region of £5 billion for a complete takeover, but that fell short of the Glazer family's valuation.

Sheikh Jassim withdrew his bid to buy 100 percent of the club in October while Ratcliffe continued to pursue a minority shareholding. "The joint ambition is to create a world-class football operation building on the



club's many existing strengths, including the successful off-pitch performance that it continues to enjoy," the United said in their statement on Christmas Eve.

Ratcliffe, who tried to buy Chelsea last year, grew up in the Manchester region and describes himself as a committed fan.

"As a local boy and a lifelong supporter of the club, I am very pleased that we have been able to agree a deal with the Manchester United board that delegates us management responsibility of the football operations of the club," he said.

He said the expertise and talent from the wider INEOS Sport group would be harnessed in the drive for success, underlining that it was a long-term project. "Our shared ambition is clear," he said. "We all want to see Manchester United back where we belong, at the very top of English, European and world football." Dave Brailsford, the former performance director of British Cycling, is expected to have significant influence in his role as INEOS's director of sport.

The club said Ratcliffe would acquire 25 percent of the Class B shares held by the Glazer family and up to 25 percent of its Class A shares, which are traded in New York. Ratcliffe's proposal values United at \$33 a share. Under the deal, an additional \$300 million will be provided for investment into United's outdated Old Trafford stadium.

— Commercial experience —

Executive co-chairmen and directors Avram Glazer and Joel Glazer said Ratcliffe and INEOS "bring a wealth of commercial experience as well as significant financial commitment into the club". Ratcliffe's group has extensive involvement in sport, owning French Ligue 1 club Nice and Swiss side Lausanne-Sport, as well as the INEOS Grenadiers cycling team. United have not been crowned Premier League champions since Alex Ferguson's final season in charge, in 2013.

They languish eighth in the Premier League this season, 12 points behind leaders Arsenal, and have been knocked out of the League Cup and the Champions League. Manager Erik Ten Hag's position is also likely to come under closer scrutiny, with the Dutch coach failing to build on ending United's six-year trophy drought by winning the League Cup last season.



MELBOURNE: Umar Gul, David Warner and Babar Azam share a light moment in the nets.





## In brief

### Woman killed, two injured

ISLAMABAD (APP): A woman was killed while two persons got critically wounded when a speeding car hit a motorbike near Mian Channu Bypass on Monday afternoon. According to details, Police sources said that the accident occurred near Mian Channu bypass where a speeding car driver lost his control and hit a motorbike, in a result one killed and injured two others, a private news channel reported. Police and rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the body and injured to hospital. According to rescue sources, the deceased was yet not identified. Police have seized the car while its driver managed to escape from the scene after the accident.

### Ahmad Bashir remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ahmad Bashir writer, journalist and intellectual was remembered on Monday on the occasion of his death anniversary. Born in Aimanabad near Gujranwala on March 24, 1923, Ahmed Bashir gained his Bachelor of Arts degree from Srinagar and went to Bombay for a career in acting but soon started writing for film magazines. After the partition of India, he came to settle permanently in Pakistan. After the partition, Ahmad Bashir worked for several newspapers in Pakistan. However, he is remembered for his days at Daily Inmroze where he introduced feature writing in Urdu press. He also obtained training in film direction from Hollywood on a state scholarship. Bashir also worked for the Department of Films & Publications and later for the National Film Development Corporation (NAFDEC). Bashir was also a portrait writer. His book Jo Milay Thay Raaste Mein contains pen sketches of eminent literary personalities including Mumtaz Mufti, Krishan Chander, Meeraji, Chiragh Hasan Hasrat, Hasrat Mohani and Kishwar Naheed. He also wrote an autobiographical novel "Dil Bhatkey Ga". In 1969, Bashir directed and produced an Urdu film, Neela Parbat. He died on December 25, 2004 in Lahore.

### AIOU to hold convocation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Convocation of Alama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will be held on January 31, 2024, at the Jinnah Convention Center, Islamabad. According to the AIOU, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Dr Arif Alvi, who is also the Chancellor of the University, will be the chief guest at the event. The ceremony will be hosted by the Vice Chancellor, of AIOU, Prof Dr Nasir Mahmood. Federal ministers, secretaries, senior officials of HEC, vice chancellors of various universities, rectors, renowned journalists, eminent social personalities, deans, professors, principal officers, faculty members, and students of AIOU will participate in the convocation. Convocation is the most important event of the university, Vice Chancellor, Prof Dr Nasir Mahmood has directed students to register for convocation by January 5 to ensure maximum participation. Graduates who have secured 70% marks in all degree programs from the semester of Autumn 2004 to the semester of Spring 2022 are eligible for registration. Students are directed to visit the convocation website [convocation.aiou.edu.pk](http://convocation.aiou.edu.pk) for registration and more information.



ISLAMABAD: Christian community members performing religious rituals on Christmas day at Fatima Church.

## Authorities crack down on begging in twin cities, 67 accused face legal action

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to curb the rising trend of professional begging in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, authorities have implemented robust measures resulting in legal actions against 67 beggars and throughout December 2023, about 42 cases were registered, signalling a determined effort to address the issue.

This move aimed not only to decrease the prevalence of begging but also to encourage alternative means of earning a livelihood. The Islamabad Deputy Commissioner's office revealed that after a thorough investigation process, legal proceedings were initiated against 67 individuals involved in professional begging. These cases, now in the hands of the competent jurisdiction, mark a

significant step in tackling the persistent issue, an official in the Ministry of Interior told APP. The measures taken have led to a noticeable decline in begging activities across the twin cities. Officials express optimism that these actions will redirect beggars towards more sustainable sources of income, emphasizing the importance of hard work and labor.

