

ECP dismisses plea
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday dismissed the plea seeking the removal of the interim federal minister, Fawad Hassan Fawad, from his post due to épolitical affiliation. The petition filed by the high court advocate Syed Aziz Uddin Kaka Khel, prompted the election commission to address this matter.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX

No. 341

Regd. No. 241

JAMADI-US-SANNI 16 1445 -- FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29 2023

PESHAWAR EDITION

08 PAGES

PRICE. 30

Baloch protesters give govt 7-day ultimatum to meet demands

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), one of the groups organising the Baloch protest march in Islamabad, on Thursday issued a seven-day ultimatum to the government to meet all its demands or the movement would put forth its case before the Baloch people.

Dr Mahrang Baloch, one of the organisers of the protest that is demanding an end to enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings of their community, said in an Islamabad press conference today that the government was being given a week for negotiations on the following demands.

Dr Mahrang said that a fact-finding mission head-ded by a UN Working Group should be sent for a detailed investigation into rights violations in Balochistan, an agreement should be signed under the auspices of the Working Group for the elimination of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, all victims of enforced disappearances should be immediately released, restrictions should be put on the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and "state-sponsored death squads" should be eliminated as well. She further demanded that the Ministry of Interior should "confess" to the alleged deaths of disappeared persons in fake encounters, adding that an acknowledgement letter be issued regarding this and a press conference held with the names of all victims.

Dr Mahrang also said that fake cases against all peaceful protesters should be taken back. "If the state does not hold sincere negotiations on the above demands and does not show seriousness and if the treatment of the past week with protesters continues then after seven days, the movement will express its disappointment with all state institutions against state policies of genocide and treating Balochistan like a colony, and put its case before the Baloch people."

She added that the Baloch people would then be the ones to decide matters. Dr Mahrang said the state would have to make clear in the week to the people how serious it was about the "Baloch genocide". She said the state would have to practically prove and end all human rights violations and

34 remaining Baloch protesters finally released after negotiations

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The caretaker federal government on Thursday released 34 more Baloch protesters who had been arrested during a police crackdown in Islamabad last week.

A declaration stated that all detained Baloch protesters have been released on the advice of the negotiation committee constituted by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. It added that the arrested marchers were released after fulfilling the legal requirements. The PM's negotiation team — headed by caretaker Privatisation Minister Fawad Hasan Fawad — held talks with the protesters. The marchers had demanded the immediate release of the arrested persons. After the first round of talks, the government had ordered to release of all the protesting women, who were taken into custody during the police crackdown. It is pertinent to mention here that the people were protesting against the "extra-judicial killing" of a Baloch youth by the Counter-Terrorism Department officials in Turbat earlier this month.

illegal measures in Balochistan. "The decision will be in the court of the Baloch people if the state is not ready to change its colonial mindset."

At the outset of her press conference, Dr Mahrang alleged that the state was exerting power over the past week to bring the Baloch sit-in to an end. Criticising the brutal treatment meted out to the protesters by the police and the administration, she remarked how the events took place in the federal capital instead of some backwater area of Balochistan.

"No person should now be under any doubt or suspicion of the state violence against the Baloch." She said how the state had treated the protesters "like enemies" and elements had harassed their camp in the night provided that "the state is using every kind of measure against the Baloch." Lashing out at some from the journalistic community too, she said when the state action failed, "state personnel in the garb of journalism" were used to "torture" the protesters by attempting to create a false narrative.

"The whole of Balochistan is in the grip of state violence and barbarism currently and every day there seems to be an increase in this. When the state treats peaceful protesters like this in front of the global media then you can understand what the state's behaviour is without the presence of the media or the internet." She said Baloch people across the country had come out to the streets and demonstrated to the state that the community would no longer accept "state terrorism".

Criticising the government, she said on the one hand it talked about negotiations to solve issues and on the other hand, the protesters were subjected to violence, arrests and abductions. Dr Mahrang said the Islamabad police had lied about releasing all protesters, adding that the reality was that all of them were still not released.

The BYC earlier today accused the police of sabotaging their seminar preparations in the capital, by allegedly switching off their sound system. The BYC also shared videos of police at the venue outside the National Press Club. In one of the videos, Dr Mahrang can be heard requesting a policeman to leave and not disrupt their programme.

Rights activist Sammi Deen Baloch posted a video of the speakers being forcefully taken away as a crowd looked on. At the venue, one of the organisers, Saira, from Khuzdar said: "We were going to hold a press conference but the police tried to take away the speakers and the participants."

"The police and the administration are panicking. There is no household in Balochistan that has not found a mutilated body. Institutions make our household members disappear before our very eyes." She lamented that previously mutilated bodies would be found, but now people are being "killed in fake encounters". Dr Mahrang and Sammi also posted videos of a verbal confrontation with an Islamabad police officer.

JUI-F to hold CJP, CEC responsible if party comes under attack

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: While raising security concerns ahead of the February 8 polls, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) said Thursday it would hold Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja responsible if the party's workers came under attacks during electioneering.

In a press conference in Islamabad, JUI-F Emir Maulana Fazlur Rehman said his party was still reeling from the Bajaur blast, which resulted in the deaths of more than 40 workers, and banners were put in cities warning people against participating in JUI-F's rallies. The elections will be staged on February 8, 2024, but several political actors have warned that there are security threats to the polls and given the recent rise in terrorism, they demanded that the law and order situation should be conducive.

"Cautioning against security threats does not mean that we're against elections. I have struggled for elections for more than three years; it is my right that my party's given a good security environment," Fazl, whose party was part of the previous government, said. Terrorism has been on the rise in the South Asian nation ever since the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan called off its truce with Islamabad and began targeting military personnel, especially in KP and Balochistan. The Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies's data shows that there were 623 militant attacks in 2023, as compared to 380 such attacks in 2022. Among total attacks in 2023, 29 were suicide attacks; whereas in 2022, 15 were suicide attacks.

Turning his guns on the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the Supreme Court, he said three judges summoned the CEC and directed him to file an appeal before the apex court for polls. "If the election schedule was to be issued on court's directions, then when will the election commission become independent," Fazl wondered, terming the current situation as a "judicial martial law".

It is pertinent to mention here that the ECP had filed a petition in the apex court after detailed deliberations, the court's senior judges and government officials, on following which the top court ordered that no hindrances should be put forth in the way of polls moving forward. The JUI-F chief added: "If even one of my workers is injured, [I will hold] chief justice and chief election commissioner responsible."

Fazl added that when the security situation and weather were not favourable, then it would ultimately impact the elections. "What will happen when the turnout will be impacted due to the weather," he wondered. Moving on, Fazl said if political actors' nomination papers were being snatched, it was "not right", but noted that nothing wrong was being done to the PTI.

Army to assist ECP in holding election

Army Commanders resolve that terrorists will be dealt with full might

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) presided over the two days long 261st Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) held at GHQ, on Thursday.

Forum paid rich tribute to the supreme sacrifices of Shuhadas including officers and men of the Armed Forces, Law Enforcement Agencies and Citizens who laid their lives for ensuring peace and stability in the country. Participants also offered Fateha for the Shuhadas including those of DI Khan attack. Forum reiterated Pakistan Army's resolve to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan against direct and indirect threats.

Forum expressed serious concern over continued repression and reprehensible human rights violations by Indian military forces in IIOJK. The recent acts of abduction, torture and killing of civilians by the Indian Army were unequivocally condemned by the participants. Such acts constitute grave crimes against humanity and cannot dampen the spirit of the brave Kashmiris who are struggling for their lawful right of self-determination. Pakistan would keep supporting its Kashmiri brethren with all political,



moral and diplomatic support for resolution of Kashmir issue according to international law and relevant UNSC resolutions.

Forum was briefed on prevalent geo-strategic environment, challenges to national security and own strategy in response to evolving threat. The sanctuaries and liberty of action available to the terrorists of proscribed TTP and other groups of that ilk in a neighboring country and availability of latest weapons to the terrorists were noted as serious points of concern impacting security of Pakistan.

Forum resolved that all terrorists, their facilitators and abettors, working on the behalf of hostile forces to destabilise Pakistan will be dealt with full might of the state. The forum expressed full solidarity with the people of Palestine and condemned serious human rights violations and war crimes being perpetrated in Gaza while reiterating Government's stance of demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and peaceful resolution of the

ongoing conflict.

Forum reiterated its support for ongoing efforts to promote socioeconomic growth and encouraging foreign investment under the umbrella of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). Forum also took holistic review of the ongoing actions being taken against smuggling, money laundering, power theft and hoarding of essential items amongst other illegal economic activities. Pakistan Army will continue to provide all out support to relevant government institutions and LEAs to curb such crimes. The Forum also noted that requisite and necessary support will also be extended to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for forthcoming general elections.

The forum was briefed on operational preparedness of the formations. COAS stressed the need for continuously maintaining operational excellence in cognitive and physical realms and pursuit of high standards of motivation and training.

Qureshi sent to jail on judicial remand

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who was manhandled and re-arrested outside the Adiala Jail a day earlier, told a Rawalpindi court on Thursday that he was "physically and mentally tortured" in prison last night.

The PTI leader said this while recording his statement during a hearing at the Rawalpindi Judicial Complex. Qureshi was released from Adiala Jail on Wednesday after the Supreme Court had approved his post-arrest bail in the cipher case. However, the PTI leader, who tried to talk to the Punjab police on multiple occasions, was pushed and whisked away from the prison.

It was later found out that the former foreign minister was arrested in connection with a case pertaining to the attack on the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi on May 9. He was initially moved to the Cantt police station by the police, who maltreated him. Today, Qureshi was brought to the court of Duty Magistrate Syed Jahangir Ali in an armoured police van. A video shared by the PTI on social media showed policemen escorting a handcuffed Qureshi.

Speaking to media persons ahead of the hearing,

the PTI leader's daughter Meher Bano Qureshi expressed displeasure at the security arrangement made outside the court. "It seems as if they are presenting a terrorist," she said. "No one is allowed to enter the Judicial Complex," Meher Bano pointed out, adding that the police's behaviour was disappointing.

Talking about Wednesday's arrest, she said the scenes had created a "joke out of Pakistan in a neighbouring country". "Even the neighbouring country would be wondering how a former foreign minister is being treated," Meher Bano added. As the hearing commenced, Qureshi said he wanted to record his statement before the court. He highlighted that three judges of the apex court had approved his bail against surety bonds.

However, the PTI leader highlighted that before he could obtain the robkar (release order), it emerged that orders had been issued to detain Qureshi under the Maintenance of Public Order. "How am I a threat to the public? I have been in jail for several months," Qureshi said. He added that he had been told in Adiala Jail that the MPO orders against him would be withdrawn but the date was later extended to Dec 27 instead of Dec 26. Qureshi said he

had been detained from inside Adiala Jail illegally, highlighting that he had been a member of the Parliament five times. The PTI leader further stated that police officials had kicked and ridiculed him, claiming that he wasn't taken to a doctor despite multiple requests.

"A team came to me saying that they wanted to record a statement on the May 9 violence. These people want to nominate me in cases related to May 9," he said. "I was in Karachi on May 9 ... my wife was undergoing surgery (that day)." The PTI vice chairman also alleged that he was kept in a cold cell last night and wasn't allowed to sleep. "I was tortured mentally and physically," he claimed.

Meanwhile, the prosecutor sought a three-day physical remand of Qureshi. He argued that remand in terrorism cases could be taken for even 90 days, adding that he had reports from the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority. In a two-page letter to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday, Meher Bano asked the chief election commissioner to ensure level playing for her father and prevent his political victimisation at the hands of the police.

Qureshi defended Talpur's arrest: Bilawal



F.P. Report

SUKKUR: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that incarcerated PTI vice chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi defended Faryal Talpur's arrest during the PTI tenure.

Addressing a press conference in Sukkur, Bilawal stated that when former president Asif Ali Zardari and PPP leader Faryal Talpur were arrested, the then Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood said that the 'institutions are free' to make their decisions.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari further said that PPP doesn't believe in politics of revenge and condemn arresting political leaders. The former foreign minister urged PTI to abandon the enmity and hate in their politics. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari denied any incident of snatching nomination papers in Sukkur and Larkana saying that authorities should take notice of such incident as no one can be stopped from contesting elections. Bilawal said that they were not afraid of the election, rather they would fully participate in the democratic process to get the people's mandate.

Solidarity with Palestinians: PM bans New Year celebrations

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday announced that in view of the shocking situation in Palestine, the Government of Pakistan had completely banned all kinds of events regarding the New Year celebrations to express solidarity with the oppressed Palestinians.

He also urged the general public to show solidarity with the oppressed people of Gaza and observe simplicity at the beginning of the New Year. The prime minister, in a special televised message, said that the entire Pakistani nation and the Muslim Ummah were deeply saddened by the genocide of the oppressed Palestinians, especially the massacre of innocent children, in Gaza and the West Bank.

"Since October 7, 2023, more than 21,000 innocent Palestinians have been martyred by the brutal Israeli forces, including a large number of innocent children - around 9,000," the prime minister remarked. He said to stop the Israeli bloodshed, Pakistan had raised its voice for the oppressed Palestinians at every world forum and it would always continue to do so in future as well.

PM Kakar pointed out that Pakistan had sent two consignments of relief goods for the Palestinian brothers and sisters, while the third one would be dispatched soon. Likewise, he said, the Government of Pakistan was in close contact with Egypt and Jordan for the provision of timely relief to the Palestinians, besides evacuation of the injured from Gaza and their treatment.

The prime minister prayed to Allah Almighty that the New Year might dawn with the message of peace, prosperity and harmony for Pakistan and rest of the world.

Role of Ulema inevitable to eradicate polio, save future generation: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar calling the anti-vaxxers ill-fated people, urged the Ulema to stand against those spreading negative propaganda on the polio vaccine to make Pakistan achieve the goal of becoming a polio-free nation.

"The people, who call polio vaccine un-Islamic are ill-fated. You have to stand with us against such people. This is our collective fight. We owe it to our future generation," the prime minister said addressing the National Ulama Conference on Polio Eradication here.

Attended by the Ulema from different schools of thought, cabinet members, diplomats and donors, the conference featured the adoption of a declaration that

rejected the baseless propaganda against the polio vaccine and assured the Ulema's all-out support to the government in its fights against the crippling virus. The prime minister thanked the donors and supporters on behalf of the entire nation for their assistance to Pakistan in its fight against polio, reiterating the country's resolve to eliminate the disease without showing any laxity.

"I feel ashamed when I see a polio-crippled child because we put him in a situation that could have been avoided," he remarked. He urged the Ulema to follow the guiding Islamic principle of probing before believing any notion in the case of polio vaccine as well as it would enhance the effectiveness of their message from the pulpit.

"Don't our children have a right to live a healthy life and enjoy Allah's blessings as others do? This is their fundamental human right. Their right is our responsibility," Prime Minister Kakar said. He said the real challenge was to convey the message to pulpits in the remote areas and at the grassroots level.

Coming to the Gaza situation and the killing of around 9,000 children by Israeli forces, he called it a sheer failure of humanity as instead of being declared a criminal, the killer was claiming to be a leader. Likening the killing of children in Gaza with the acts of Pharaoh, he said either Israel should give up calling itself the follower of Moses or leave the footsteps of Pharaoh.

In his address, Caretaker Health Minister Dr Nadeem Jan said at the conference, the Ulema agreed and resolved to keep supporting the government's efforts in polio eradication besides promoting the messages on other health issues. He said besides its deadly impacts on children, the polio disease was also a burden on the national national exchequer. This also raises questions on the national dignity, he remarked.

He said that considering it a national emergency, it was the duty of every individual particularly Ulema to play their role in making Pakistan a polio-free nation. He also paid tribute to the polio workers who served the very noble cause against a meager financial benefit. Prime Minister's Special Representative on Religious Harmony and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Muslim Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi read out the declaration of the conference in which the Ulema unanimously declared the polio vaccine as permissible for children's safe future as it carried no harmful ingredients thus having no adverse impact on health.



Customs thwart drug smuggling attempt

ISLAMABAD (APP): The collectorate of customs has thwarted an attempt to smuggle a substantial amount of drugs from Karachi airport to Saudia Arabia. The customs officials said that amphetamine drugs worth Rs 6 million in the international market were seized from the luggage of a Jeddah-bound passenger, according to a private news channel on Thursday. Later, upon inquiry, the passenger was also arrested, and a case was registered against him, it added.