He further said that efforts to address inflation and poverty are also underway, with the government working tirelessly to provide equal employment opportunities for all segments of society. The goal is to create an environment where citizens can earn a living through legitimate means, reducing dependency on begging as a source of income.

Notable areas identified for professional begging include Saddar, Committee, Mureed and Chadni Chowks, Sixth Road, Pindora Chongi, Faizabad, Dhoak Kala Khan in Rawalpindi, and Aabpara, Melody Market, G-7, G-8, F-8, H-9, G-9 in Islamabad.

The deceptive tactics employed by beggars, such as crocodile tears and fake disabilities, highlight the extent to which begging has become a pervasive business. The phenomenon is not limited to a specific age or gender, as women carrying infants and young men resort to begging to elicit sympathy from the public. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive measures to address the root causes of professional begging.

### Pope Francis message on Christmas Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis said his heart is with those suffering in Bethlehem, where the good of God is being muffled by the conflict in Gaza.

Pope Francis in his message on 25th December (Monday) the global Christmas Day that Jesus's message of peace is being drowned out by the "futile logic of war" in the very land he was born.

"Our hearts are in Bethlehem, where the Prince of Peace is once more rejected by the futile logic of war, by the clash of arms that even today prevents him from finding room in the world," said the Catholic leader.

The 87-year-old leader's address began with, "A census of the whole Earth," where he drew comparisons between emperors and God. He talked about how the powerful seek to make a name for themselves in history, while "the King of history chooses the way of littleness," which teed up his next point.

### Commissioner Rawalpindi shares Christ joy in colourful event

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a heartwarming Christmas gathering, Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatta highlighted the universal message of love for humanity preached by all religions, emphasizing the value of unity and respect for diverse beliefs.

Speaking as the chief guest, Commissioner Chatta said that minorities are fully protected and enjoying equal rights.

He assured the Christian community of foolproof security measures, emphasizing that the security of Pakistan is intertwined with the collective attitude towards other religions and minorities. He called upon everyone to actively contribute to making the country a haven of peace and security. The commissioner expressed gratitude for the cooperation of the administration, scholars, and various schools of thought, stressing the need for their active involvement in fostering a harmonious society.

Pastor Adil praised the administration's efforts in safeguarding the rights of minorities, acknowledging their commitment to maintaining law and order during the Christmas celebrations.

## Efforts afoot to provide best Hajj services to pilgrims: Aneeq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Monday said that the government was taking all possible steps to provide best services to the Pakistani pilgrims during the current year's Hajj.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that the Federal Government, in the Hajj Policy 2024, had brought a significant reduction in the Hajj expenses as compared to the previous year.

"The Haj 2024 is set to embrace digitalization, providing pilgrims with a mobile application which will function without Internet connectivity. This innovative app will offer various features, including a complaint lodging option to the pilgrims

this year," he added.

The government, Aneeq said, had also introduced a historic 20 to 21-day short Hajj package and was striving to make the religious obligation financially affordable to the entire nation, the minister said.

He said quality accommodation and meals, with improved transportation facilities would be provided to make the Hajj a more comfortable and convenient experience for the pilgrims. The minister appreciated the Saudi government's efforts for making the Hajj more affordable for the Pakistani pilgrims. Aneeq said the ministry had received more applications than the quota for the Regular Hajj Scheme this year, which showed the citizens' more confidence than the last years.

## Social media users celebrates 147th birth anniversary of 'Jinnah', posted inspiring Quotes to pay tribute

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the 147th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Pakistani nation shared Quaid's inspiring quotes and photos from his speeches on Monday to express their respect and love for Jinnah, who fought selflessly for the Muslims of undivided India and laid the foundations of a new country, Pakistan.

"Social media users, while paying rich tributes, had posted messages on various platforms commemorating his sacrifices and struggles in achieving a separate homeland for the Muslim population," said a report aired by the PTV news channel. Social media is the best opportunity for students because it provides a good platform for learning and knowing about the historical struggle of the founder of the nation, said a teacher.

Pakistanis, including various politicians and celebrities, also posted heartfelt messages for Mohammad Ali Jinnah on Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp groups, and Instagram posts, said a citizen.

Thanks indeed, Sir, for your diligent efforts in making a beautiful and independent homeland for us, said a Facebook user while sharing the post. On his anniversary, we remember the founding father of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, with respect and gratitude, according to another post on Twitter. "There is no power on Earth that can undo Pakistan," said a politician while sharing his views on Twitter. Let's pay real tribute to Quaid-e-Azam by making Pakistan as per his dream and vision, said an Instagram post shared by a celebrity.

Happy birthday to one of the most extraordinary, brave, and incorruptible men in the history of the world, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, said a user in a Facebook post while sharing a video of his speech. A true leader who sacrificed everything for Pakistan. May we all play our part in the growth, stability, and progress of our beloved country, said a student in a Twitter post.

## Jamal Shah pays tribute to Quaid-e-Azam, calls for unity, progress

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a heartfelt tribute, Caretaker Minister for Culture and National Heritage, Syed Jamal Shah, on Monday commemorated the birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Acknowledging Jinnah's unwavering determination, Jamal Shah emphasized how the founder's visionary leadership transformed the dream of a separate homeland for Muslims into a tangible reality.

Jamal Shah urged the nation to unite on this significant day, echoing the spirit that fueled the independence movement for the creation of Pakistan.

Regardless of differences in caste, creed, or faith, he called for collective efforts towards a common goal.