IRSA releases 32,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 32,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 36,800 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1475.92 feet and was 75.92 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16,500 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1156.10 feet, which was 106.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 6,100 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 16,400, 20,000, 21,400 and zero cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,100 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 6,700 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

LDA to give possession of Jinnah Sector C Block

LAHORE (APP): In a significant development for the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) City residents, Commissioner Lahore and Director General (DG) LDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa announced on Thursday that possession of Jinnah Sector C Block's plots would be handed over on Saturday. The first phase includes allocating possessions for over 1,500 plots in C Block, ranging from 5 to 10 marlas and one to two kanals.

Under Commissioner Lahore's leadership, a crucial meeting was held to discuss the important matter of granting possession of plots in LDA City Jinnah Sector C Block. The 1,200-kanal C Block also features a park, sports complex, cricket stadium, and various other amenities. The structure of Chanab Road's tower has been completed, finishing work is ongoing, and the facilitation centre is progressing rapidly.

The two senior officials said that advertisements would be issued for acquisition of the remaining lands in Jinnah Sector. He emphasised that following the directives of the Punjab chief minister, the administrative issue of LDA City's plots had been resolved.

1410 Aero Apprentices passed out at PAF Airmen Academy Korangi Creek

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Passing out Parade of Aero Apprentices was held at PAF Airmen Academy, Korangi Creek, Karachi, today. Air Marshal Irfan Ahmad, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Air Defence), Pakistan Air Force, was Chief Guest at the occasion. Earlier, Air Vice Marshal Syed Imran Majid Ali, Air Officer Commanding, PAF Academy Korangi Creek, received the Chief Guest. A total of 1410 Aero Apprentices including 66 trainees from Pakistan Navy and 01 trainee from Sri Lanka have successfully completed their technical training.

While addressing the ceremony, the chief guest said, "PAF is a highly professional organization that is venerated as a combat efficient force and has

always come up to the expectations of the nation during testing times through its historic valour, operational preparedness and professional excellence". He further said that PAF is equipped with state-of-the-art weaponry and has full potential to defend the aerial boundaries of the motherland.

The chief guest emphasized that the current security scenario calls for a fully harmonized training of PAF workforce that is fully capable of protecting and maintaining its next generation defence assets. He congratulated the graduating airmen and wished them a bright future and success in their upcoming professional assignments. Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Air Defence) also commended the Academy Instructional Staff for their sincere endeavors and commitment

to the cause of training.

Later, the worthy chief guest awarded trophies to the distinction holders. Chief of the Air Staff Trophy for Overall Best Performance was awarded to Aircraftman Talha Usman whereas Asghar Khan Trophy for the Overall Best Performance in Aeronautics was clinched by Aircraftman Muhammad Arslan. Nur Khan Trophy for the Best in Avionics Technology was conferred upon Aircraftman Talha Usman whereas Air Officer Commanding Trophy for the Best Performance in General Service Training was awarded to Academy Sergeant Aircraftman Anees Ur Rehman. The Trophy for Best Performance in foreign trainees was lifted by LAC Abeykoon ABMS from Sri Lanka.



Plan ready for promoting farm mechanization

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Agriculture Department has prepared a comprehensive plan for promotion of farm mechanization in the province.

Under the plan, 22 types of machinery including tractors and harvesters, would be provided to farmers at subsidised rates.

The plan was reviewed in a meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman at Civil Secretariat, here on Thursday. The Agriculture secretary and officers concerned attended the meeting.

The chief secretary said that agriculture was the backbone of the country's economy and the Punjab government was taking all possible steps to improve this important

sector in the province. He said that increase in productivity is not possible without the use of modern technology, adding that the farm mechanization would increase crop production and reduce losses. The CS mentioned that the use of machinery to destroy crop residues would also help control smog.

Agriculture Secretary Nader Chatta gave a detailed briefing at the meeting. He said that the use of modern machinery in sowing and harvesting crops would increase the agricultural production significantly. He said that due to non-use of modern machinery, there is a loss of 3 million tons in wheat and 3.6 million tons in rice yield.

Tribute paid to Dr. Majeed Abel for his 30 years of peace services

LAHORE (APP): An interfaith ceremony was held in Nolakha Presbyterian Church to celebrate the birthday of Moderator Rev. Dr. Majeed Abel.

Chairman National Commission for Interfaith Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw, Chairman Kul Masalik Board Asim Makhdoom, Khatib Data Darbar Ramzan Sialvi, Pir Syed Usman Noori, Professor Syed Mahmood Ghaznavi, Mufti Syed Ashiq Hussain, Dr. Kanwal Firoz, Allama Qari Khalid Mahmood, Officers of the Public Relations Department and well-known singer Waris Baig specially attended the ceremony.

Leaders of different religions, political and social personalities expressed their views and paid rich tribute to Dr. Majeed Abel for his thirty years services for the promotion of peace.

Dr. Majeed Abel thanked everyone and said, "Everyone's gathering has increased happiness and the participation of all proves that we are all one, are Pakistanis first." He said that all the minorities living

in Pakistan participated for the establishment of Pakistan, adding that happily, all the minorities living here have equal rights. Makhdoom Asim, head of Kul Masalik Board, while expressing his views, said that Nolakha Church has a unique status, adding, peace and love were always promoted from here.

Ramzan Sialvi said that inter-faith harmony is the need of the hour. The whole world is desirous of peace. "We must strive for united peace," he added.

Mufti Ashiq Hussain said that the purpose of interfaith events is to tell the world that there is peace in Pakistan, while substantial work is being done to promote interfaith tolerance, including the rights of minorities. Prof. Mahmood Ghaznavi, Mufti Ashiq Hussain and others also spoke on the occasion. Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw offered a special prayer for the development and prosperity of the beloved country Pakistan and peace around the world.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed addressing a Hajj Balloting 2024 at Karachi Press Club.

CM directs MDA to start uplift work on housing scheme of nullah affectees

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar presided over a meeting to finalise the development of a township at Taiser Town for the affected people of Gujjar, Mahmoodabad, and Orangi Nullah and directed the local govt dept to get the internal development started.

The meeting was held at the CM House on Thursday and was attended by Minister Local Govt Mubin Jumanji, Minister Law Omar Soomro, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Dr Fakhre Alam, Secretary Local Govt Manzoor Shaikh, Secretary Finance Kazim Jatoti, Secretary Law Ali Ahmad Baloch, Commissioner Karachi Saleem

Rajput, DG MDA Naseem Sahto and other concerned officers.

Secretary Local Government Manzoor Shaikh briefing the chief minister said that a piece of 137.74 acres have been allocated for the 6500 affected people of Gujjar, Mahmoodabad, and Orangi Nullahs at Taiser Town Scheme -45, Sector 16 of Malir Development Authority.

The Sindh government will allot a plot measuring 80 square yards to each affected person/family and after handing over the possession of the plot, with title and free from all encumbrances, the cost of construction will also be paid to the affected persons. The chief minister directed the MDA to engage an architect so that proper develop-

ment of the housing scheme for the nullah-affected people. He directed the MDA to develop a park, a playground, a school, and a mosque for the housing scheme and equip it with all the utility facilities such as gas, water and electricity. Justice Baqar directed the finance department to release the funds so that the inner and outer development of the housing scheme could be started. He added that he would personally visit the area to ascertain if the quality work was being done.

The CM directed the MDA to start the development work and try to get it down within six months. "We are already very late to accommodate the affected people and now it must be done on war footing," he said.

Aneeq for sensitizing youth to promote interfaith harmony in society

KARACHI (APP): The caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Aneeq Ahmed, Thursday, underscored need to impart awareness to youth to promote interfaith harmony in society.

He was addressing a seminar titled "Religious Minorities and Interfaith Harmony, Social Tolerance in Pakistan" organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony in collaboration with NED University of Engineering and Technology as part of efforts aimed at sensitizing youth in higher educational institutions.

Religious scholars, academicians, and intellectuals addressed the seminar and stressed cultivating and nurturing virtuous values of tolerance, tranquillity, and respect for each others' beliefs. The federal minister Aneeq Ahmed said that love for religion was a part of life for every Muslim in the world and their hearts were filled with utmost love for Allah. His Rasool S.A.W, Quran and Islam which could not be vitiated.

"Our hearts are the abode of Allah and there should be no space for impurities like envy, prejudice, hatred and violence," he remarked. A person who loves and reveres the Quran should also comprehend and follow its message that emphasizes on dignity of a human life and declares the murder of an individual as the assassination of entire humanity and protecting a human life as saving humanity, he argued.

All the Pakistanis irrespective of their religion and beliefs were guaranteed equal rights under the constitution, he said adding that the Pakistani nation was living with harmony in a culture embedded with values of peaceful coexistence, tolerance and mutual respect. Economic turbulence, low literacy rate, poverty and other factors have been affecting the social fabric of the society and extremism has found a way to sneak in, he observed and said that strengthening the economy was among the core responsibilities of the state. Aneeq Ahmed recalled that after the occurrence of the unfortunate incident of Jaranwala the entire Muslim population of the surroundings reached for the help of the affected Christian community along with Ulema and state functionaries and even doors of Masjid were opened to provide shelter to the affected families.

He further said that incidents like Jaranwala will not be tolerated as they were against the spirit of Islam and law was in place to deal with the perpetrators. The minister urged that in this era of disinformation, people must verify if they hear about any such happening that hurts their religious sentiments and act cautiously instead of taking the law in hand by resorting to vehement reaction and violence. The minister commended the role of society and Ulema for raising voices against intolerance in society and said that mass awareness events on interfaith harmony are being organized in universities as well as in Masjid and we need to arrange such events in places like churches. The sight of a vibrant and talented young generation reinforces

our belief that the future of Pakistan is bright and glowing. Aneeq Ahmed said and urged the students to collect the pearls of wisdom and disseminate light of intellect in the society.

Cardinal Joseph Coutts, Cardinal Pope of the Vatican at Archdiocese of Karachi, said that everyone has their own identity and every society must be inclusive and harmonious so that everyone can live in an environment of peaceful coexistence. He also prayed that this harmony prevail always in Pakistan.

Notable religious scholar and Muhtamim Darul Uloom Naeemia Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman stated that there was no concept of forced conversion of religion in Islam rather it was an unacceptable act.

Investigation and inquiry must be made in the reported cases of forced conversions, he said and assured his assistance in any case of repression or forced conversion.

Mufti Muneeb ur Rehman said that it was our principled demand that the religious sanctity of our religion must not be violated and no one should be allowed to take the law in hands.

Renowned scholar and former member Council of Islamic Ideology Dr. Mohsin Naqvi, said that injustice and foul playing create intolerance in the society. Emotional aspects of religion should go hand in glove with the intellectual aspects, he added. Taking part in the discussion Bishop of Karachi and Balochistan Diocese Bishop Fredrick John said that words influence our behavior so we must change certain terminologies to remove negativity from our minds.

PFA shuts confectionery unit over violations

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A team of the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has unearthed a factory producing substandard confectioneries with prohibited ingredients here on Thursday. The raid was conducted in the area of Band Road Akram Park under the supervision of PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javed.

He said that the authority closed down the factory over

violations and discarded a huge cache of hazardous food including 35,000 substandard toffees, inferior-quality of chocolates, 500kg of whey powder, 450kg of coco powder, 200 litres of chocolate syrup, 150 litres of palm oil and five bags of prohibited colour.

While, the local area police have registered a case against the factory owner on the complaint of PFA while handing two accused over to police for further investigation,

PFA DG said.

He said that chocolates and toffees were being made with expired coco powder and palm oil. He said that PFA's watchdogs also witnessed worst condition of hygiene and rusty machinery during the raid. Apart from that, workers of the unit did not have medical and training certificates. Muhammad Asim said that the authority took action against the factory for doing the food business against the Punjab Pure

Food Regulations.

Correction in Father's Name

My father correct name is Shamroz Khan while mistakenly written in educational documents as Doctor Shamroz Khan please make the required correction in it. Haroon Khan S/o Shamroz Khan Tehsil & District Peshawar.



KARACHI: H.E. Maria Agnes Cervantes, Ambassador of Philippines and Honorary Consul General Dr. Imran Yousuf at Christmas Celebration with Filipino community in Karachi.



PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

CORRIGENDUM INVITATION TO BID

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

Description & Bid No.	Bid Fee (PKR) Non-Refundable	Fixed Bid Security (PKR)	Bid Submission Date/Time	Bid Opening Date/Time/Place	Last date for issuance of Bidding Documents	Basis PKR (Price)
Procurement of Digital Voice Logging System (DVLS) 48 Channels Qty 01 for MIAP Multan & 32 Channels Qty 01 for BKIAF Peshawar (With Installation & Commissioning) HQCAA/1992/227/XXLN	1,500/-	As Mentioned in Bidding Documents	24-01-2024 1030 Hours	24-01-2024 1100 Hours Log. Center (S) (Log. ANS Branch)	23-01-2024	F.O.R.

All other clauses would remain the same. This corrigendum is also available on PPRA website www.ppra.org.pk and CAA website www.caapakistan.com.pk

ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR LOGISTICS (ANS)
HQ CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY
Phone: 021-9907-2265 Fax: 021-9924-2675
www.caapakistan.com.pk

PID(K)#1869/23



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali presenting appreciation certificate to a bodybuilder winner of 'Mr. Pakistan Award'.

PHC suspends notification

— to end free electricity to WAPDA officers

PESHAWAR (INP): The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Thursday suspended the decision of the caretaker government to end the provision of free electricity units to the WAPDA employees.

The ruling was announced during the hearing of a plea of PESCO offices for free electricity units provision.

The PHC after suspending the notification of the government, issued notices

to the caretaker federal government and WAPDA. The respondents have been asked to submit their responses at the next hearing of the case.

It is to be noted that Pakistan ended free electricity units for the DISCOs and GENCOs, WAPDA and NTDC officers from December 1, 2023.

In a notification issued by the power division, it was stated the federal cabinet had approved moneti-

sation of free electricity units admissible to the employees of Wapda, ex-Wapda companies, including distribution companies (Discos), generation companies (Gencos), National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) and Power Information Technology Company (PITC).

The WAPDA employees had been protesting for the continuing of free electricity units to them.

Training sessions for immunization staffs held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A two-day training session regarding Routine Immunization, Protection Gender Inclusion, and Community Engagement Accountability was organized by Pakistan Red Crescent Society merged areas headquarters with the collaboration of health department and IFRC in a local hotel in Peshawar.

The session was organized for female vaccinators, DHOs, field government vaccinator's staff, social mobilizers, and PRCS vaccinators of Sub division Bannu.

In which PRCS Tribal Districts Headquarters Secretary Saeed Kamal Mehsud, Routine Immunization Program Manager Sub Division Wazir Bannu Dr. Hamid Rehan,

PGI/CEA Manager IFRC Arosha Khatki, Data Focal Person Routine Immunization PRCS Tribal Districts Headquarters Yar Mohammad Khan, MIS Data Focal Person DHO Office Bannu Amir Shahzad, Routine Immunization PRCS Tribal Districts Supervisor Sub Division Wazir Bannu Dr. Hamid Khan, gave special training to Female Vaccinators Sub Division Wazir Bannu, DHO Bannu Health Staff, Social Mobilizer, Government Vaccinators on routine immunization, protection, gender inclusion, community engagement, accountability and dealing with difficulties faced during field work.

While addressing the participants, Secretary of PRCS (Tribal Districts)

Headquarters, Saeed Kamal Mehsud, said that the purpose of conducting such training and informative sessions for immunization staffs, who are working in the field to aware them with various equipments because in future the health data will be stored in the modern data system NEIR (National Electronic Immunization Registry) smart phone application instead of being recorded in the register. Female vaccinators have also been given detailed training on the NEIR smartphone application.

Saeed Kamal Mehsud, distributed certificates to female vaccinators, PRCS vaccinators, social mobilizers and DHO government vaccinators who completed the two-day training workshop.

Chief CC briefs visiting participants of SMC



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The participants of the 34th Senior Management Course from the National Institute of Management, Islamabad, visited the Model Collector, Peshawar on Thursday for a briefing session hosted by the Chief Collector Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The visiting delegation comprised of the senior officers from various occupational groups and was led by the Directing Staff of the National Institute of Management Islamabad,

Muhammad Imran. Chief Collector Muhammad Ikram welcomed the officers and introduced himself and the key members of the Customs House Peshawar team which was followed by the introduction of the participants of the 34th Senior Management Course.

The Chief Collector highlighted the importance of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in the national trade landscape and the role of customs in facilitating legitimate trade while safeguarding the

national interests through appraisal and enforcement drives.

The Deputy Collector Ms Kashmala, delivered a comprehensive presentation about the Organizational Structure and delved into the specifics of customs operations in the region, including import and export procedures, trade facilitation measures, risk management strategies, and enforcement activities.

Memorabilia were exchanged at the conclusion of the briefing session.

Power suspension notified

PESHAWAR (APP): PESCO on Thursday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Jamrud grid station on 30th December from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Consequently, it said consumers of Hayatabad I, 2, 3, 4, 5, New Hayatabad, Health Care Center Hospital, Health Excellence, North West Hospital, Kidney Center, RMI, Kacha Garhi, Karkhano, Gul Abad, PIC, Hayatabad Surgical, Peshawar General, Foundation Hospital, Cell Wood, Northern Bottling, PCB, Alhaj, BSF, Olympia, Omarak, Industrial Estate, Mohmand Steel, Alhafiz, Frontier Teak Wood, PPI,

Mika Steel, Express 1, 2, 3 and PHA feeders will face inconvenience.

It said the power supply will also remain suspended from Peshawar City Grid Station on 30th December from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Sikanar Pura, Lala, Hashtnagari, Chugulpura, Chamkani, Jaghra, Radio Pakistan, Sethi Town, Gulbahar, Zaryab, Pandho Road, City Homes, Baghbanan, Umar, Islamabad, Faqir Abad, Shiekh Abad, Molve Je, Nishar Abad and NHA feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from Sakhi Chasma Grid Station on 29th December from 9

a.m. to 1 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Pajagai, Chughal Pura, BW University, Kaniza feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from Abbottabad Grid Station on 31st Dec from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Cantt and Town feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from Hattar - Wah Transmission Line on 31st Dec from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. resultantly, consumers of 132 KV Hattar 1, 2, Hattar Special Economic Zone, Hariapur, Kholian Bala and 66 KV Hariapur and Hevelian grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

KP CM reviews arrangements for admission in medical, dental colleges

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah on Thursday, visited the Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar where he reviewed arrangements for medical and dental colleges in the province.

He was given briefing about various activities of the university. The Chief Minister was accompanied by Advisor on Health Professor Dr. Riaz Anwar. He reviewed the arrangements for admissions after the successful conduct and result of MDCAT by KMU.

He distributed laptops amongst students of the university and awarded degrees of Masters in Medical Education to graduates.

Chief Minister Justice (R) Arshad Hussain Shah specifically commended

KMU for its unwavering dedication to providing quality health education to students. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq gave a detailed briefing to the Chief Minister, elucidating the diverse range of programs offered by KMU which include Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Allied Health Sciences, Nursing, and Pharmacy.

The Chief Minister was also updated on the ongoing public health initiatives and health research initiatives thriving on the KMU campus and admissions to postgraduate degree programs in epidemiology and basic medical sciences.

Acknowledging the services of Khyber Medical University, the Chief Minister recognized its pivotal role in empowering the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Chief Minister also visited the under-construction KMU Hospital and

Research Centre and directed the concerned quarter to expedite work on the project to ensure its early completion.

He also directed the management of KMU to come up with a plan to establish campuses of the KMU in the Newly Merged Districts and assured all out support of the provincial government in this regard.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, on Thursday paid a visit to the North West School of Medicine, Peshawar and attended the 2nd Graduation Ceremony as the chief guest. He, on this occasion, distributed degrees/certificates amongst 148 graduates of MBBS and awarded gold medals to the position holders of annual examinations of 2017-22 session.

Addressing the ceremony, the caretaker Chief

Minister congratulated the graduates, their teachers and parents for achieving such a significant milestone in their educational career.

"Today, we all are here not only to mark the end of an educational phase but to commence a new and practical chapter in the lives of these talented students who have, undoubtedly worked hard to reach this momentous day", he remarked and added that all these graduates are now going to start their professional career as skilled healthcare practitioners.

The chief minister urged upon them to embrace innovation, stay committed to further polish their professional capabilities, and most importantly, prioritize the wellbeing of people as the health of our community rests in their capable hands.

He hoped that the new graduates will carry forward the legacy of excel-

lence established by the Northwest School of Medicine. Touching upon the priorities of his government, the chief minister said that efforts are underway to increase the strength of healthcare practitioners in the province.

He said that our future depends on we'll educated and skilled youth, that's why, he added that it is imperative to align our young generation with the needs and requirements of contemporary world.

The caretaker provincial government is working day and night on equipping the youth with market-based technical and crash courses so as to send them abroad for employment opportunities, he said.

Provincial Minister Masood Shah, Advisor for Health Dr. Riaz Anwar, faculty members and a large number of students and graduates attended the ceremony.



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

KP Health Deptt launches drive to combat illegal narcotic drug activities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In response to the escalating illegal sale, storage, and distribution of narcotic drugs, the Health Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under the guidance of Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir, has commenced a targeted campaign across various districts within the province.

According to Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir the department of health has received numerous complaints regarding the illicit trade of narcotic medicines in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. These substances, falling under Schedule B & G of The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Drug Rules 1982 (amended

2017), require a separate license (Form-11) for authorized sale.

Executed by Drug Inspectors, a focused effort unfolded on December 26th and 27th, 2023, across multiple districts. The campaign's findings were promptly reported to Secretary Health by the Director General of Drug Control & Pharmacy Services, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

An extensive report reveals inspections of medical stores in various districts, resulting in actions taken against violators of drug laws. In Abbottabad, 43 medical stores were inspected, leading to actions against 9 establishments. Similar interventions occurred in Bannu, Bunir, Chitral, DI Khan,

Mardan, Haripur, Manshara, Lakki Marwat, Nowshera, Orakzai, Dir Lower, Swabi, Kohat, Malakand, North Waziristan, Swat, Charsadda, and Tank, with multiple stores facing consequences for drug law violations.

Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir emphasized the continuity of this campaign until the complete eradication of illegal drug activities in the province.

Cases initiated against offenders will undergo preliminary investigation by Drug Inspectors, and upon permission from the Provincial Quality Control Board (PQCB), they will be forwarded to The Drug Court for judicial proceedings, as outlined in section

11(6) of The Drug Act 1976.

Offenders have been charged under sections 23 1 C, 23 1 (i), 23 1 a (X) of The Drug Act 1976, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Drug Rules 1982 (amended 2017). Additionally, suspected sampling has been conducted for test analysis, accompanied by the sealing of premises.

Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir asserted a zero-tolerance policy towards such offenses, declaring his mission to eliminate illegal narcotic drug activities in the province.

The cases will be pursued with rigor to ensure a drug-free and healthy future for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Experts call for promotion of vertical agriculture farming

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR)'s experts and speakers of various departments here Thursday said that adaptation of innovative techniques and vertical agriculture farming was imperative for increasing food production in the country.

These views were expressed during a one-day seminar on 'adaptation of innovative techniques for agro-food production and value addition' organized by PCSIR here.

Director General (DG), PCSIR, Jahangir Shah said that vertical agriculture farming has made deep inroads in countries including Japan and Pakistan with a population of around 240 million could also benefit from it enormously.

He said that agricultural land was reducing due to the high population bulge in the country and vertical farming was the best option

to achieve autarky in food.

"We can easily obtain about 15,000-ton vegetables and fruits from one kanal's land through the vertical farming procedure," he said, adding normally 55,000 plants came in one layer and 110,000 in the second layer and so on.

He said that approximately, the vertical plantation was made in nine layers, which means that 495,000 fruits and vegetable plants could be achieved per season after making only 10 million investment," he said.

PCSIR, Peshawar introduced vertical farming techniques on five kanal lands under a public sector development program (PSDP) project titled 'research, development and innovation' under the Ministry of Science and Technology, Islamabad with enormous success.

Dr. Jahangir Shah said that utilization of indige-

nous resources was vital for the development and promotion of industrial and agriculture sectors besides export enhancement, adding the demand-driven science and technology research and skilled human resources development through specialized training largely contribute to industrialization and socioeconomic growth of the country.

Fauz Ishaq, President SCCI while praising the services of PCSIR in the country's development said that Pakistan was blessed with all resources including manpower, hydel, water, sea, rivers, mines and minerals if properly utilized can bring huge economic laurels.

He said that precious water of rivers was being wasted due to the lack of dams and suggested adaptation of drip irrigation practices to bring arid land under agricultural cover.

Assuring support to PCSIR, he said that SCCI was ready to promote newly invented products for the benefit of people.

Sirtaj Ahmad Khan, coordinator of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry suggested strengthening of research, development, and innovation (RDI) departments in public sector departments and universities besides increasing the volume of trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan for the mutual benefit of both countries.

Pizza delivery boy killed

PESHAWAR (APP): A graduate pizza delivery youth was crushed to death by a speedy car near the Defense area here, police informed on Thursday.

The 30-year-old delivery boy of a famous pizza brand, named Amir Suhail, a resident of Deh Bala was on his way to deliver the order. When the boy reached near the Defense area, a speedy car hit him and then ran over his body. The boy sustained critical multiple injuries and died of over bleeding. Police said the boy was rushed to Lady Reading Hospital where the doctors pronounced him dead.

The friends of Amir Suhail said he was an educated and hardworking boy and his death left them and his family in unbearable grief. Police said they were in search of the car's driver whose raceless driving caused the death of the youth.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Engr. Amir Durani reviewing sanitation work of city during his visit.



In brief

Dialogue session arranged
F.P. Report

BUNER: Speakers in a one-day dialogue on the topic of budget preparation have suggested public say a must for making budget transpiration and up to public satisfaction otherwise it would be far from the wishes of general public. Tehsil Daggar Nazim Haji Rozi Khan the TMO Afsar Ali Khan, RDO Chairman Hakem Zada SPDI KP Coordinator Shamsul Hadi and large number of stakeholders from different walk of life participated. On the occasion the SPDI KP Coordinator shared the 4th annual report about budget transparency in the light of international guide lines best to be reflected in a best budget of a country. The budget report revealed many flaws and deficiencies in the federal and provincial budgets and demanded pre but budget consultations with government departments stakeholders civil societies and citizens as well so as to prepare a balanced budget as per public demands. The participants told media persons it came to their knowledge that public point of view and needs based demands were lacking in the budgets both federal and provincial and demanded digital facilitation centers at district level for pre-budget can consultations and discussions besides pretty vision of pre-budget question forms and to distribute budget proposals for public facilitation in so simple to be easy understandable. On the occasion the participants also pointed out ignoring the most vulnerable segments i.e., women and children and demanded separate form of interest for making sure their voice inducted in the budget proposals in future. The participants appreciated the CPDI the RDO and CNBA for their efforts in larger Public interests.

RPO awards cash prize to cops
F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Terrorists attacked Aba Shaheed Police Check post established in Dera Town police station last night in Dera Ismail Khan. While police countered their attack and forced the terrorists to flee and crushed, on Thursday. Regional Police Officer Dera Ismail Khan Nasir Mehmood Satti along with SP City Ishaq Khan visited Aba Shaheed Check Post. On this occasion, SHO Police Station Dera Town and in-charge check post gave a complete briefing to RPO Dera about last night's attack and the security measures taken from all sides while inspecting the check post, the RPO met the security personnel and getting aware of the problems faced by them, issued orders to solve them on the spot. RPO said during the meeting with the policemen that the way you have fought the terrorists like lions and given a befitting reply which is admirable. He that the police have made eternal sacrifices by always playing the role of frontline against terrorists for the establishment of peace, due to these sacrifices, the morale of the terrorists is low, while our morale is high for the protection of this motherland. He also distributed cash prizes to the policemen who bravely fought against the terrorists.

Woman 'raped' during robbery

KASUR (INP): In a shocking incident, a woman was 'raped' by dacoits during a house robbery in Punjab's Kasur on Thursday. As per details, the incident took place in Bhasapur, where three dacoits stormed a house for robbery and 'raped' a woman upon resistance.

PHC gives big relief to PTI: QWP leader

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Thursday said that all the political forces would have to join hands to address the challenges facing the country.

Addressing a gathering at Tangi Tehsil in Charsadda, he said that all stakeholders should work together to come up with the 'Charter of Economy' to revive the economy. Holding former prime minister Imran Khan responsible for ruining the economy during his stint, Aftab Sherpao said that the ones, who had helped him reach the corridors of power, did not brief him to strengthen the economy and have working relations with the opposition in the National Assembly.

"Before the 2018 general election, Imran Khan had claimed that he had a team of economic experts, but when he came to power his

government miserably failed to deliver and instead reversed the wheel of economic development," he recalled.

The QWP leader said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was getting unprecedented relief from the courts, therefore, its leaders were not justified in complaining about the lack of level-playing field. He said the Peshawar High Court order on giving back the PTI its election symbol was a big relief for the party. He said the plea of the other respondents was not heard in the case.

Shedding light on the problems facing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Aftab Sherpao said the province was confronting a host of issues, including poverty, poor law and order and unemployment. He said the QWP had always strived for the rights of KP, which was not getting its due share in resources. He said PTI ruled KP for almost a decade, but left

the province in dire financial straits. He said the provincial government was facing shortage of funds due to the misrule of the PTI to pay salaries to government employees. The QWP leader recalled that the PTI misguided the youth in the name of change and failed to deliver on its pledges.

He said KP was the most underdeveloped province in the country and its residents were facing poverty and unemployment. He cautioned the youth against lending a sympathetic ear to the catchy slogans. He said the youth should cast their votes carefully as opportunists were out to deceive them once again. Aftab Sherpao said that if given an opportunity, his party would not let down the Pakhtuns and would get their due rights from the centre. "We always strived to serve the people and would come up to their expectations again," he added.



CHARSADDA: Qaumi Watan Party Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao addressing public gathering at Tangi area.

Food Authority arrests two
F.P. Report

MARDAN: Director Operations Food Safety and Halal Food Authority Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan raided people supplying milk in tankers at different points along with the Food Authority team and district officers on public complaints, supplying milk at expensive prices.

Two people were arrested, samples were sent to the laboratory for testing, according to the details. Director Operations Food Safety and Halal Food Authority Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan along with Assistant Director Halal Food Authority Ibrahim Khan and Additional Assistant Commissioner Junaid Khalid on public complaints at Rashkai Interchange. Wali Khan Interchange, Baab-e-Mardan and karnal Sher Khan Interchange raided with mobile lab and checked the rate and quality of milk supplied in tankers.

The district officers arrested two persons who were supplying milk at high prices in Mardan and other areas along with their tanker and handed them over to Sheikh Maltoon police station. A heavy fine will be imposed on them through a summary trial. On the other hand, the Halal Food Authority also took milk samples and sent them to the laboratory.

If adulteration is proved, legal action will be taken against the persons involved under the prevailing act of Halal Food Authority. On this occasion, Director Operations Halal Food Authority Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan said that the cordon has been tightened against the elements who play with human health. Actions will be continued against the mixing mafia.

Sports competition held: According to the orders of the Directorate of Sports, various events including Jiu-Jitsu, Karate, Snooker Championship and Cricket competitions were organized by the Sports Department and District Administration in Mardan Sports Complex on Quaid-e-Azam Day. A cricket match was played between Fakhar Zaman Cricket Academy and Arifwala Cricket Team, while Arifwala Cricket Team won the trophy.

Prevention of domestic a social responsibility

F.P. Report

MARDAN: City Mayor Mardan Himayatullah Mayar said on Thursday that prevention of domestic violence is the collective responsibility of society. Ignorance of rights was also one of the reasons for this, he said, adding that special programs should be broadcast by the media on women's rights and measures should be taken to ensure the implementation of laws in this regard.

He was addressing a dialogue on domestic violence organized by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan at TMA Hall. Shahid Khan of HRCPC, Vice Chairman of the Commission Akbar Khan and Ijaz Mohmand Advocate besides male and female members of City Council, lawyers and other

civil society representatives participated in the dialogue.

Mayor said that Islam advises us to have good behavior and high morals. Ignorance of laws and less knowledge of their rights lead to domestic violence. The media should play its role in this regard. He said Marriage is a contract between a man and a woman in which the role of both is clear and both should positively play their role.

The others speakers said that there is no scope for domestic violence in the law, if the perpetrators are punished according to the law, it can be stopped. They appreciated the role of Human Rights Commission in the protection of human rights.

ADC reviews provision of services: Additional Deputy Commissioner

(General) Saeedullah Jan paid a surprise visit to Tehsildar Office Mardan and reviewed the revenue services provided to the people there.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner inspected the Tehsildar Office and Girdawar Circle Offices and inquired from the staff regarding the current revenue records, during which the Additional Deputy Commissioner also met the public and discussed the problems faced by them and the revenue services being provided.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner issued orders to Tehsildar Mardan and Girdawar Circles Mardan on the spot so that all the problems faced by the public can be resolved in time. He directed the staff to treat the public in a friendly manner.