Expressing his hopes for the nation's future, Jamal Shah prayed for strength and unity. He envisioned a Pakistan that lives up to the ideals set by Quaid-e-Azam, aspiring to become the strongest nation on earth. Highlighting the caretaker government's commitment under the leadership of Prime Minister Anwar Ul Haq Kakar, Jamal Shah shared their dedication to building a society free of corruption. Emphasizing a system that uplifts the poor and underprivileged,

he underlined the alignment of these efforts with the founder's vision for Pakistan.

In a broader message of inclusivity, Jamal Shah extended warm greetings to the Christian community in Pakistan on the joyous occasion of Christmas. This gesture underscored the minister's commitment to fostering harmony and celebrating the diversity within the nation. This tribute not only commemorates the visionary leader Quaid-e-Azam but also calls for collective action and unity to fulfill the aspirations of a stronger, more prosperous Pakistan.

## G A Chishti remembered on death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned music composer, considered one of the pioneers of subcontinent film music Ghulam Ahmed Chishti also known as Baba Chishti was remembered on the occasion of his death anniversary on Monday.

He was born on August 17, 1905, in Jalandhar in his childhood, Chishti became fond of music and delivered na'ats at his school. He was later

noticed by a stage play director Agha Hashar Kashmiri when Chishti came to Lahore in 1934. Agha Hashar Kashmiri was a well-known writer and playwright whose works were praised throughout the Indian subcontinent and would occasionally compose songs for theatres.

Kashmiri hired Chishti to assist him with his work and offered him a salary of 50 rupees per month. Under

Kashmiri's influence, Chishti began learning the intricacies of the music industry and trained with him. Upon Kashmiri's death, Chishti joined a recording company and began composing on his own. Amongst his first records were those for Jaddanbai and Amirbai Karnatki before partition. Chishti had introduced Noor Jehan to the Lahore stage when she was 9 years old in 1935.

## Capitalizing youth's potential for Eco-Entrepreneurship critical to address Pakistan's environmental issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): The experts at a dialogue on Rethinking Urban Development in Pakistan: The Potential of Youth for Eco-Entrepreneurship have said that capitalizing on youth's potential for Eco-Entrepreneurship in managing urbanization well in Pakistan and aligning it with natural resource conservation is imperative for a livable and climate-resilient future.

This entails a critical assessment of the current and future urban trends, incorporating principles of sustainability in the urban development process, and bringing together thinkers and implementers for co-creating solutions to this complex problem. Youth can play an important role in this regard especially since youth forms a sizable segment of the population and is likely to be most impact-

ed if proactive steps are not taken to enhance environmental protection.

Institute of Urbanism (IoU) and School of Leadership Foundation (SoLF) with the support of the U.S. Embassy Islamabad organized a dialogue titled "Rethinking Urban Development in Pakistan: The Potential of Youth for Eco-Entrepreneurship". In the session, the students of Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) who were a part of the 02-month Green Urban Development School (GUDES) shared the projects they proposed for solutions on urban solid waste management and urban water management in Islamabad with the relevant experts, media, policy-makers, and researchers and discussed how such solutions can be scaled up in the city to create a long term impact to encourage green development practices in Islamabad. In

Pakistan, unleashing the potential of youth is the game changer in climate adaptation. Their fresh perspectives and innovative ideas break conventional boundaries, paving the way for sustainable solutions. Engaging youth is crucial for understanding local contexts, as their deep knowledge of community dynamics informs effective adaptation strategies for green urban development.

These empowered youth aren't just researchers; they become the driving force behind community outreach, advocating for policy changes that prioritize sustainability and resilience. In a nutshell, investing in youth engagement in climate adaptation research is the catalyst for a resilient and environmentally just future in Pakistan, said Mariyam Irfan, Managing Director at SoLF in her welcome remarks.

## Pakistan's vibrant youth showcase theatrical talents at PNCA's Drama Festival

ISLAMABAD (APP): The three-day Drama Festival wrapped up that showcased a tapestry of performances, highlighting the talent of diverse theatre groups that not only provided quality entertainment but also delivered powerful messages through impeccable acting, dialogue delivery, and script techniques at Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA).

In a dazzling finale, the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) concluded its three-day drama festival, a kaleidoscope of performances that left audiences enchanted. The event featured spirited presentations by student groups from Makhlef University, BNU Lahore, Nast Dramatic Club, Quaid-e-Azam Dramatic Club, and Team Master. Director PR Dr Bilal Karim said. A Glimpse into the Festivities, the cultural extravaganza unfolded with Makhlef University's student groups presenting a delightful mix of stand-up comedy and Sufi dance. NUST Dramatic Club took center stage with a captivating play, while Quaid-e-Azam Dramatic Club infused humour through stand-up comedy, while BNU Lahore added a rhythmic touch with a mesmerizing dance performance, and Team Master delivered a compelling play.

The star-studded event was graced by Sadia Hayat Khan, a prominent television artist, model, compere, and producer, who adorned the role of the chief guest. With her seasoned presence, she added a touch of glamour and prestige to the festivities.

The climax of the festival saw the distribution of prizes to the outstanding performers, marking their achievements in this artistic spectacle. The first, second,

and third-place winners were acknowledged and applauded by Sadia Hayat Khan, who recognized and admired the exceptional talent on display.

The festival took a unique turn with students presenting spontaneous sketches on topics suggested by the audience, fostering an interactive and engaging atmosphere. This not only showcased the versatility of the participants but also kept the spectators on the edge of their seats.

Tamasha, a collaborative effort between the Pakistan National Council of Arts and Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad, featured thought-provoking plays by 23 university students and theatre groups. The festival served as a melting pot for drama, acting, and cultural dances, with participants hailing from various universities and colleges across Pakistan.