SMC officers' visits Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park

Saqib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: A 14 members delegation of 34th Senior Management Course (SMC) led by Zoobia Masood, Directing Staff, National Institute of Management (NIM), Islamabad is currently visiting Bahawalpur for Inland study tour (IST). The participants of the course belong to various service group namely Pakistan Administrative Service, Foreign service, Secretariat Group, Inland Revenue Service, Information group, Pakistan Audit & Account Service, as well as other Cadres.

The Group visited Bahawal Victoria Hospital which is providing medical services and catering to the local requirements of the citizens in the field of Health in Bahawalpur and



adjoining areas. Participants were briefed about the Bahawal Victoria Hospital's administration.

Later on, the participants of 34th SMC called on Commissioner Bahawalpur. The Participants were given detailed briefing about the district administration. The delegation also visited RPO, Office. RPO welcomed the participants and underlined special initia-

tives taken over period to transform policing along modern lines in sync with the requirements of the day.

The underlying rationale of the Inland Study Tour is to enhance understanding of the officers about working of District government and its various department. The delegation also visited Lal Suharna Park and Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park.

PPP history to sacrifice for nation, says Aslam

Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: During a media interaction on the occasion of the 16th anniversary of the late Benazir Bhutto's martyrdom, Muhammad Aslam, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate for NA-33, expressed his condolences to

the iconic Bhutto. He remarked that Allama Iqbal and the founding father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, laid the intellectual groundwork, but it was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the martyr, who was instrumental in the completion of Pakistan. Bhutto's contributions, including constitutional

frameworks, recognition documents for the Pakistani diaspora in the Gulf, economic exchanges, and the foundation of atomic power, were highlighted. The resting places of martyrs attest that Bhutto not only sacrificed himself for the country but also offered his offspring's blood.



QUETTA: People sitting around burning woods to warm themselves during cold weather.

Road accidents and safety

Usman Wasim Abbasi

ROAD accidents are a significant public health and life safety concern in Pakistan, causing numerous fatalities and injuries daily. Understanding the causes, consequences, and possible solutions is essential to this problem.

This piece of writing will provide an easy-to-understand overview of road accidents and safety in Pakistan, along with survey reports that shed light on the situation.

Statistics: According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Pakistan has one of the highest road traffic mortality rates globally, with over 25,000 deaths annually. The country experiences a high number of road accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

Contributing Factors: Several factors contribute to the high rate of road accidents in Pakistan, including inadequate road infrastructure, reckless driving, non-compliance with

traffic rules, and the prevalence of overloaded and poorly maintained vehicles.

Speeding: One of the primary causes of accidents is over speeding, which leads to reduced reaction times and more severe crashes. Many drivers in Pakistan disregard speed limits.

Reckless Overtaking: Risky overtaking on narrow roads contribute to head-on collisions and side-swipe accidents. Survey reports indicate that overtaking without visibility is a significant issue.

Distracted Driving: The use of mobile phones while driving is widespread in Pakistan. This distraction diverts a driver's attention and increases the risk of accident.

Poorly Maintained Vehicles: Inadequate vehicle maintenance can result in brake failures, tire blowouts, and other mechanical issues that lead to accidents.

Lack of Traffic Education: A lack of awareness and education about traffic rules and safety measures is a significant problem in Pakistan.

Loss of Lives: Road accidents lead to a significant loss of lives each year.

These tragedies badly affect families and communities across the country.

Injuries: Survivors of road accidents often suffer from severe injuries, including fractures, head injuries, and spinal cord injuries, leading to long-term physical and emotional consequences.

Traffic Law Enforcement: Stricter law enforcement and heavy fines/penalties for traffic violations can act as a deterrent to reckless driving. Traffic police play a vital role in maintaining road discipline.

Road Infrastructure Improvement: Investing in better road infrastructure, including wider roads, clear road markings, and safer intersections, can reduce accidents.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Government and non-government organizations conduct public awareness campaigns to educate the public about safe driving practices and

the importance of following traffic rules.

Survey Reports on Road Safety Driver Behavior: Surveys have highlighted that a significant number of drivers in Pakistan admit to speeding, using mobile phones while driving, and not wearing seat belts, indicating a need for behavior change.

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Road Condition: Reports show that many roads in Pakistan are poorly maintained, increasing the risk of accidents. Missing road signs, and lack of proper lighting are common issues.

Vehicle Maintenance: Surveys reveal that a substantial percentage of vehicles on the road have maintenance issues, emphasizing the need for regular vehicle check-ups and maintenance. Road accidents in Pakistan are a critical issue that affects the lives of thousands of people each year.

Understanding the causes and consequences of these accidents is crucial to finding effective solutions. Through stricter law enforcement, better road infrastructure, and public awareness campaigns, Pakistan can work towards reducing road accidents and ensuring safer journeys for its citizens. It is essential for both the government and the public to actively participate in addressing this issue for a safer and more secure road environment.



China’s military lashes out at US after breakthrough talks

BEIJING (Reuters): China's defence ministry lashed out at the United States on Thursday, a week after their top military officials resumed high-level talks, criticising its continued meddling in the Asia Pacific region and saying it maintained a "Cold War" mindset.

Both sides had pledged at the talks to work towards restoration of contacts to avert miscalculation and misunderstanding, with the US calling for "more work" to ensure military communications stayed open and reliable. But a Chinese defence ministry spokesperson took a more hawkish tone at the year's last regular press conference.

"The United States continues to strengthen its Asia-Pacific deployments, this is full of a Cold War mindset," the spokesperson, Wu Qian, said on Thursday. "Its goal is for its own selfish gains and to maintain its hegemony. Its nature is to stoke confrontation." US officials had hoped last week's talks, when top US General Charles Brown and his Chinese counterpart, General Liu Zhenli, held a videoconference in the first such event in more than a year, could bring a broader restoration in military ties.

Those talks followed a pact in San Francisco last month between the leaders of both countries to resume such ties, which Beijing had snapped after a visit to self-ruled Taiwan in 2022 by Nancy Pelosi, then speaker of the House of Representatives. The video call yielded "positive and constructive outcomes", Wu said. But Beijing expected Washington to "take concrete actions on the basis of equality and respect to promote the sound and steady development of China-US military-to-military relationship", he added, with specifics to be announced later.

On Taiwan, set to hold a key presidential election on Jan 13, Wu accused its government of deliberately "hyping up" a military threat from China for electoral gain. He warned the US against interfering in Taiwan affairs, including selling arms to the island democracy. "We firmly oppose any country having official and military

contact with Taiwan in any form. The US is manipulating the Taiwan question in various forms, which is a very dangerous gamble," Wu said.

"We urge the US to stop arming Taiwan under any excuses or by any means," he added. Taiwan's defence ministry said this week it was not seeing any signs of large-scale Chinese military activity before the elections but was keeping close watch on China. Wu also blamed the United States for rising tension in the South China Sea, following recent skirmishes between China and the Philippines around the Spratly islands.

The US has backed Manila in its maritime disputes with China amid a broader strengthening of ties under Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. "The US, out of its selfish calculations, has been conniving at, and emboldening the Philippines, attempting to coerce and threaten China," Wu said. This week a Philippine military spokesperson rebutted China's accusation that his country was provoking conflict in the region. On the domestic front, Wu declined to comment on the removal this week of three executives at leading aerospace defence firms from China's top political advisory body. "I refer you to the competent national authorities," he said, when asked about the reason behind the removals.

The executives are from China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), China's main space program contractor and builder of missile systems; Norinco, a major Chinese defence contractor, and China's largest missile maker, the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation (CASIC). An anti-corruption purge in the top ranks of the People's Liberation Army has implicated former defence minister Li Shangfu, who faces investigation for corrupt military procurement, Reuters has previously reported. The People's Liberation Army Rocket Force has also been in focus recently after its two most senior leaders were suddenly replaced at the end of July with commanders from outside the force.

Top Brazilian criminal leader is isolated in prison

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP): One of Brazil's top criminal leaders was locked up in a 6-square-meter (65-square-foot) isolation cell at a maximum security prison to avoid being killed by rivals, authorities said.

Luiz Antônio da Silva Braga, the boss of the largest militia group in the state of Rio de Janeiro, surrendered to federal police. The criminal leader better known as Zinho was sent to the Bangu 1 prison, where drug traffickers and militia men are also held, Rio state's public security secretary Victor Santos said. "Today, Zinho's custody is a responsibility of the state," he told TV channel GloboNews. "He is now in an isolated cell for us to secure his physical integrity."

Zinho's lawyer did not respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press following his arrest. Militias emerged in the 1990s when they originally were made up mainly of former police officers, firefighters and soldiers who wanted to combat lawlessness in their neighborhoods. They charged residents for protection and other services, but more recently moved into drug trafficking themselves. Zinho, whose militia group dominates Rio's west region, had 12 arrest warrants issued against him until he surrendered after a negotiation. He had been on the run since 2018, and rose to the top position of the group after his brother Wellington da Silva Braga,

known as Ecko, was killed in 2021.

The militias are believed to control about 10% of Rio's metropolitan area, according to a study last year by the non-profit Fogo Cruzado and a security-focused research group at the Fluminense Federal University. The militias are distinct from drug trafficking gangs that control important areas of Rio. A Brazilian federal police source who had access to the investigation told The Associated Press that Zinho feared he could be executed if he turned himself in to Rio state police. The source, who spoke under condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly, also said the criminal leader will not join other inmates at Bangu for sunbathing and meals due to security reasons.

Rio Gov. Claudio Castro said in a statement that Zinho is "Rio's number one enemy" and celebrated his police forces for the arrest. "This is another victory of our police and security plan," Castro said. "The disarticulation of these criminal groups with arrests, raids, financial blocking and the arrest of that mobster show we are on the right path," the governor said. Authorities also said they would protect Zinho in the expectation he could sign a plea deal that could implicate members of police forces, politicians and businessmen.

"That will depend a lot on where the lawyers take

him, what he can offer as information and, obviously, what benefits he can obtain from such a plea bargain," Santos, the Rio state public security secretary said. Ricardo Capelli, executive-secretary at Brazil's Justice Ministry, said the government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva needs to "work to get to the spine of the connections of the organized crime and its financial moves. No one brings terror to one third of the city of Rio without having powerful connections," he said in his social media channels.

The area dominated by Zinho's group made news in October when gang members set fire to at least 35 buses in apparent retaliation for police killing one of the criminal leader's main allies. The attack caused no casualties, but it underlined the ability of the militias to cause chaos and inflict damage. Zinho will stand trial on charges of forming a criminal organization, money laundering, extortion, bribing public officials and co-participating in August 2022 in the killing of former Rio councilor Jerônimo Guimarães Filho, better known as Jerominho.

Police investigators said Jerominho was shot dead under orders from Zinho, in an attempt to keep control of his criminal organization. Zinho's lawyers have long denied he had any connection with that case. He is also under investigation in several other killings of militia members.

Does attack on Russian ship make a difference?

KYIV (BBC): It was an explosion which filled the sky and lifted Ukrainian morale. For Kyiv, the sight of Russia's Novocherkassk landing ship being hit in an air strike was a much-needed boost. With Russia gaining the upper hand in recent weeks and the West's support stuttering, Ukraine has produced another dramatic missile strike in occupied Crimea. Spectacular? No doubt. But was it significant?

"As a battleship, you might think it's not crucial," explains Alina Frolova, who was Ukraine's deputy defence minister between 2019-2020 and is now with the country's Centre for Defence Strategies. "But we need to look at the full context, it's a step-by-step process." Both Ukraine and the UK now say that 20% of Russia's Black Sea Naval Fleet has been destroyed since the start of its full-scale invasion - a startling feat for Ukraine, a country whose navy barely has any ships.

Mostly, Russia's vessels have been destroyed with long-range Storm Shadow missiles supplied by the West. That has diminished Russia's ability to launch missile strikes from the sea, and any possibility of it mounting an amphibious attack from the sea is even less likely. It has also unblocked ports like Odesa which has allowed Ukrainian and international cargo ships to travel along an unofficial route. Frolova thinks this latest strike in Feodosia is a continuation of Ukraine squeezing Russian supply routes to Crimea, and therefore weakening Moscow's grip on the peninsula, which it has held since seizing it in 2014.

"It demonstrates Ukraine's Air Force can operate in the face of Russian air defences," she says. "Ships like this are used to deliver ammunition and drones. Based on the detonation, there were a substantial number of explosives on board." Ukraine's Navy claims up to 80 people were on board too. Kuzan is confident Russia will have felt this strike. He says because the Kerch Bridge was damaged from previous Ukrainian attacks, Moscow had to look at other means to supply the Crimean peninsula. "Ships allow them to move large loads relatively quickly," he says. "These large ships are intended for carrying up to 500 tonnes of people and equipment."

The Novocherkassk was one of 12 Russian landing ships, according to Kuzan, of which he says Ukraine has now destroyed half. Moscow is currently able to control the front lines in Ukraine. But Kuzan suggests these are not disconnected from Crimea. "We can't separate the peninsula from the south of Ukraine, namely the occupied parts of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions," he says. As with the liberation of Kherson city last year, Kuzan is optimistic the battles at the front could move in Ukraine's favour if they could eventually lessen Russia's air superiority and frustrate its supply lines to its troops.

This is exactly what led to invading forces retreating across the Dnipro river to the eastern bank in November 2022. But this time we are talking about a lot more territory.

Kim orders military to accelerate war preparations

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea leader Kim Jong Un has ordered his country's military, munitions industry and nuclear weapons sector to accelerate war preparations to counter what he called unprecedented confrontational moves by the US, state media said on Thursday.

Speaking on the policy directions for the new year at a key meeting of the country's ruling party, Kim also said Pyongyang would expand strategic cooperation with "anti-imperialist independent" countries, news agency KCNA reported. North Korea has been expanding ties with Russia, among others, as Washington accuses Pyongyang of supplying military equipment to Moscow for use in its war with Ukraine, while Russia provides technical support to help the North advance its military capabilities.

"He (Kim) set forth the militant tasks for the People's Army and the munitions industry, nuclear weapons and civil defence sectors to further accelerate the war preparations," KCNA said. On Thursday, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol visited a frontline military unit in the eastern county of Yeoncheon to inspect its defence posture and called for an immediate retaliation if there was any provocation from North Korea.

"I urge you to immediately and firmly crush the enemy's will for a provocation on the spot," Yoon told troops. During the party plenum, North Korea's Kim also laid out economic goals for the new year, calling it a "decisive year" to accomplish the country's five-year devel-



opment plan, KCNA said.

"He ... clarified the important tasks for the new year to be dynamically pushed forward in the key industrial sectors," and called for "stabilising the agricultural production on a high level." The North has suffered serious food shortages in recent decades, including famine in the 1990s, often as a result of natural disasters. International experts have warned that border closures during the COVID-19 pandemic worsened food security.

North Korea's crop output was estimated to have increased year-on-year in 2023 due to favourable weather conditions. But a Seoul

official has said the amount was still far below what is needed to address the country's chronic food shortages.

The 9th plenary meeting of the 8th central committee of the Workers' Party of Korea kicked off to wrap up a year during which the isolated North enshrined nuclear policy in its constitution, launched a spy satellite and fired a new inter-continental ballistic missile. The days-long assembly of the party and government officials has been used in recent years to make key policy announcements. Previously, state media released Kim's speech on New Year's Day.

Court orders a 3rd Japanese company to compensate workers

SEOUL (AP): South Korea's top court on Thursday ordered a third Japanese company to compensate some of its former wartime Korean employees for forced labor, the second such ruling in a week.

The South Korean verdict drew quick rebukes from Japan, but observers say it's unlikely the ruling will cause any major negative impacts on bilateral relations, as both governments are serious about improving their cooperation in the face of shared challenges like North Korea's nuclear program and China's assertiveness.

The Supreme Court ruled that shipbuilder Hitachi Zosen Corp. and heavy equipment manufacturer Mitsubishi Heavy Industries must give between 50 million won (about \$39,000) and 150 million won (about \$116,000) in compensation to each of the 17 Korean plaintiffs — one of whom is a surviving ex-worker and the rest bereaved relatives. Mitsubishi and another Japanese company, Nippon Steel, were previously given a similar compensation order by the South Korean court, but it was the first such ruling for Hitachi.