Meanwhile, beyond entertainment, the festival aimed to promote healthy activities among the youth, reinventing the concept of theatre in the twin cities. With a theme centered around peace, love, and harmony, the event succeeded in bringing alive the cultural vibrancy of Pakistan's capital. In the grand finale, the three-day drama festival emerged as a theatrical triumph, leaving an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of Pakistan.

The vibrant performances, the star-studded presence, and the enthusiastic audience participation collectively painted a picture of artistic excellence and cultural celebration. As the curtains closed on this spectacular event, it left behind memories of laughter, contemplation, and a renewed appreciation for the rich tapestry of Pakistan's theatrical prowess.



### Winter aid distributed

GHAZANI (Ariana News): Bayat Foundation has handed out dozens of aid packages of food and non-food items to needy families in Ghazni. The packages include flour, rice, cooking oil and warm clothes. "In continuation of donations, distribute every year because of the cold days, started distributions this year as well. Earlier distributed in Kabul and today in Ghazni and distributing food and non-food items to dozens of deserving people."

## The Frontier Post

Jamadi-us-Sanni 12, 1445 — Tuesday, December 26, 2023

### OCHA seeks to provide aid

KABUL (BNA): Alhaj Mullah Mohammad Abbas Akhund, Acting Minister of State Disaster Management, in a meeting with Mohammad Zaid Khater, Deputy Coordinator of UN humanitarian aid in Afghanistan discussed the UN organization's action plan for next year and providing winter aid for needy. In 2024, Afghanistan needs humanitarian assistance for 23.8 million people, more than half of the country's population, requiring \$3.06 billion for management.

## Facilities increased in Spin Boldak camp

KABUL (TOLONews): As the weather is getting colder, authorities have announced an increase in facilities at Spin Boldak camp for immigrants returning from Pakistan.

Officials said that they accelerated the transfer of migrants to their main areas, and warm rooms and other necessary facilities have been provided for them in the temporary camp.

"The services are delivered properly and the distribution plan for heaters and coal has been prepared for the winter," said Nooruddin Turabi, deputy of the Afghan Red Crescent Society.

"Facilitation has been made for the migrants for the winter, which is done with the help of foreign organizations," said Hamdullah Turabi, deputy

of the Information and Culture department in Kandahar.

The process of forced deportation of Afghan immigrants from Pakistan is still going on through the Spin Boldak crossing, where hundreds of people return to the country every day.

Returning migrants said that Afghans in Pakistan are still being harassed by the security forces of that country and their property is forcibly being taken from them.

"They didn't let us roam around the markets," said Sharfuddin, a refugee.

"We took our children out of that country, and we left Afghanistan because of our honor," said Ghamai, a refugee.

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Commerce and Investment of Spin Boldak

said that until the end of the process of returning Afghan refugees, food is provided for free in the camp.

"We still haven't stopped helping the returnees, and the merchants and industrialists of Spin Boldak are ready to cooperate no matter how many immigrants return to their homeland every day," said Mohammad Idris, deputy of the chamber.

"Bread is distributed to 2,500 to 700 migrants in the morning and to the same number in the evening, and in one day and night we distribute bread to 6,000 migrants," said Ahmad Shah Khan, a Kandahar trader. Since the first of the November of the year, more than 135,000 people have returned to the country through the Spin Boldak crossing.

## IEA fulfilled commitments, says Kabir

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs has stated that the Islamic Emirate fulfilled all its commitments in the past two years and is seeking positive interaction with the world.

According to a statement released by this office, Mawlawi Kabir stated his views during a meeting with Zarghun Shah Shinwari, a journalist, and some Afghan authors and politicians residing abroad.

Deputy PM Kabir mentioned basic work and progress in Afghanistan over the past two years, emphasizing ongoing efforts for economic strengthening and general well-being.

He added that Islamic Emirate welcomes the opinions and suggestions of all Afghans, mainly scholars, author, and experts.

Zarghun Shah Shinwari also stated that with the arrival of the Islamic Emirate, the country has seen a decline in insecurity, corruption, aggression, and injustice.

He noted the significant difference between the actual conditions in Afghanistan and what people hear from social networks and media in foreign countries. Consequently, efforts are being made to facilitate interaction, relationships, and collaboration between Afghan expatriates, experts, writers, and scientists with the Islamic Emirate.

## Afghan vendors banned

KABUL (TOLONews): Local authorities in the city of Mashhad in Iran's Razavi Khorasan province ordered a ban on business activities of mobile Afghan merchants in the bazaars in the city. Iranian media reported that the notice was installed in the entrance of Mashhad's Bazaar.

The ban on Afghans comes as half a million Afghan citizens are currently living in the city.

Afghans living in Iran expressed concerns that the move will hinder their activities and cause severe challenges. They also complained about mistreatment by the country's police toward the Afghan refugees.

"The demand of the refugees from the Islamic Emirate is to address the challenges of the refugees through diplomatic paths, so that the refugees be treated based on international laws," said Enayatullah Alokozai, an Afghan refugee in Iran.

## IEA seeks positive ties with world community

KABUL (Ariana News): Abdul Salam Hanafi, the administrative deputy prime minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), met in Kabul with the Japanese ambassador and a delegation from the Japanese Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

The meeting was also attended by Tadamichi Yamamoto, the former representative of the United Nations for Afghanistan (UNAMA). In the meeting, Abdul Salam Hanafi commended Japan for its assistance and collaboration with Afghanistan across various domains, particularly acknowledging the efforts of Dr. Tetsu Nakamura, according to an official statement by the PM's office.

Hanafi emphasized that drugs pose a significant obstacle for Afghanistan and the world. He further stated that the Islamic Emirate has implemented a ban on the cultivation, production, smuggling, and use of drugs, which is considered a significant



achievement.

At the meeting, he stressed that Afghanistan's territory will not be used to carry out activities against any country. The Islamic Emirate seeks to establish positive relations with all nations based on mutual respect and interaction.

Tadamichi Yamamoto expressed that normalizing relations between the Islamic Emirate and the international community is

beneficial for Afghanistan and the world and Japan stands ready to cooperate in this regard.

Atsushi Tsunami, the head of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation of Japan, while expressing his satisfaction with the overall security situation in Afghanistan, said that they are the voice of the Japanese people and are ready to help the people of Afghanistan.

He added that the security

throughout Afghanistan has encouraged them to start their activities in the fields of health, education, agriculture and irrigation and other fields.

During the visit, the Japanese ambassador also revealed that Japan has provided over \$58 million in aid to Afghanistan and intends to continue supporting the country with food assistance and aid for returning refugees.

## Afghan Minister meets with Japan's delegation



KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Minister of Interior Sirajuddin Haqqani met with the delegation of the Japanese Sasakawa Peace Foundation of Japan in Kabul, the ministry said in a statement.

The delegation included Atsushi Sunami, president of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Tadamichi Yamamoto, former UNSG's Special Representative for Afghanistan and other members of this organization, read the statement.

Sunami praised the achievements of the Islamic Emirate in various fields, including comprehensive security, and said he hopes that some existing obstacles, including economic problems might be resolved soon.

Sunami added that to solve the problems of Afghanistan, there is a need to hold various meetings between non-governmental organizations and individuals.

He stated that Afghanistan's problems can be solved by considering different ways, and once they are resolved, the gap between Afghanistan and the world will disappear. The delegation expressed hope for more assistance from Japan through UNAMA for the Afghans.

Sirajuddin Haqqani meanwhile said that Japan has helped Afghans in difficult situations and added that the historical relations between the two countries are positively affected by the deeds of kind and com-

passionate people like the late Tetsu Nakamura.

Haqqani described the visit of experts from Sasakawa Peace Foundation and similar organizations as positive and said that IEA hopes these organizations would present an actual picture of the country's situation to others, leading to good political decisions.

"The restrictions imposed by foreigners cause the tragedy of human needs; however, the basic human needs of Afghans should be evaluated separately from the political issues," Haqqani said.

He added that prolonged political issues can be resolved through dialogue, understanding and bilateral relations.

## UN concerned by dire situation of Afghan children

KABUL (TOLONews): The UN Secretary-General's special representative on Children and Armed Conflict in Afghanistan said in a new report that children in Afghanistan remained highly vulnerable to grave violations, despite an overall decrease in grave violations compared to the last reporting period, following the "takeover of Kabul by the Taliban".

The report, which was released on December 22, 2023, says that children's access to basic services was "disrupted due to protracted conflict, displacement, extreme poverty and food insecurity, lack of livelihood opportunities and lack of investment in public services, and natural disasters, increasing their vulnerability to grave violations such as recruitment and use, sexual violence, school drop-out, and unsafe migration, including forced return from Pakistan."

"The indefinite suspension of girls' secondary and tertiary education affected girls' rights to education and exposed them to heightened risks and harmful coping mechanisms," the report said.

TOLONews profiled 16-year old, Mahboobullah, who is working at a shop in Kabul to support his family of six people. Mahboobullah complained of facing dire economic challenges and urged the Islamic Emirate to help him. "We should study to reach a position and become something in the future. There are a lot of children who are working as shoe polishers or in other fields," he said.

The report also said that overall, 4,519 grave violations against 3,545 children

aged from a few months to 17 years were verified between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2022, with most of them attributed to the Taliban.

But the Islamic Emirate's spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, said that they are supporting the children and that there are no teenagers among the Islamic Emirate's fighters.

"We have had this rule previously that those who are teenagers are not allowed to work. After the Islamic Emirate came to power in

Afghanistan, all of the security departments have professional appointments and there are no teenagers among them," he said.

Virginia, Special Representative of Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict called on "de facto authorities" to reopen schools above grade six to all girls and lift the suspension on girls' secondary education and women's access to university education. "Millions of girls continue to be prevented from attending secondary school," she said.

## Iranian FM meeting with IEA's delegation



TEHRAN (Ariana News): The Iranian foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian held a meeting with a visiting Afghanistan delegation headed by Afghan acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Tehran.

The Afghan delegation arrived in Tehran for an international conference on Palestine.

In his meeting with Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Iranian foreign minister emphasized the need to resolve the outstanding issues between Iran and Afghanistan, including the border and water issues, and expressed hope that the

officials of the Afghan ruling body will take practical steps to resolve the issues.

Meanwhile, foreign ministry says that during the meeting they also emphasized on strengthening the political, economic, commercial and transit relations between the two countries.

In addition, Muttaqi discussed the situation and solving the problems of Afghan prisoners and immigrants in Iran with his Iranian counterpart.

Iran's Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian has assured cooperation in these sectors. At the same time, Amir Khan Muttaqi,

made a visit to the Afghan Embassy in Tehran.

In a video released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muttaqi is seen meeting with the embassy's head, diplomats, and staff, delivering a speech to them.

During the visit, Muttaqi listened to the requests and concerns raised by the embassy staff and assured them addressing their issues. The Afghan acting foreign minister traveled to Iran two days ago upon an official invitation from Iran to participate in an international conference on the Palestinian issue held in Tehran.