Among the plaintiffs are the surviving victim who suffered a serious burn and the bereaved family of a worker who died during an earthquake in Japan in 1944, when they

worked for Mitsubishi's aircraft-making factory in Nagoya. Others include the relatives of late Mitsubishi workers who were injured during the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima and another wartime event, according to a court press release.

A ruling in favor of Korean plaintiffs was widely expected because the Supreme Court in two separate rulings in 2018 ordered Mitsubishi and Nippon Steel to compensate some of their former Korean employees, saying they were forced to provide their labors to the companies when the Korean Peninsula was colonized by Japan from 1910-45. On Dec. 21, the top court again ordered Mitsubishi and Nippon Steel to provide compensation to other Koreans for similar colonial-era forced labor.

Japan's Foreign Ministry responded by summoning a senior South Korean diplomat in Japan to lodge a formal protest. In the meeting, Hiroyuki Namazu, director-general for the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, called the latest South Korean ruling "extremely regrettable and absolutely unacceptable," according to the Japanese ministry. Namazu maintained Japan's long-held position that all compensation issues between the two countries were settled when they

normalized ties in 1965.

The South Korean rulings in 2018 and this month argued that the treaty can't prevent individuals from seeking compensation for forced labor because Japanese companies' use of such laborers were "acts of illegality against humanity" that were linked to Tokyo's illegal colonial occupation and its war of aggression. The 2018 rulings plunged bilateral ties to one of their lowest ebbs in decades. Japan imposed export restrictions on key items, while South Korea threatened to terminate a military intelligence-sharing pact with Japan. But their ties began improving significantly in 2023 after South Korea's government, now led by conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol, established a domestic fund to compensate forced labor victims without demanding Japanese contributions.

Eleven of the 15 former forced laborers or their bereaved families involved in the 2018 rulings had accepted compensation under Seoul's third-party reimbursement plan, but the remaining four refuse to accept it. Lim Soosuk, spokesperson of South Korea's Foreign Ministry, said the government would seek to provide compensation to the Korean plaintiffs related to Thursday's ruling through the third-party reimbursement system as well.

Russian stars’ semi-naked party sparks wartime backlash

MOSCOW (Reuters): A rapper who attended a celebrity party with only a sock to hide his modesty has been jailed for 15 days, sponsors of some of Russia's best known entertainers have torn up their contracts, and President Vladimir Putin is reported to be unamused.

An "almost naked" party at a Moscow nightclub held at a time when Russia is engaged in a war with Ukraine and the authorities are pushing an increasingly conservative social agenda, has provoked an unusually swift and powerful backlash. A video clip of Putin's spokesperson listening to an explanation from one of the stars who attended has been circulating online, and Baza, a news outlet known for its contacts with the security services, has reported that troops fighting in Ukraine were among the first to complain after seeing the footage and that photographs of the event reached an unimpressed Putin.

Dmitry Peskov, Putin's spokesperson, asked reporters to forgive him for not publicly commenting on the burgeoning scandal, saying: "Let you and I be the only ones in the country who aren't discussing this topic." Maria Zakharova, a spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, said that the event had "stained" those who took part, but that they now had a chance to work on themselves, according to the Ura.ru news outlet.

The fierce backlash from the authorities, pro-Kremlin lawmakers and bloggers, state media, and Orthodox Church groups has been dominating the headlines for days, displacing stories about rising egg prices and inflation. The party, in Moscow's Mutabor nightclub on Dec. 21, was organised by blogger Anastasia (Nastya) Ivleva and was attended by well-known singers in various states of undress who have been staples on state TV entertainment programmes for years.

Ivleva, who has since become one of Russia's most recognised names and who attended wearing jewellery worth 23 million roubles (\$251,000) at a time when some Russians are strug-

gling to get by, has issued two public apology videos. In the second tearful one, released on Dec. 27, she said she regretted her actions and deserved everything she got but hoped she could be given "a second chance."

Her name has since disappeared as one of the public faces of major Russian mobile phone operator MTS, the tax authorities have opened an investigation that carries a potential five-year jail term, and a Moscow court has accepted a lawsuit from a group of individuals demanding she pay out 1 billion roubles (\$10.9 million) for "moral suffering." If successful, they want the money to go to a state fund that supports Ukraine war veterans.

"To hold such events at a time when our guys are dying in the (Ukrainian) special military operation and many children are losing their fathers is cynical," said Yekaterina Mizulina, director of Russia's League for a Safe Internet, a body founded with the authorities' support. "Our soldiers on the front line are definitely not fighting for this."

Many of the party's famous participants have recorded apologies, including journalist Ksenia Sobchak whose late father Anatoly used to be Putin's friend and boss. The scandal comes at a time when Putin, who is expected to comfortably win another six-year term at a March election, has doubled down on social conservatism, urging families to have eight or more children, and after Russia's Supreme Court ruled that LGBT activists should be designated as "extremists."

Nikolai Vasilyev, a rapper known as Vacio who attended wearing only a sock to cover his penis, was jailed by a Moscow court for 15 days and fined 200,000 roubles (\$2,182) for propaganda of "non-traditional sexual relations." Other more famous names have had concerts and lucrative state TV airtime cancelled, contracts with sponsors revoked, and, in at least one case, are reportedly being cut out of a new film.

The scandal has angered those who support Russia's war in Ukraine. One

woman who said her nephew had lost both legs in combat wrote in a post to the League for a Safe Internet that the stars should pay for prosthetic legs for her relative and others to make amends. "That would be a better apology," the unidentified woman wrote.

Candidate says court backs barring her from challenging Putin

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia's Supreme Court has upheld a decision to bar a former TV journalist who opposes the war in Ukraine from taking part in a presidential election in March, Yekaterina Duntsova, the would-be candidate, said. Members of the central electoral commission voted unanimously to reject the candidacy of Duntsova, citing "numerous violations" in the papers she had submitted in support of her bid. Duntsova, in a post on her Telegram channel, confirmed that her appeal against the decision had been rejected by the Supreme Court.

She said she now planned to try to set up a new political party for people who wanted "peace, freedom and democracy" - ideas Duntsova said were attractive to tens of millions of Russians whose voices she said were not being represented. Duntsova - who is not well known in Russia and, by her own admission, commands a core support base of only thousands in a country of over 140 million people - had previously told Reuters she felt she had been unfairly disqualified. The central election commission says its decisions are purely rules-based and that its job is to make sure that would-be candidates follow the right procedures. Incumbent Vladimir Putin, who has been in power as either president or prime minister for more than 20 years and faces no serious competition, is expected to comfortably win another six-year term in March.

Vietnam’s ‘bamboo diplomacy’ shifts into higher gear

HANOI (Reuters): Communist Party-ruled Vietnam has upgraded ties with the world's top powers, including former foes, China and the United States, as part of its "bamboo diplomacy", which it has pro-actively pursued since 2021 to navigate rising global tensions.

After a string of deals this year and last, the Southeast Asian country's top partners include the United States, China, India, South Korea and Russia, which for decades has supplied most of Vietnam's military equipment. Below are details of Vietnam's increasingly dynamic foreign policy approach and its most important diplomatic agreements over the last 12 months. A regional manufacturing powerhouse, Vietnam is an increasingly strategic player in global supply chains. To bolster this position, the country's most powerful figure, Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, used in 2021 the imagery of "strong roots, stout trunk, and flexible branches" of the bamboo

plant to describe Vietnam's foreign policy approach of having "more friends, fewer foes".

Vietnam and China earlier this month agreed to build a community with a "shared future" during a visit to Hanoi by Chinese President Xi Jinping, his first to an Asian country this year. The two nations signed 36 cooperation documents in areas such as transport infrastructure, trade, security and digital economy, and published a joint declaration with wide-ranging commitments.

China is Vietnam's largest trading partner and a vital source of imports for its manufacturing sector, but the two communist countries have been for years embroiled in disputes in the South China Sea - the latest in May. Tensions have subsided somewhat more recently as Beijing's attention has focused on another claimant in the waterway, the Philippines. Vietnam and the United States elevated in September their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership,

the highest level in Vietnam's ranking, and announced closer cooperation on semiconductors and critical minerals during a visit to Hanoi by US president Joe Biden.

The United States, which is the top importer of Vietnam's goods, pushed for the upgrade as part of its strategy to secure uninterrupted access to global supply chains and to contain China in the South China Sea. Vietnam and Japan in November upgraded their relations to Vietnam's top tier during a visit by Vietnamese president Vo Van Thuong to Tokyo, agreeing to boost security and economic cooperation. Japanese multinationals, including Canon, Honda, Panasonic and Bridgestone, are among the largest foreign investors in Vietnam. Vietnam and South Korea elevated their ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in December 2022 during a visit to Seoul by then Vietnamese president Nguyen Xuan Phuc, focusing on trade, investment, defence and security.

The Frontier Post

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

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The image of Pakistan

THE manner in which Shah Mahmood Qureshi, a former two times foreign minister of Pakistan was arrested did dent the image of Pakistan globally. If somebody wants to deny this fact, it's their own choice.

The manner in which Pakistan is being run today is nothing less than a jungle rule where the mighty has the power to do anything they wish to do. And there is no body to stop or question this injustice which is being committed everyday in one shape or another. The images which are being circulated around the world about Pakistan is nothing to feel proud of.

On one hand Pakistani Caretaker Prime Minister Mr Kakar is charging the Board of Governors of Special Technology Zones Authority to boost foreign investment in Pakistan but on the other hand a former foreign minister in being dragged and shoved inside a police vehicle. How are the foreigners going to invest in such atmosphere.?

The Baloch protestors are sitting in Islamabad since last several days but no senior government official had the audacity to go and sit with those protestors and listen to their genuine demands. But instead the image of Pakistan is being portrayed globally by the rivals of Pakistan that separatists movements in Pakistan are taking place. Are we ok with such image of our country.?

To accommodate a certain political party or few political parties the whole process of elections has turned into a joke. Who is going to believe the results of such elections? What will be the image of Pakistan democracy to the world? By suppressing one political party and promoting another political party what justice is being done to the voters of Pakistan.? Such attitudes decreases the nationalism and patriotism of the voters.

The image of the Justice system in Pakistan is also globally portrayed as a managed system which is rotten and decayed. The powerful and the blessed ones are getting justice swiftly and according to their desires but those who are oppressed or those with no wealth and contacts are seen banging doors of justice in one corner of the country or another corner of the country. Are we ok with such Justice system.?

Who is going to improve this image of Pakistan and how can this image be improved?. Let's start with the basics of any normal society and country by allowing each sector to operate independently and without interference. Let us focus on holding free and fair elections. Let us not make politics so brutal and nasty that no sane person thinks about becoming a politician or public servant. Let us stand as a nation together to fight the many challenges we are facing. Let us be a little forgiving as well.

Japan's defense spending

JAPAN has finalized its defense budget for the fiscal year starting April 2024 at 7.95 trillion yen (\$55.76 billion), over 1.13 trillion yen, or 16 percent, more than that in the last fiscal year. The decision was taken on Dec 22. Additionally, the Japanese government has decided to relax weapon export controls by shipping Patriot defense missiles to the United States, marking a significant shift in Japan's defense policy since World War II.

In the budget, Japan has allocated around 2 trillion yen to address its spare parts shortage and increase its conflict readiness; approximately 930 billion yen to build up its ammunition reserves to improve sustained combat capability; about 800 billion yen for the maintenance of its Self-Defense Forces' facilities and the improvement of ammunition depots; around 380 billion yen for the construction of an "Aegis" warship, which is expected to enter service by 2027; and approximately 640 billion yen for jointly developing next-generation fighter jets with the United Kingdom and Italy.

Moreover, Japan aims to increase investment in the development of hypersonic missiles, precision-guided missiles and the acquisition of new naval vessels. Particularly noteworthy is Japan's plan to introduce approximately 30 mobile landing craft and transport helicopters for the rapid deployment of SDF troops and supplies in its southwestern islands. About 400 billion yen is allocated for this purpose. Japan will also establish an SDF maritime transport group by integrating the ground, maritime, and air SDF to facilitate the deployment of forces and supplies to the southwest islands.

Given that Japan has identified China as its "greatest strategic challenge ever", the significant defense spending in its southwest islands is clearly aimed at China. One should read this in light of the US having just passed a military budget worth \$886 billion for the coming fiscal year, with China presented as cause for concern. The way it is sprinting toward 430 trillion yen in defense expenditure in the next five years, Japan must worry about the risks it may pose to its debt burden in the future.

Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Gaza, US universities and reproduction of power

Ahmed Moor

ON the morning of December 10, I awoke to two messages. The first was from my father. He was asking me to write to the US Department of State to request the evacuation of my uncle and his family from Rafah, in southern Gaza, where they are "without any food, shelter or water and very terrified from the bombing all the time". My aunt, my uncle's wife, was killed by the Israelis in Gaza in 2014. Now, he and his children face the real possibility of joining her in death.

The second was an email from a friend in a senior leadership role at one of the large, multilateral organisations. We attended the University of Pennsylvania together and she was dismayed by the capitulation of its current president, Liz Magill, to the right wing. But she felt, justifiably, that she was unable to speak out because of the oppressive environment at work, and in America in general. If Magill, a moderate who stood for very little, could not stand up to a clutch of rusty pitchforks, what hope was there for a woman of colour with Middle Eastern roots?

Those two messages, coming so close together, neatly captured the various fronts of the war on Palestinian lives. I graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 2006 with a BA in political science. My experience of the school was mixed. Having resources - which Penn does - is a nice thing for lots of reasons. But having money may also indicate an excessive orientation around, and to, it. Back then, securing a well-paying job after college was the main thrust of undergraduate life. The internships with consulting and banking firms were highly prized and expected to lead to rich offers from those same firms in New York or London. Things don't appear to have changed much: Penn ranked first, ahead of Princeton, Columbia, MIT and Harvard, in the 2024 Wall Street Journal/College Pulse Salary Impact study. Or, as the headline in the WSJ frames it, the school is first among "The Top US Colleges That Make Their Graduates Richer".

Which isn't to say that

Penn was an apolitical place; the accumulation of large amounts of money cannot possibly be apolitical. I recall an early conversation with a young woman who, upon learning I was from Palestine, responded with "there's no such

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Separately, I remember being raged at by another undergraduate, in the context of my student activism, "if you don't like it here you can go home, terrorist". While I suspect that Penn's focus on money may have been a major contributor to Magill's ultimate undoing - her testimony at Congress has been cited as a reason for the withdrawal of a \$100m donation - that is not the full story.

My experience of Penn was representative of elite America's pinched disdain for anything which threatens its conception of itself as meritocratic, deserving of exalted status and morally beyond reproach. It's an essentially conservative posture, one that resists growth and defies all efforts at meaningful social education. I observed that posture later in life, as a graduate student at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. There, I met some of the high-achieving minds behind President George W Bush's

catastrophe in Iraq. I remember one conversation I had with a senior State Department official who now serves as ambassador to a large country in Asia. "Hans Blix," I said, referring to the former head of the United Nations faceted, way to the Israeli genocide in Gaza. The relationship between Capitol Hill, University City, where Penn rests, expansively, Cambridge and Rafah is correctly understood through the prism of power. The main role of elite higher education institutions in America is to reproduce power and the infrastructure which attends it. If society is an organism, the university is the clonal petri dish. But in nature, nothing is reproduced perfectly; evolution is an essential feature of every biological system. And evolution within the university leads to a divergence from the staunchly guarded power structures that define our existing political order. The grotesque thrashing by the right wing, on television, in newspapers and through congressional inquiries, is animated by the awareness that young, educated people invariably think differently across generations. The assault on US universities is part of a larger effort to direct and control the evolution of thought in this society.

In this context, values are relative and speech is only valuable insofar as it isn't performed and lies dormant in the realm of abstract ideas, like "freedom" or "the arc of the moral universe". Now Magill stands, unwillingly in all likelihood, as the lamb on the altar. Collateral damage in so many words. The people who demanded her resignation may not have been able to articulate their whole reason for wanting her ouster. But they demonstrate an innate understanding of the stakes: the capacity of the organism to reproduce itself is embedded within the university, more than anywhere else. What they fail to understand, however, is that like Daniel Dennett's theory of the mind, independent thinking arises everywhere at once. Nothing short of a bullet to the brain can stop its emergence. Sadly, for the people in Gaza today, the advent of a new political understanding on Palestine in the US doesn't mean very much. My uncle and his family, and many thousands of others, may be dead by the time a new generation of Americans, whose evolution was forged by a genocide, come to power.