## Parisa Azada released from Taliban prison after 40 days



KABUL (Khaama Press): Sources confirmed to Khaama Press that Parisa Azada, a member of one

of the Afghan women's protest movements, has been released from the Taliban administration prison after

40 days and has returned to her family. According to the source, Parisa, who had been arrested on November 14, was released from prison on Tuesday. Local media outlets have also confirmed the news of her release, citing members of the "Afghan Women for Justice and Freedom" movement.

The release of this protesting woman has been widely welcomed by women's rights activists. Sahra Karimi, a filmmaker and former head of Afghan Film, has described Parisa as a "brave and valiant girl."

Tamana Zaryab Paryani, a women's rights activist, also welcomed Parisa's release on the social media platform X, writing:

"We look forward to the release of all prisoners."

The conditions of Parisa Azada's release from the Taliban administration prison and her physical and mental condition have not been disclosed yet, and her relatives have not responded immediately to the calls from Khaama Press. Parisa Azada was arrested on November 14 while printing protest banners in Dasht-e-Barchi, west of Kabul. Julia Parsi, Neda Parwani, and Bahara Karimi, three other protesting women, were also released from the Taliban administration prison on bail in recent weeks, and at least one other protesting woman, Manizha Seddiqi, is still in captivity.

## Hundreds of Afghan migrants return home from Iran

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation of Afghanistan has reported that continuing the trend, hundreds of Afghan migrants have recently returned home from Iran.

The ministry wrote on its X page on Monday that about 590 Afghan migrants resident in Iran returned to the country.

Officials of the Ministry of Refugee Affairs announced that the aforementioned migrants forcibly and voluntarily re-entered the country on Monday.

The ministry added that the returning migrants re-entered the country through the Islam Qala border of

Herat province.

It is worth mentioning that the returnees were registered with the refugee administration for assistance to the offices of the United Nations High Commissioner and the International Organization for Migration.

Recently, the wave of expulsions of Afghan citizens from Iran has intensified, and in most cases, the main reason for the expulsion of Afghan citizens from this country is said to be the lack of legal residency documents.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has stepped up its forced deportation of Afghan citizens since November 1st, coinciding with the onset of

harsh winter conditions and a severe humanitarian crisis within the country.

Pakistani officials justify these expulsions by citing security concerns, asserting that the removal of Afghan citizens is necessary. They maintain that these measures are essential to maintain national safety and order.

In contrast, the Taliban administration vehemently denies these accusations. They assert that they do not permit any activities that would use Afghan territory against neighboring countries, signalling a dispute between the two nations over the treatment and rights of Afghan citizens in Pakistan.

**15 Afghan citizens released from Pakistani prisons:** The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation of Afghanistan has announced the release of 15 Afghan citizens from Pakistani prisons.

On Monday, the Ministry issued a press release stating that 15 imprisoned citizens from Afghanistan have been released from the Quetta prison in Pakistan.

The Ministry's press release mentioned that the prisoners were released on the 23rd of December and have been returned to their country.

The Border Command of Spin Boldak in Kandahar province stated that the

prisoners were initially detained by Pakistani police due to the lack of proper residency documents and were later released and deported from Pakistan.

It is noteworthy that just a week earlier, the Ministry of Refugees had reported the release of 99 Afghan citizens from Pakistani prisons.

While Afghan citizens have previously been arrested and deported from Pakistan for various reasons, Pakistani officials have repeatedly emphasized that the main reason for the arrest of Afghan migrants in their country is the lack of legal residency documents.







ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi visiting the photo exhibition during the speech competition on Quaid Day organized by DEMP at Information Service Academy.

## Palestinians feel ‘no joy’ as Israel bombs Gaza on X-mass

GAZA: Palestinians said they felt “no joy” this Christmas as Israel bombed Gaza on Monday, with no end in sight to the war that Hamas says has claimed more than 20,000 lives. Festivities were effectively scrapped in the occupied West Bank city of Bethlehem, revered as the birthplace of Jesus Christ, with few worshippers or tourists at the usually packed streets.

In the besieged Gaza Strip, the ministry of health said early Monday Israeli strikes had killed at least 18 people in the southern city of Khan Yunis, the center of recent fighting. At a hospital in the city, Fadi Sayegh — whose family has previously received permits to travel to Bethlehem for celebrations — said he would not be celebrating Christmas this year.

“There is no joy. No Christmas tree, no decorations, no family dinner, no celebrations,” he said while undergoing dialysis. “I pray for this war to be over soon.” Sister Nabila Salah from the Catholic Holy Church in Gaza — where two Christian women were killed by an Israeli sniper earlier this month according to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem — struck a somber tone.

“All Christmas celebrations have been canceled,” she told AFP. “How do we celebrate when we are... hearing the sound of tanks and bombardment instead of the ringing of bells?” The war broke out when Hamas fighters attacked southern Israel on October 7 and killed about 1,140 people, mostly civilians, and seized 250 hostages, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures.

Israel has vowed to eliminate Hamas in response and its military campaign, which has included massive aerial bombardment. The campaign has killed 20,424 people, mostly women and children. Pope Francis kicked off global Christmas celebrations on Sunday with a call for peace. “Our heart goes to Gaza, to all people in Gaza but a special attention to our Christian community in Gaza who is suffering,” the Catholic leader said. Vast areas of Gaza lie in ruins and its 2.4 million people have endured dire shortages of water, food, fuel and medicine due to an Israeli siege, alleviated only by the limited arrival of aid trucks. Eighty percent of Gazans have been displaced, according to the

## Netanyahu heckled inside parliament by families of Hamas captives

GAZA: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been heckled and booed by the families of captives held by Hamas in Gaza during an address to parliament. “Now! Now!” the families chanted from the gallery on Monday when Netanyahu promised to bring the captives home but added that he has been told by Israeli field commanders that “more time” was needed.

“We wouldn’t have succeeded up until now to release more than 100 hostages without military pressure,” Netanyahu said. “And we won’t succeed at releasing all the hostages without military pressure.” A deal brokered in late November by the United States, Qatar and Egypt saw the release of more than 100 of the estimated 240 captives taken to Gaza during attacks by Hamas on October 7 on southern Israel. Israel says 129 captives are still held in Gaza. Three of them were mistakenly killed by Israeli forces this month. “We won’t stop until victory,” Netanyahu said over the cries of the protesters in parliament. The family members of the captives sat in the chamber looking down on the prime minister, holding posters of their relatives behind the Plexiglass of the gallery and intermittently interrupting him.

Netanyahu’s address came after his Likud party reported that he visited the Gaza Strip on Monday and promised to ramp up Israel’s assault there. Shortly after his return, Netanyahu said the war was far from over. He said it was false media speculation that his government might end the fighting. “We’re not stopping. We’re continuing to fight, and we’re intensifying the fighting in the coming days. It’s going to be a long war that’s not close to ending,” the Israeli leader said. Israel’s Ministry of Finance said the war, which it foresees lasting through February, will likely incur an additional cost of at least \$14bn in the 2024 budget. Meanwhile, about three months of Israeli bombardment has killed more than 20,674 Palestinians and wounded 54,536 – most of them women and children. — Aljazeera

UN, many fleeing south and now shielding against the winter cold in makeshift tents.

The head of the UN refugee agency, Filippo Grandi, called for an end to the suffering. “A humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza is the only way forward,” he wrote on X, formerly Twitter. “War defies logic and humanity, and prepares a future of more hatred and less peace.” World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also renewed calls for a cease-fire, saying: “The decimation of the Gaza health system is a tragedy.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the war was exacting a “very heavy price,” as the death toll of soldiers killed in the conflict continued to mount. “But we have no choice but to keep fighting,” he said, adding: “This will be a long war.” The army said Monday two more soldiers had been killed, taking to 17 the number of troops killed since Friday and 156 since Israel’s ground assault began on October 27.

Israeli military spokesman

Jonathan Conricus indicated that forces were close to gaining control in northern Gaza and that now “we focus our efforts against Hamas in southern Gaza.” Two freed detainees and a medic said Sunday that Palestinians held by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip had suffered torture, a charged denied by the military. The two men were among hundreds detained by Israeli forces over alleged links with Hamas during Israel’s ground offensive.

About 20 men released from Israeli custody “have bruises and marks of blows on their bodies,” Marwan Al-Hams, hospital director in the southern city of Rafah, told AFP. Meanwhile, the Jordanian military field hospitals in the besieged Gaza Strip stand as the primary, and often the “only,” fully functional medical facilities in this war-torn area. They have transcended their medical roles, evolving into sanctuaries for Gazans who seek refuge amid the relentless Israeli bombardment of their territory. — Arab News

## Egypt sets out ambitious Israel-Gaza ceasefire plan

CAIRO: Egypt has presented what is described as an ambitious plan to end the war in Gaza with a cease-fire. The proposal, which was presented to Israel, Hamas, the United States and European governments on Monday would see Israel fully withdraw from the Gaza Strip, all captives held by Hamas, and many Palestinian prisoners, freed, and a united technocratic Palestinian government installed in the enclave.

The proposal, developed with the Gulf state of Qatar, includes several rounds of captive and prisoner exchanges, reports Al Jazeera’s Bernard Smith from Tel Aviv. In the first phase, Hamas would free all civilian captives in return for the release of Palestinian prisoners over a truce of 7-10 days. During the second stage, Hamas would release all female Israeli soldiers in return for more Palestinian prisoners, taking place during another weeklong truce.

In the final phase, the warring parties would engage in “a month of negotiations to discuss the release of all military personnel held by Hamas in exchange for a lot more [Palestinian] prisoners and Israel pulling back to Gaza’s borders”, said Smith. Close to 8,000 Palestinians are held by Israel on security-related charges or convictions, according to Palestinian figures.

Throughout the cease-fire, Egypt would also lead talks to reunite Palestinian factions Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, who would then jointly appoint a government of experts to run the West Bank and Gaza, ahead of future elections, reports The Times of Israel. The plan appears to be preliminary, and there are already suggestions that it could struggle to gain traction with either side.

Israel’s war cabinet was due to discuss the proposal on Monday, even as its military continued pounding Gaza over the Christmas holiday, killing at least 100 Palestinians within 12 hours. Experts noted that the cabinet, which has been under intense pressure to bring home the remaining captives, is divided and may struggle to accept some of the deal’s terms. “One challenge is a cease-fire versus a truce,” Mohammed Cherkaoui, a professor of conflict resolution at George Mason University, told Al Jazeera. “Palestinians are talking about a full-fledged cease-fire. The Israelis are hearing a ‘truce,’ a pause.” — Arab News

## ECP issues guidelines

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has laid down the law on campaign materials, dictating a strict size code for banners, posters, and portraits of political hopefuls.

Gone are the days of towering portraits looming over the city skyline. Forget about wall-to-wall posters plastering every available surface. The new campaign game in town is all about keeping it concise and contained.

ECP has issued guidelines, the posters no bigger than a medium pizza (18 inches x 23 inches), handbills the size of a postcard (9 inches x 6 inches), and banners that wouldn’t even cover a standard door (3 feet x 9 inches). Portraits get slightly more breathing room, allowed to be up to 2 feet long and 3 feet wide, but even they have to stay within respectable limits.