When I first learned of the hunt for large quarry at Penn and Harvard I shrugged. I regarded the topic as a sideshow; false moralism in an alternate universe meant to distract from the ongoing atrocities in Palestine. But now I think I was probably too dismissive of what was happening, and how it related in a direct, if multi-

Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, "told there were no weapons of mass destruction. Why did you go to war?" He explained, disarmingly, that "we believed what we wanted to believe". In seven words, he captured the essence of a system that insulates its people from accountability, which today partially explains why my family in Gaza are left to die along with the rest of the Palestinians there. It explains President Joe Biden's priggishness and the egg on his National Security Advisor's long face.

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Aljazeera

In Somalia, the rains have come but crisis is far from over

Wafaa Saeed Abdelatef

WHEN tiny Samia was brought to the UNICEF-supported medical centre in the northeastern port city of Bossaso in Somalia, her skin was pulled tight over her emaciated rib cage. The infant was so weak from fever and diarrhoea that her eyes remained half closed and she could hardly move her legs and arms.

Desperate for help, her mother had spent two days on the road, traveling 350km (220 miles) to get her child proper medical attention. "Her cries were uncontrollable," says the mother, Saido Mohamed, 31. "I didn't know what to do or where to go for help." After Samia was examined at the clinic, it was determined that she had severe acute malnutrition, a life-threatening condition. Doctors attached a drip to her left arm to replace lost fluids and monitored her closely for two weeks. Samia eventually recovered, but hundreds of thousands of children across Somalia are suffering just like her.

The Horn of Africa has recently experienced its worst drought in decades. With five failed rainy seasons in a row severely impacting agricultural production, the United Nations estimates that at least 43.3 million people across the region require life-sustaining assistance, including 8.25 million in Somalia. Thankfully, the current rainy season (April - June 2023) is faring better than expected and a famine appears to have been narrowly avoided by sustained humanitarian assistance and declining food prices. But the crisis is far from over. As many as 1.8 million Somali children under the age of five could still face acute malnutrition through 2023, with an estimated 477,700 needing treatment for severe wasting.

Somalia's story is not just one of prolonged droughts, either. Climate change has locked the country in a spiral of droughts and floods, with recent rains flooding the lowlands and displacing more than 200,000 people. Although initially slow to respond to the threat of famine, the international community eventually came to Somalia's aid. Aid organisations stepped up their efforts and famine was averted. However, while the threat of famine and severe malnutrition still looms on the horizon, with so much suffering in global headlines, the world's attention has already moved away from Somalia and the region.

The war in Ukraine and three years of COVID-19 have understandably left people numb to bad news and painful statistics. But now is not the time for the international community to switch off. The fact remains that Somalia and other countries in this region are just one failed rainy season away from another human catastrophe. The impact of recurring climatic shocks, widespread food insecurity, and reduced livelihood potential is being compounded by persistent conflict and community displacements. If we are to save more children like Samia, we must come together and continue supporting the lifesaving response in the Horn of Africa. On May 24, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs held a high-level pledging event in New York to support the humanitarian response in the Horn of Africa. While it hoped to raise \$7bn, so far only \$2.4bn has been announced for the region. More needs to be done to secure scaled-up resources to address desperate humanitarian needs, highlight the capacity and commitment of humanitarian partners to implement lifesaving assistance across the three countries, discuss the underlying factors affecting the region, and explore opportunities and practical, long-term solutions, including how to promote and finance climate adaptation.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is urging more UN member states to step up to help the Horn of Africa region. We need urgent funding to continue providing treatment to thousands of children in Somalia suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Specifically, UNICEF has major concerns about 18 of Somalia's 74 districts across the Bakool, Bay, Gedo, Hirran, Galgaduud and Mudug regions. These southern regions urgently need supplies of therapeutic foods and milk, as well as medicines, which will go to health centres run by the government or NGOs.? In addition, we need vaccines and medicines to prevent and treat diseases like cholera, pneumonia, malaria and measles which, if left unchecked, threaten the lives of thousands of children. UNICEF is working with the government and sister UN agencies such as the World Food Programme, the

International Organization for Migration, and the World Health Organization to prevent malnutrition, supply safe drinking water, and deliver essential health services.

As well as urgent, humanitarian funding, Somalia needs more predictable, long-term financing to help families to adapt to the vagaries of climate change. Among the least global contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, Somalia makes the case for why the international community bears the moral obligation to provide climate financing to countries unfairly carrying the weight of climate change. At the centre where Samia was treated, UNICEF supported the training of staff including a medical doctor. The 14 staff at the Bossaso Stabilization Centre treat children from the internally displaced and host communities who have both severe acute malnutrition and medical complications. When children's medical complications are stabilised at the centre, they are transitioned to receiving nutrition treatment. In addition to treating children, the centre provides the mothers or caretakers a daily home-cooked meal throughout the duration of their stay, which averages about 7 to 10 days. UNICEF supports the centre with funding from the US Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. But to continue carrying out this lifesaving work at similar centres across the country, we desperately need increased donor support. As of April/this year, UNICEF Somalia faced a funding gap of \$218m.?

This funding gap needs to be urgently bridged if we are to save more lives like Samia's.

Pursuing modernization for the well-being of people

Liu Dongchao & Yan Xiao

THE Communist Party of China has been pursuing modernization and seeking happiness for the people since its founding more than a century ago. Given that the vast majority of workers and peasants in China lived in dire conditions and extreme poverty when the Party was founded in 1921, the Party tried to first improve the lives and living conditions of the poor people through struggle.

Up to 1949, the Party's efforts to improve people's livelihoods focused on solving the basic living problems and improving the living conditions of the ordinary people in terms of food, clothing, housing, healthcare and education.

Comrade Mao Zedong had visionary thinking and planning for China's modernization at an early stage. On the eve of the nationwide victory, he proposed the steady transformation of

China from an agricultural country to an industrialized nation after the revolution's success, aiming to build China into a great socialist country. Under the leadership of Mao, China went from a state of extreme poverty and backwardness, where "we couldn't even produce a car, an airplane, a tank, or a tractor" at the beginning of the establishment of the People's Republic of China, to the establishment of an independent and relatively complete industrial system and national economic system. China achieved breakthroughs in cutting-edge defense technologies such as "two bombs and one satellite" and nuclear submarines.

The First National People's Congress held in 1954 proposed the four modernizations as the main goals, which included industry, agriculture, transportation, and national defense. Since the early days of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to

the third plenary session of the 11th CPC Central Committee in 1978, the Party continued its efforts to improve people's livelihoods through various means. The "cultural revolution" (1966-76) interrupted this process and seriously affected the improvement of people's livelihoods, yet the Party's efforts yielded considerable results in terms of improving people's livelihoods during the nearly three decades.

Since the launch of reform and opening-up, the Party's understanding of modernization has gradually deepened. And the Party leaders repeatedly stressed the importance of continuing to improve the livelihoods of the vast majority of the people. In 1979, the then Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping described modern agriculture, modern industry, modern national defense, and modern science and technology as goals of

"Chinese four modernizations", and pointed out that Chinese modernization must start from China's reality.

As a result, the 12th CPC National Congress report in 1982 stressed that constantly meeting the people's ever-growing material and cultural needs is the fundamental purpose of socialist production and construction, and the improvement of the living standards of urban and rural people can only be achieved through the development of production. And after the 12th Party National Congress, China formulated a development strategy to achieve the socialist modernization in three steps by the middle of the 21st century. With the advancement of reform and opening-up, China's social productivity and economy have both developed at a rapid pace, helping the country meet the basic needs of the people while helping generate more

demands of the people.

Since the 18th Party Congress in 2012, the country's efforts to improve people's livelihoods have come into a new era. China has taken a variety of measures to improve the education and medical care systems, boost employment, strengthen social security and other fields, increasingly meeting the needs of the people.

Since China succeeded in eradicating extreme poverty in 2020 and building a moderately well-off society in all respects, new needs of the people continue to emerge, further boosting the development of the country's economy and social undertakings. In his report to the 20th CPC National Congress in October 2022, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping proposed and elaborated on the Chinese path to modernization.

He emphasized that the path to modernization in China is the modernization

of common prosperity for all.

Hence, the country's efforts to improve people's livelihoods should cover a broader and more diverse space. In this context, a large number of laws and regulations have been promulgated and a slew of measures to benefit the people implemented. As a result, the Party's cause of improving people's livelihoods has made significant progress, the people's needs for a better life are being met, and the people's sense of gain, happiness and security are being promoted.

Moreover, the CPC leadership can always adhere to the people-centered principle, understand the characteristics of the different needs of the people in different times, formulate a policy system that is for the well-being of the people, and implement these policies with the help of competent personnel and rich resources.

With even leavers regretting Brexit, there’s one path back to rejoining the EU

LET Nigel Farage be our inspiration, let John Redwood be our role model. Not the way they would want, revered as the founding fathers of Brexit, toasted on this day every year as the men who led us to glorious independence from the hated empire of Brussels. Of course not that. On the contrary, 23 June 2016 is a milestone in our national story that evokes sadness and regret rather than celebration.

We don’t need to rehearse on this seventh anniversary all the ways in which Brexit has disappointed even those who voted for it. Farage and Redwood, along with Boris Johnson, Michael Gove, Jacob Rees-Mogg and the rest, promised increasing prosperity, cheaper food, flourishing trade and a flush NHS. They said we’d be free of all that tedious European red tape and would take back control of our borders, encouraging anyone agitated by immigration to believe that fewer people would come in. There would be no downside, only upsides. As David Davis pledged soon after the vote, our exit deal would “deliver the exact same benefits” as EU membership.

Look around to see how all that turned out. The country is in the grip of a cost of living crisis, food prices are rocketing, trade is either down or static while it’s surged for our EU neighbours, and the NHS is ailing. Post-Brexit red tape is strangling thousands of small businesses, whether travelling musicians or exporters of goods, tying them up in daunting forms or extra charges that cost time and money they don’t have. Those who thought legal migration of 330,000 people a year was too much when they voted in 2016 now contemplate an annual figure nearly twice as high: 606,000. As for the terms of our exit, ask any

Jonathan Freedland

one who buys from, sells to or is stuck in a queue to visit the continent if we enjoy the “exact same benefits” we once did.

These are not remainder facts. They are facts understood and absorbed by a growing majority of the British people, including a good chunk of those who voted leave. As the polling guru John Curtice notes, just 33% of Britons now believe the 2016 decision was the right one, while 55% say it was wrong. More striking still, as many as 59% say they would vote to rejoin the EU if given the chance, with just 41% preferring to stay out.

Combine those two facts – that Brexit has proved to be both disastrous and unpopular – and it’s easy to conclude that it’s only a matter of time before we reverse the decision we took seven years ago today. Indeed, it’s tempting to look at the 41 years that separated the 1975 referendum that sealed our membership and the 2016 ballot that ended it, reflect that politics moves twice as fast as it used to and predict that it will take half the time to undo Brexit – with a vote to rejoin scheduled for late 2036. After all, it is surely unsustainable to continue on a course that an emerging consensus regards as an act of national self-harm. Except the world is littered with unsustainable situations that are nevertheless sustained, seemingly for ever. And there are multiple obstacles that stand between us and what, to rejoiners, seems like a date with our obvious destiny.

For one thing, the status quo ante those 59% are longing to restore may no longer be available. The 27 remaining nations of the EU will be understandably wary of plunging themselves once more into the on-again-off-again psychodrama of the UK’s relationship to Europe – a

drama that is, in fact, about the UK’s relationship to itself, its struggle to see its place in the world as it truly is and to accept being a medium-sized European power rather than the imperial superpower of the recent past. The member states of the EU would need to know that this time it’s for keeps. If they do entertain talk of UK readmission, it won’t be on the same terms as before. The UK had a sweetheart deal – including a hefty cash rebate, an opt-out on the euro and much more – that the 27 will be reluctant to offer again. Any future referendum is likely to be on a package less appealing than the one Britons cast aside in 2016.

To get to that point, a governing party would first have to put the question. Few are rushing to do that. Labour’s preferred posture is Trappist, hoping to stay mute on the issue lest it unsettle the pro-leave members of its electoral coalition. If it does speak, it is to say that Brexit is done and there will be no change. Even the Liberal Democrats, perhaps eyeing pro-Brexit voters in south-west target seats, keep their mouths shut. Of course, politics is dynamic and those calculations could change. But given the tortuous process of EU-UK negotiation that would be involved, rejoin is a project that could span two parliaments: which party would willingly commit that much political capital to such an endeavour? Especially when you consider that “Europe” has lost much of its salience. In 2019, 70% rated it as the most important issue facing the country; now just 19% say that.

More poignantly, rejoin is predicated on the notion that Britons miss what they no longer have. What if that feeling dissipates, as memories fade? “A generation brought up without the Erasmus scheme and who find it easier to travel to the US

than to the EU will think differently,” says Anand Menon, director of UK in a Changing Europe.

All these obstacles are real. None can be wished away. Which is why rejoiners need to look to the likes of Farage and Redwood for inspiration. The long march from 1975 to 2016 required a dogged, even obsessive, persistence and, as important, a strategic patience. They didn’t move straight to their end goal: before they were Brexiters, they posed as mere Eurosceptics. They were prepared to play the long game, inching incrementally – a rebellion over the Maastricht treaty here, opposition to joining the euro there – towards their ultimate goal of exit. Sad to say, it worked. Rejoiners should do the same. Start with commonsense, popular demands – say, a new, reciprocal exchange scheme for young people, closer cooperation on security or shared food safety and environmental standards – moves only an ideology could oppose. A review of the EU-UK trade agreement is due to start in 2026: with a Labour government in place, that could be the vehicle for steady, gradual convergence. After that, the Overtown window could be sufficiently open to let in a conversation about re-entering the customs union and the single market. And once you’re talking about that, rejoining the EU itself becomes the natural course of action.

Step by step by step. Mocked and on the margins at first, dismissed as unrealistic or swivel-eyed, prepared to be a Europe bore – the Brexiters showed us how it’s done and what it takes. It might be harder for us than it was for them. We have the young, but they had the old and the old vote. We have facts, but they had myths, and myths are often more potent. Still, theirs is a path worth studying. It led them to a rupture from our neighbours. It might just lead us to a reunion.

Republicans must heed significance of US domestic migration trends

Dalia Al-Aqidi

states such as New York and California.

One notable example of this trend unfolded in 2021, when the CEO of Tesla, Elon Musk, made headlines with the announcement of the electric car behemoth’s headquarters relocation. Previously situated in the renowned tech hub of Silicon Valley, California, Tesla’s headquarters was moved to Austin. This decision sent shockwaves through the business and technology sectors, capturing widespread public interest. In explaining the motivation for the relocation, Musk highlighted factors such as housing affordability and improved commute times, which were pivotal in driving the strategic decision. This move made by Tesla, with its global prominence and influence, symbolized a broader trend whereby companies have opted to establish their operational bases in states that offer favorable conditions and opportunities. By selecting Texas as its new base, Tesla demonstrated a strategic alignment with the state’s business-friendly environment and incentives. This high-profile move resonated across industries, inspiring other businesses to reevaluate their geographical footprint and consider the advantages of such red states.

The relocation decisions of well-known figures and influential companies serve as poignant examples of the shifting landscape within the business world, wherein states traditionally known for their economic prowess and technological innovation face increasing competition from emerging hubs. The allure of affordable living and improved accessibility, as mentioned by Musk, are among the many factors driving this trend, as businesses seek to optimize their operations and capitalize on the opportunities presented by states that are fostering conducive environments for growth and innovation. Oracle Corporation, a multinational technology company, moved its corporate headquarters from California to Texas, followed by Hewlett Packard Enterprise, which did likewise. Another example is the Charles Schwab Corporation, which is a major brokerage and banking firm. It fled San Francisco, California, to guess where? None other than Texas.

The movement of Democrats to red states and its impact on political demography can have a range of effects, both in the near term and potentially over the long haul. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that making precise predictions about the exact ramifications and their influence on the results of the

2024 presidential election entails a degree of speculation, given the multitude of factors and uncertainties inherent in electoral dynamics. When Democrats relocate to red states, particularly in significant numbers, it has the potential to reshape the political landscape by introducing a broader array of viewpoints and preferences within those states. The infusion of individuals leaning toward the Democratic Party may engender shifts in local and state-level elections, rendering them more competitive for Democrats and challenging the established political dominance of Republicans in those regions. However, the impact on the outcomes of the 2024 presidential election hinges on several key factors. These include the magnitude of the migration phenomenon, the concentration of Democratic voters in specific regions or districts within the red states, the overall political climate prevailing at that time, and the respective candidates’ strategic campaign approaches.