It’s about keeping the campaign clutter under control and ensuring a level playing field. No more visual intimidation with larger-than-life depictions. No more drowning out opponents with a sea of oversized propaganda. With everyone adhering to the same size restrictions, the focus can shift to the actual message rather than the visual bombast.

Some lament the limitations on creative expression, the inability to make their candidate stand out in a sea of similarly sized faces. But others see it as a refreshing change, a chance to let ideas and policies do the talking instead of visual dominance.

The upcoming elections in Islamabad will be a sight to behold – not for the scale of the campaign materials, but for the creativity and ingenuity it sparks within the confines of these newly defined dimensions.

# Bilawal vows to turn difficulties into opportunities

F.P. Report

SHAHEED BENAZIRABAD: Chairman Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has termed the economic crisis, climate breakdown and growing population as a challenging situation for the nation, but has also reiterated his resolve, saying, “We will turn our difficulties into opportunities. Problems can be solved by working together and utilizing the country’s resources.”

Addressing the annual function of Bakhtawar Cadet College for Women as Chief Guest, PPP Chairman said that the future of the country is the youth of Pakistan. He said that “if the politics of division, hatred and abuse are buried”, Pakistan’s problems can be solved. “Pakistan is currently facing many difficulties,” he said, adding that on the one hand there are threats caused by the economic crisis and climate change, on the other hand there is the pressure of problems arising due to the growing population in the country.

He said that the ideology of Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, ‘Roti, Kapra Aur Makan’, is as much needed today as it may not have been before. He said that due to climate change, our region is under threat due to the melting of snow in the Himalayan range, and added: “in the years to come, there will be floods first and after some time (as the snow melts in the Himalayan range) the people here will suffer from thirst.” He said that Pakistan is the fifth largest country in the world in terms of population. “70% of our population consists of youth, whose needs include education, employment and health,” he added.

Chairman PPP, while discussing the solutions to the problems facing the country, said that the incoming government will first have to take responsibility to double the salaries to fight inflation during its five-year term. “Pakistan is an agricultural country, and we all know that if the farmers are prosperous, the whole of Pakistan will be prosperous,” he said, adding that PPP intends to take measures for the prosperity of farmers across Pakistan. The PPP government will introduce Kisan Card for farmers, Mazdoor Card for laborers and Youth Card for youth. He said that instead of giving the subsidy of billions of rupees to the mill owners through the said cards, the funds will directly reach the backward working classes. “The first right to workers in Pakistan was given by the Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto,” he recalled.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that provision of education and employment opportunities by the government is the right of the youth, adding that vocational training facilities will be provided to the youth along with financial support through Youth Card and Youth Centers. He vowed that youth centers will be established in every district with digital library, free Wi-Fi facility, vocational training and career counseling as well as cultural and sports facilities, adding that steps will be taken at the government level for the



SHAHEED BENAZIRABAD: Chairman Pakistan People’s Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing during convocation ceremony at Bakhtawar Cadet Collage for Girls.

## Election 2024: ECP receives over 28,000 papers from candidates

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: With the deadline for the submission of nomination papers expiring on Sunday, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has received a total of 28,626 nomination papers from prospective candidates across the country aiming to contest upcoming polls slated for February 8, 2024.

As per the ECP’s data, 7,242 men along with 471 women have filed nomination papers for national assembly seats (general), whereas for provincial assemblies, the number stands at 17,744 and 802, respectively. The ECP is currently scrutinizing the nomination papers filed by the candidates with the stage set to culminate on December 30 (Saturday). Meanwhile, appeals against the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers can be submitted by January 3, and decisions on these appeals will be made by January 10. The top electoral body will issue the list of candidates on January 11, with candidates having the option to withdraw until January 12 i.e., before the ECP allots electoral symbol on January 13.

As per the data shared by the ECP, a total of 459 and

1,365 nomination papers have been received by the electoral body for the reserved seats for national and provincial legislature, respectively.

Meanwhile, on the reserved seats for non-muslims, 361 men and 32 women have submitted their nomination papers for provincial assemblies. For national assembly seats, the number stands at 140 and 10, respectively. A total of 7,713 people have submitted their nomination papers for national assembly seats (general), with the number standing at 18,546 for provincial assemblies (general).

The ECP received a total of 6,498 nomination papers in the province, with 1,681 candidates seeking to contest polls for the national assembly (general), whereas 4,265 nomination papers were submitted for provincial assembly seats (general). A total of 427 nomination papers were filed for women’s reserved seats, along with 125 who seek to contest polls from the reserved seats for non-muslims in the province.

A total of 5,278 nomination papers have been filed in the province, with 1,322 candidates seeking to contest polls for the national assembly

(general), whereas 3,464 nomination papers were submitted for provincial assembly seats (general). A total of 418 nomination papers were filed for women’s reserved seats, along with 74 non-Muslims applying to contest elections from their respective reserved seats.

The top electoral body received a total of 2,669 nomination papers of which 631 were for general national assembly seats, whereas 1,788 were for general provincial assembly seats. Meanwhile, 183 women along with 67 non-Muslims submitted nomination papers for their reserved seats, respectively.

The province saw a total of 13,823 nomination papers being filed with 3,871 and 9,029 nomination papers being filed for national and provincial assembly seats (general), respectively. A total of 796 and 127 people filed their nomination papers for the reserved seats for women and non-Muslims, respectively. The federal capital saw a total of 208 people submitting their nomination papers for the national assembly (general), whereas 150 nomination papers were filed on the reserved seats for non-Muslims.