It is crucial to recognize that electoral results are influenced by multiple elements extending beyond individual migration patterns. Broader national issues, the appeal of candidates, campaign strategies, voter turnout and specific state dynamics all play integral roles in shaping electoral outcomes. Moreover, the influence of Democratic migration on political demography may manifest gradually over time. It encompasses factors such as generational shifts among new residents, their active engagement in local political affairs and the evolution of party platforms and strategies to align with the changing demographics. The impact may not be confined to a single election cycle but could have far-reaching implications that extend into the future.

Ultimately, the extent to which Democrats’ relocation to red states will impact the results of the 2024 presidential election rests upon a complex interplay of numerous variables. A precise understanding of the outcome necessitates conducting a comprehensive analysis encompassing state-level dynamics, demographic shifts and the evolving political climate as the election date draws near. The Republican Party must not overlook these transformative shifts in political demography within the states it currently controls. Instead, it should proactively adapt its strategies to capitalize on the perceived shortcomings of Democratic-led local governments and seek to flip traditionally blue states. This strategic approach is crucial to safeguarding the nation from the detrimental consequences of the policies advocated by the radical far left.

Scottish politicians have the courage to decriminalise drugs

Simon Jenkins

THE Scottish government declared last week that it wanted to decriminalise the possession of drugs for personal use. Possession of drugs in Scotland remains under the pre-devolution Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and, as the Scottish drugs policy minister Elena Whitham says, the current approach has “failed”. Scotland has the highest drug mortality rate in Europe. Drug use is polluting every public service from mental health and homelessness to welfare, policing and imprisonment.

Scotland is supposedly in charge of these services. Yet the central government in London absolutely refuses to allow it to touch drugs policy. It reacted to Whitham’s announcement as though she were a lobbyist for the dealers. A horrified Rishi Sunak rushed out a statement reinforcing his government’s “tough stance” on drugs. An equally horrified Labour promptly agreed. All recent attempts by Scotland to “socialise” its drug predicament have been blocked by the Home

Office. This included last year’s effort to set up consumption and treatment centres for addicts in town centres. The UK’s home secretary, Suella Braverman, reacted by saying that the right answer lay in tougher laws not weaker ones. She reportedly wanted cannabis to become a class A drug. In March she also suppressed a report supporting decriminalisation from her own Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, a body supposedly independent but long purged of members thought to favour reform. Its secret report is now dubbed a “confidential conversation with ministers”.

Not just decriminalising but legalising and regulating supply of cannabis (and, in certain countries, other drugs) is the norm among progressive western democracies, as offering a civilised and realistic means of controlling demand and supply. In decriminalising cannabis, the UK trails behind the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Mexico, Uruguay, Canada

and South Africa, not to mention 21 American states and cities, including California, New York City and Washington DC. It is estimated that more Americans, roughly 55 million, now use cannabis than smoke tobacco, apparently to the benefit of their health. Virtually all EU countries have legalised medical cannabis, which in Britain is controlled not by the medical authorities but by the home secretary, who has rendered it all but unobtainable. It is like leaving education in the hands of creationists. Many of the reformist countries still experience drug problems - though few on a par with Scotland’s. The Netherlands is pestered with drug tourists. North America’s various regimes offer useful lessons in what not to do as well as what to do. Colorado and Canada are worth watching. London’s mayor, Sadiq Khan, who favours decriminalisation, might study New York, where legalisation was introduced last year. Portugal has found that

decriminalisation means what it says: less crime, but also less addiction.

This debate is not really about drugs but about political courage. It echoes the discussion on capital punishment in the 1960s. Then, politicians lived in mortal fear of pro-hanging constituents, who would summon them to meetings to agree that “hanging was too good” for criminals. Few dared advocate abolition, until a brave home secretary, Roy Jenkins, faced down his officials and got parliament to ban the rope. We do not have brave ministers today. Out of office they may be reformers.

But in power they regard the Home Office as an in-house Daily Mail that can click its fingers, summon the dihedrals and silence debate or reform. But Scotland supposedly has a devolved administration. It has a devolved solution to a devolved problem. At the very least, it should be allowed to pilot its proposal. We might have hoped that Keir Starmer would agree. But he too lacks the guts.

The Alhambra and the Spanish presidency of the EU

Jorge Hevia Sierra

LATER this year the Spanish presidency of the Council of the European Union will organise 23 informal ministerial meetings in 21 cities throughout the country, in addition to the Conference of Speakers of Parliament, the trip of the College of Commissioners to Madrid, and the informal meeting of heads of state or government.

That meeting will be held in Granada, a city at the foot of the Sierra Nevada and in the south of Spain and Andalusia with a historical legacy of enormous tourist interest. It is where the formidable Alhambra, the 13th century Nasrid palace admired throughout the world, was built by architects from the ancient Arab world. The European Union Film Festival 2023 included the screening of the Spanish film “The Builders of the Alhambra” last month in Riyadh. The film directed by Isabel

Fernández is a unique feature-length documentary that rebuilds the Nasrid society in Andalusia for the first time. From the embassy of Spain we were able to feel the special affection of the Saudi spectators after the screening of the film due to its historical significance and the memory of the ties that have united Spanish and Arab cultures since ancient times.

Once again, the Nasrid palace will be the protagonist when the Spanish government grants a special rank to the Alhambra, since the most important meeting of the Spanish presidency of the EU will take place in its premises. The leaders of 44 European countries will meet in October in Granada –not only the 27 members of the EU will attend, but also another 17 members of the European Political Community who do not belong to

the bloc.

With a special nod to our Saudi friends from the memory of the Alhambra, the embassy of Spain is pleased to say that Spain assumes the presidency of the EU in the second half of 2023, from July 1 to Dec. 31, at a period of great challenges for the member states and the EU as a whole. The Spanish presidency has established four priorities for its period in office, as announced by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and more recently the Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Manuel Albares: to reindustrialize the EU and ensure its open strategic autonomy; advance the green transition and the environmental adaptation; promote greater social and economic justice; and strengthen European unity in a world of uncertainty and growing geopolitical ten-

sions.

In a geopolitical context marked by uncertainty, Europe must become an area of certainties. In this context, Spain acknowledges the strategic importance of Saudi Arabia for the EU, and welcomes the strengthening of bilateral relations – notably through closer political dialogue and consultations and enhanced sectoral cooperation matching the priorities of Vision 2023 relating to global issues such as the fight against climate change and environmental degradation, or dealing with regional issues deepening the strategic partnership with the Gulf.

The Patio de los Leones, the Nasrid Palaces, the Generalife, the towers ... these are places that the Spanish government wants to make known to the European delegations, at the same time that once again an Arab historical cultural flavor links Spain with Saudi Arabia.

Chinese military a force for peace and justice

CHAIRMAN Mao Li Daguang & Wang Zhe
Zedong was the principal founder and leader of the people’s army. What we call Mao Zedong Thought today is a development of Marxism-Leninism, and military and political ideology by Mao Zedong. The People’s Liberation Army, whose history dated back in 1927, is the people’s force armed with Mao Zedong Thought.

Till the early 1930s, under the leadership of Mao Zedong and based on China’s real situation, the army waged armed struggles in the rural areas where the Kuomintang regime was relatively weak, making it possible to use “rural areas to encircle the cities and finally seizing power in the cities and the whole country”.

Under the guidance of Mao Zedong Thought, the people’s army has fought bloody battles, and despite suffering losses, forged itself into a force of peace and justice. The Red Army was then forced to make a strategic shift and arrive in northern Shaanxi in triumph after the Long March (1934-36). During the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), Mao Zedong formulated the policy of forming a Chinese united front against Japanese aggression, while initiating the second cooperation between Kuomintang and the CPC which prompted the whole of the Chinese nation to join the war of

resistance against Japanese aggression.

At the 7th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 1945, Mao Zedong Thought was established as the guiding ideology of the Party. After the victory in the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Chiang Kai-shek waged an all-out civil war principally against communists. And Mao Zedong, together with Zhu De and Zhou Enlai, led the military force to fight the superior Kuomintang forces and defeat them one by one. After the three major campaigns of Liaoshen, Huaihai and Pingjin, and the Yangtze River Crossing campaign, the people’s army won a great victory in the War of Liberation under the Party’s leadership, facilitating the founding of the People’s Republic of China on Oct 1, 1949.

Along the way, the fearless and valorous people’s army helped establish a peaceful and people-friendly People’s Republic to liberate the toiling masses and achieve equality for all. Soon after the founding of the People’s Republic, the Chinese People’s Volunteers force, under Mao Zedong’s leadership, launched the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53) to help the Korean people to defend their motherland. The CPV force helped restore peace in Asia after defeating the

United States-led aggressors.

Since then, the Chinese military has conducted many self-defense and humanitarian missions, including those across the country’s borders, safeguarding peace in the region and beyond. The Chinese Navy has dispatched naval vessels to carry out regular escort operations in the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters, making an important contribution to global peace and stability. The PLA has been forged into a force of peace and justice. The PLA is a loyal defender of the People’s Republic of China, which remains committed to an independent foreign policy of peace and peaceful development. And the PLA has helped implement this policy, and faithfully safeguarded national security.

However, as the PLA approaches the centenary of its founding and pursues its centenary goals, some unscrupulous politicians in other countries are using the internet to spread rumors about the PLA, by claiming that the PLA said, “there will be a war when the army has been established for 100 years”. This is a blatant lie, and another attempt to smear China and its military. The PLA will continue to safeguard national security and China’s core interests, and no country or individual should expect the PLA to pull back on that front.

The China Daily

It’s time to get our ‘Chelsea tractors’ moving to Ukraine

Ben Wallace & Hamish De Bretton-Gordon

DESPITE recent controversy over the proposed project to send ageing “Chelsea tractors” from Kensington to Kyiv, this enlightened idea must come to fruition. It can be done quickly - now, in fact - since the hold-up is over a simple bureaucratic issue that is easily overcome. It would require changes to regulations for the certificate of destruction, required for car scrappage, but this is not beyond the whim of the relevant secretaries of state. With immediate action from the Transport Secretary and logistical support from the Ministry of Defence, we can get this process moving and hand Ukraine a much-deserved Christmas present. Do it now.

It would be mystifying, to say the least, if ministers hold this up for days or weeks - or seek instead to play bizarre political games - given our historic support for Ukraine

against Putin’s aggression. This is no time for silly Westminster politics: if the Ukrainians do not prevail, Nato could be brought into direct conflict with Moscow and we could once again have war across Europe.

In the deep snow of winter and the mud of the spring, a 4x4 is about the only civilian vehicle that can make any headway. Many of the soldiers on the front line have been driving themselves to combat points - a not insignificant task in mid-winter, and much of the logistical support of getting rations and fuel to the front is done by civilian means. There is no shortage of fuel, and these ageing Land Rovers and Toyotas are easily maintained by the plethora of garages and mechanics spread across the land. With many smaller vehicles carrying stores to the front, they will be much more difficult to target from Russian drones than large lorries and

military vehicles.

From an environmental perspective, what better way to extend the useful lives of these vehicles, rather than add them to landfill or supply new ones to the Ukrainian forces? And if climate activists object, they should be reminded that Ukraine is fighting for the security of Europe. If that declines, they face a much more immediate threat than climate change. Russia is now on a “total war” footing and will spend a large proportion of GDP on defence next year. It is turning tractor factories to tank production and shows no signs of stopping the fight in Ukraine and beyond if successful. The UK has emptied its tank sheds and ammunition stores to support the Ukrainian armed forces, but there is much more we are capable of doing as a nation to show Kyiv we are full square behind them. Those 4x4s due to be

scrapped, and similar types of vehicles across the UK, could be as useful as a few extra tanks or artillery pieces. Indeed, soldiers in Ukraine have a great liking for British vehicles.

So let’s do it and stop the squabbling. Much is being made of the Mayor of London blocking this project. But while he may have made a number of errors during his rule of the capital, this is not one of them. It is now in the able hands of government ministers to make this happen. At Christmas, when British soldiers are serving around the globe and Ukrainian soldiers are in the trenches of the Donbass, let us ensure that those Chelsea tractors that might well have been taking the great and good shopping in Knightsbridge last year are taking much needed supplies to the brave fighters on the front lines in the battle with Russia in the very near future.

The Telegraph



Govt urged to frame economic policies

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq emphasized the need of holding consultation with chambers and stakeholders before framing economic policies, and tax-reforms.

The SCCI chief also demanded review on IPPs agreements to overcome the rising energy crisis and control on high electricity tariffs.

He sought pragmatic steps for provision of electricity and gas on subsidized rates to industries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Fuad Ishaq was addressing a meeting during a Inland Study Tour of the 34th Senior Management Course Officers of National Institute of Management (NIM) Islamabad here at the chamber house, according to a press release here on Thursday.

Undertraining senior officers' delegation was

spearheaded by Directing Staff, NIM Islamabad Muhammad Imran.

The meeting was attended by SCCI vice president Ijaz Khan Afridi, executive member Muhammad Ismail Safi, former president Faiz Muhammad Faizi, former senior vice presidents Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Imran Khan Mohmand, former vice president Shuja Muhammad, and former executive member Muhammad Aurangzeb and others.

A detailed multi-media presentation was given regarding the chamber history and its objectives to the visiting senior officers here at SCCI house.

The SCCI president said bureaucracy has played a pivotal role in framing policies. He, however, called for taking chambers and stakeholders on board before formulation of policies and tax-reforms initiatives so that it will enable them to execute them at every level.

Fuad Ishaq while

responding to various queries of senior officers stressed it is essential to ensure uninterrupted electricity and gas supply to industries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He called for rationalization in the taxation system through reforms.

KP is self-sufficient and a surplus province in gas production, while total gas production of KP is 550mmcfds against its total consumption of 196 mmcfds, in which industries only consume 35 mmcfds and 40mmcfds CNG sector, Ishaq explained.

He said despite the fact that uninterrupted electricity and gas was unavailable to industries in the K-P, even though gas is being sold on highest tariffs to consumers of the province, he added.

Under article 158-A of the constitution of the country, Fuad Ishaq said KP has first right to exploit their natural resources, but

it is highly unfortunate that for the last 13 years, not a single gas connection was provided to industries in the province.

Replying to a question regarding illegal trade/smuggling, the SCCI chief said tariffs/duties of 224 items should be brought equal to Afghanistan and Iran to curb the menace of smuggling.

He also suggested provision of electricity to industries on wheeling charges.

Later, Directing Staff, NIM Islamabad Muhammad Imran also spoke on the occasion and thanked the SCCI chief and members for hosting the undertraining senior officers of various government departments.

Muhammad Imran assured that policies should be framed in consultation with chambers, and stakeholders and suggestions of SCCI would be presented to their respective departments to incorporate them in policies.



PESHAWAR: Labours busy in work at fruit market.

PSX stays bullish, gains 1,188 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday continued with bullish trend, gaining 1,188.61 points, a positive change of 1.95 percent, closing at 62,052.24 points against 60,863.62 points the previous trading day.

A total of 676,243,466 shares valuing Rs.20.278 billion were traded during the day as compared to 669,356,605 shares valuing Rs.16.115 billion the last day.

Some 382 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 283 of them recorded gains and 83 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 16 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 62,885,046 shares at Rs.4.76 per share, Worldcall Telecom with 46,188,089 shares at Rs.1.42 per share and Fauji Foods with 43,053,774 shares at Rs.10.88 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.999.00 per share price, closing at Rs.21,999.00, whereas the runner-up was Nestle Pakistan with a Rs.200.00 rise in its per share price to Rs.8,000.00.

Faisal Spinning Mills witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.20.75 per share closing at Rs. 340.00, followed by Pak Suzuki Motor Company with Rs.17.33 decline to close at Rs.562.36.

Rupee gains 26 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistani Rupee on Thursday witnessed the 12th consecutive recovery session as it gained 26 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 281.93 against the previous day's closing of Rs 282.19.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs 281.9 and Rs 284.4 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs 1.87 to close at Rs 313.47 against the last day's closing of Rs 311.60, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen went up by 03 paise and closed at Rs 2, whereas an increase of Rs 2.14 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 361.40 compared to the last closing of Rs 359.26.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 08 and 07 paise to close at Rs 76.76 and Rs 75.17 respectively.

Gold rates up by Rs.2,200

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.2,200 and was sold at Rs.22,800 on Thursday compared to its sale at Rs.220,600 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.1,886 to Rs.191,015 from Rs.189,129 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs. 175,097 from Rs.173,368, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs2,680 and Rs.2,297.66 respectively.

OGDCL hold free surgical eye camp

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, organized a three-day Free Surgical Eye Camp at its CSR Dispensary in Chak Naurang, located in the Chakwal district of Punjab in collaboration with the Al-Shifa Eye Trust Hospital. The eye camp, held from December 24 to 26, aimed to provide essential eye care services to the local community.

During the free eye camp, a total number of 1290 patients were screened at the OPD and received essential preliminary

assessments. Among them, 762 patients were provided with vision glasses, and 40 patients received post-operation dark glasses. Special glasses were provided to 285 patients, addressing specific visual needs.

Moreover, 55 patients underwent Lab/COVID-19 tests during the camp. Furthermore, a total number of 40 eye surgeries were performed, contributing to the long-term improvement of the patients' eye health.

Patients who availed themselves of the services expressed their complete satisfaction with the overall process at the eye camp. OGDCL, under its CSR program, covered all expenses incurred during the three-day camp, including laser/phaco surgery, provision of vision glasses, and medicines.

OGDCL is committed to enhancing the health and well-being of communities in and around its operational areas. Through corporate social responsibility initiatives, OGDCL aims to positively impact the lives of residents and contribute to the overall prosperity of the regions it serves.

The Executive Director (HR/Admin) and General Manager (CSR) of OGDCL also visited the eye camp site and met with staff of eye camp and also patients and other community members. The local community thanked to OGDCL for such wonderful facility at their door step.

Gas theft crackdown: 149 connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 149 connections; Rs 2.09 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 16 connections on illegal use of gas while another 21 on use of compressor and also

imposed fine of Rs 0.11 million against gas theft cases.

In Rawalpindi the team disconnected 3 connections on illegal use of gas while another 5 on use of compressor.

In Multan 3 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas while another 7 on use of compressor.

In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 61 connections on account

of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 1.959 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 3FIRs against gas pilfers.

In Sahiwal, the team disconnected 3 connections on the use of compressor.

The regional team of Sheikhupura disconnected 30 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed fine of Rs 0.021 against gas theft cases.

Stable steel industry vital to economic growth

LAHORE (APP): Steel industry needs to be strengthened for sustainable economic growth, a prerequisite for rapid development, progress and prosperity in the country.

This was stated by Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Meher Kashif Younis while talking to a delegation of industrialists led by Ahmad Waqar here Thursday.

Meher said that the iron and steel industry was the bottomline producer industry and the mother of all industries as it caters to other industries, thus contributing towards industrial and national development.

He said that worldwide, the steel industry was considered one of the vital aspects of stable growth and economic development. "Our industrial policy needs to be revisited to prioritize steel production over sugar, cola and cigarettes production," he remarked.

There was definitely a dire need for promoting the steel sector as the demand for steel was higher than its production and the demand and supply gap was met through imports. "Even if the reverse were the case, we would have exported steel given its high demand world over," he highlighted.

The FTO Coordinator said steel was also recyclable and, therefore, unlikely to run out like fossil fuels.

"About 88 per cent of steel is recycled throughout the world and unlike other recycled materials, steel never loses its strength during recycling."

"This is the reason that ship-breaking which is a part of the steel sector, is so important," he said, citing that about 15 per cent of the domestic production of steel came from ship-breaking scrap. Highlighting the significance of steel sector in national development, Meher said iron and steel sector was part of the large

scale manufacturing; not only it had linkage with other industrial sub-sectors, but also with the agriculture and services sectors – which used implements made of iron and steel.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity remained active at the port where three ships, Cap Andreas, Maersk Cabo Verde, Sparto and Isabella Kosan carrying Containers, Mogas and LPG, berthed at Container Terminal, Oil Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile three more ships Epos, Velos Libra and Ejanwith Coal, Canola and LNG also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hours.

A total of 08ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, three ships Maersk Cabo Verde, Simaismaand Pacific Victory left the port on Thursday morning and two more shipsIsabella Kosan and Leena areexpected to sail on afternoon.

Cargo throughput during last 24 hours stood at 139,228 tonnes, comprising 87,433 tonnes imports cargo and 51,795tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,653 Containers (733 TEUs Imports and 1,920 TEUs export) was handled at the port.

There are five ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them a bulk cargo carrier Epos & another ship Vancour carrying Coal and Containers areexpected to take berthst PIBT and QICton Thursday, 28th December, while two more container ships Maersk Breezy and Mynvare due to arrive at Port Qasim on Friday.

Pakistan Horticulture Development, Export Company hosted webinar

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export Company (PHDEC) hosted a webinar focused on "Enhancements in White Onion Through Good Agricultural Practices and Its Nutritional Benefits."

The protocol for inspection and quarantine requirements for export of onion from Pakistan to China between the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) and General Administration of Customs China (GACC) in 2021. In Chinese market white onion is more in demand. Keeping in view the opportunity of Chinese market, PHDEC organized webinar on producing white onion.

The event targeted processors, potential growers, exporters, research and development experts, as well as private companies. Predominantly, participants from the provinces of Sindh, Baluchistan, and

Punjab participated, collectively contributing significantly to the nation's onion production.

Pakistan, ranking as the 6th largest global onion producer, annually yields 2 million metric tons (MMT) over an expanse of approximately 150 thousand hectares mainly red onion. The country stands at the 7th position in onion exports, with an annual export value of \$147 million. While onion cultivation spans the entire country, the production is notably concentrated in six districts of Sindh and Balochistan: Hyderabad, Mirpur Khas, Sanghar, Chaghi, Kalat, and Turbat, contributing around 60% to the national onion production.

Recognizing the suboptimal production of white onions in Pakistan and the newfound opportunity created by China opening its market for white onion imports from Pakistan, the webinar aimed to guide

growers on cultivating white onions for export to China.

Mehvish Tahir, Scientific Officer, Vegetable Research Institute, AARI, Faisalabad provided a detailed presentation on white onions, addressing cultivation constraints such as climate dependence, limited availability of high-quality seeds, and the need for approved varieties with specific characteristics. She explained the province wise area and production of onion, soil type and climate suitable for onion cultivation in Pakistan, province wise planting and harvesting time, nutrition management. Seed rate, sowing time, methods for preparing beds and irrigation system was also discussed with pictures.

Ms. Mehvish Tahir explained the reasons of low production of White Onions in Pakistan and impact of malpractices and lack of knowledge of rec-

ommended production technology of white onion on quality and yield.

Ch Maqsood Ahmad Jatt, Chairman Potato Society, Okara appreciates PHDEC's Effort and requested to Agriculture Research Institute to introduced the range of white onion varieties and seed availability to the farmers. He further requested to PHDEC to share the market insight of china especially prices, SPS compliance and other protocols.

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

Pak-Afghan businessmen agree over holding of Int'l Expo

PESHAWAR (APP): A meeting of leading businessmen and stakeholders of Pak-Afghan trade have agreed over the holding of an international Trade Expo in Peshawar in the initial months of 2024.

The meeting organized by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) at Area Study Center Peshawar University was held as a pre-conference on Pak-Afghan International Expo.

The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam was chief guest on the occasion and attended the meeting virtually.

Leading businessmen from Pakistan and Afghanistan who attended the meeting included Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, Coordinator FPCCI KP, Sartaj Khan, Chairman TDAP, Nauman Bashir, VP PAJCCI, Shujah Muhammad, Director PAJCCI, Intiaz Ahmad Ali, Ex. SVP SCCI, Engr Manzoor Elahi.

Those who represented

Afghanistan included Counsel General in Peshawar, Hafiz Mohibullah, Trade Attaché, Waheed-ullah Himatyar, Ex. Deputy Attache Trade, Dr. Hameed Fazli, and others.

Participants of the meeting held threadbare discussions on issues about Pak-Afghan trade and agreed on taking measures for the promotion of commerce in the region for the benefit of thousands of people on both sides of the divide.

They also agreed in principle that an international Pak-Afghan International Expo should be held in Peshawar in the coming months of 2024 wherein products of both countries should be displayed besides holding discussions among the stakeholders for the promotion of trade.

Speaking on the occasion, Coordinator PAJCCI, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi appreciated the efforts of FPCCI for holding of the conference on the important issue of Pak-Afghan trade.

He said Pak-Afghan trade is a big source of livelihood for thousands of

families in both countries and it should be linked with politics.

Zia also thanked Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali for sparing time for the meeting and expressed the hope that suggestions made by participants would be given due consideration.

He also mentioned some hurdles in the smooth sailing of trade and suggested for creation of a liaison committee consisting of members of stakeholders of Pak-Afghan trade from both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In this regard, he also the mention of Facilitation Committee formed at the Torkhem border for holding meetings of traders and stakeholders from Pakistan and Afghanistan sides every month.

Taking part in the discussion, the Afghan Consul General in Peshawar, Hafiz Mohibullah demanded the release of stuck-up containers of Afghan Transit trade in Karachi port.

Engr Manzoor raised the issue of slow movement in

the Torkham crossing point, delaying the shipment of consignments resulting in financial losses in the shape of detention charges over containers.

The participants also discussed bilateral investment opportunities, exchange of businessmen delegations, facilitation in visa issuance from both sides, and reduction in collection of different charges from vehicles carrying Afghanistan bound goods.

The Governor in his virtual address lauded the role played by FPCCI and PAJCCI in holding the conference. He also thanked TDAP and the Area Study Center for extending cooperation in arranging meetings of businessmen from Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Ghulam Ali said the government is giving serious consideration to the improvement of commerce and trade and in this connection are taking different steps. He also held out assurance of his full cooperation and support in holding the international expo in Peshawar.

Nadeem Ahmad and VP Asim Saeed Sheikh suggested that FBR should also establish fast fast-track complaint cell at the regional level.

They said, the business community was in favour of a documented economy but added that they were already facing problems on FBR systems PARAL and IRIS and suggested that in addition to delaying the enforcement of SRO for some time, fast complaints redressal mechanisms be introduced at regional tax office (RTO) level.

MCCI want delayed enforcement of electronic invoicing system

MULTAN (APP): Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) has urged the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to grant a year-long grace period to businesses for training and adaptation before enforcing a new electronic invoicing system on sales tax under a recent Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO).

The demand was aired at the Taxation sub-committee meeting of MCCI chaired by its convener Khawaja Suhail Tufail. MCCI president Mian Rashid Iqbal, SVP Nadeem Ahmad

Sheikh, and VP Asim Saeed Sheikh and other members of the subcommittee were in attendance.

Khawaja Suhail Tufail said that businesses had serious reservations about the new electronic invoicing system on sales tax under SRO 1525-DI(I)2023 and appealed to the FBR to delay it, at least for a year, before it is enforced, so that they have ample time to be trained and prepared for its enforcement. MCCI president Mian Rashid Iqbal said that FBR should consult business and Industry

on business-related law drafts to avoid problems at the enforcement stage.

The SRO was introduced for sales tax on Fast Moving Consumer Goods through an electronic invoicing system linked with FBR system, says veteran industrialist Khawaja Usman. He added that troubles would surface at the initial stage and the absence of a mechanism for complaint redressal would further complicate problems for businesses and industries.

MCCI president Mian Rashid Iqbal, SVP Sheikh



In brief

Perry, McGrath fifties help Australia

W A N K H E D E (Cricinfo): Ellyse Perry and Phoebe Litchfield made India's above-par score of 282 look less threatening as Australia went 1-0 up in the first of the three ODIs at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday. Losing Alyssa Healy in the first over of the innings, Litchfield and Perry notched up 78 and 75 respectively, with Tahlia McGrath contributing a valuable unbeaten 68 as Australia recorded the second-highest run chase in women's ODIs. This was after Jemimah Rodrigues's classy 82 and Pooja Vastrakar's fighting 62 not out at No.9 on a sultry Mumbai afternoon propelled India to their highest ODI total against Australia. Perry's intent was clear from the beginning as she started off briskly to keep up with the required run rate of 5.66. The allrounder smashed nine fours and two clean sixes in her 72-ball innings while the left-handed Litchfield gave us a glimpse of the future of Australia's batting with her calculative knock. She began the innings by just stroking to get accustomed to the conditions and once she got settled in, Litchfield began to find boundaries with the sweep, reverse sweep and punches off the back foot. Playing her 12th ODI, first in India, Litchfield scored eight boundaries and a six in her 89-ball knock. The left-right duo stitched together 148 off 150 balls, and by the time Perry was dismissed by Deepti Sharma in the 26th over, the foundation was well laid for the chase. Beth Mooney and McGrath capitalised on the start to put on another 88 runs off just 67 deliveries and made the chase look effortless as the wicket became better to bat on. Vastrakar cleaned up Mooney for 42 in the 42nd over, but it was too late for India to bounce back with little help from the bowlers in the second innings. McGrath, in her first tour as full-time vice-captain, stayed till the end to complete the formalities with six wickets in hand.

Manu likely to miss start of Six Nations

LONDON (BBC): Centre Manu Tuilagi is expected to miss the start of England's Six Nations campaign with a groin injury. Tuilagi suffered a grade three tear in the second half of Sale's 22-20 Premiership win over Saracens at the Salford Community Stadium last Friday. The 32-year-old, capped 60 times by England, was plagued by a long-term groin problem earlier in his career. Tuilagi is likely to miss England's opening Six Nations match against Italy in Rome on 3 February. They will then face Wales at Twickenham the following week. Sale director of rugby Alex Sanderson said Tuilagi's injury would not require surgery and that the player himself was determined to get fit as soon as possible. "Manu has pulled his groin and we think he's going to be back during the Six Nations, but not for the first week," Sanderson said. "Six weeks is the recommended time for the injury and Manu is saying four. I spoke to him and he's like, 'I need to play and if I'm good to play it's up to England regarding selection'." He was in the frame before his intent to keep playing international rugby." Tuilagi played six matches for England at the 2023 Rugby World Cup in France. Meanwhile, Sale prop Bevan Rodd will miss the entire Six Nations after undergoing toe surgery.

Marsh's 96 leads Australia fightback after Pakistan blitz

M E L B O U R N E (AFP/APP): Mitchell Marsh hit a counter-attacking 96 in a fighting rescue mission with a dogged Steve Smith Thursday to help Australia build a 241-run lead and regain control of the second Test against Pakistan. The hosts were reeling at 16-4 after dismissing Pakistan for 264 in reply to their first innings 318 in Melbourne. But Marsh and Smith put their heads down to compile what could be a match-saving 153-run partnership. At stumps on day three, the hosts were 187-6 with Smith out for 50, off 176 balls, in the last over of the day, leaving Alex Carey unbeaten on 16. Shaheen Shah Afridi and Mir Hamza both took three wickets. It could have been a different story but Abdullah Shafique spilled a regulation catch in the slips when Marsh was on 20. Marsh eventually fell four runs short of a deserved century, but it took a superb one-handed diving catch at slip from Agha Salman to remove him. After Cummins took 5-48 and Nathan Lyon 4-73 to dismiss Pakistan, Australia needed to negoti-

ate a tricky 15 minutes of the morning session. But Usman Khawaja was out for a duck second ball, caught behind by Mohammad Rizwan off bowling spearhead Afridi. The same combination struck again when Marnus Labuschagne edged down the legside on five as the hosts slumped to 6-2 at lunch. When they returned, David Warner let rip with a drive to the boundary off Afridi, but he didn't last, dragging a Mir Hamza ball on to his stumps on six. He received a standing ovation as he walked off for the last time as a batsman at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, with the third Test in Sydney set to be the last of his long career. Things got worse for the hosts when Travis Head was bowled by Hamza's inswinging yorker next delivery to leave Australia in disarray at 16-4. But Marsh saw off the hat-trick ball and along with Smith dug in to take the sting out of the attack. When Aamer Jamal came on, Marsh slammed three boundaries in four balls to further relieve the

pressure before the missed chance by Abdullah. Smith played a crucial supporting role, taking 101 balls for his first boundary before reaching a gritty 40th Test half-century. Pakistan had begun the day on 194-6, after an electric spell from Cummins in the final session on Wednesday saw a collapse from 124-1, and the Australia skipper was again in the thick of the action. Rizwan made a confident start, adding 13 to his overnight 29. But he was no match for a canny Cummins, who tempted him into a drive that flew straight to Warner who had just been moved to cover from slip. It broke a 45-run partnership with Jamal who began to play his shots. New partner Afridi crunched four boundaries before he was undone by Lyon's spin, trapped lbw for 21. Jamal was in good touch, finding the ropes three times in six balls at one point in his 33 not out. Cummins grabbed his fifth wicket by bowling Hasan Ali for two before Lyon had Hamza stumped for the same score.



MELBOURNE: Mitchell Marsh ponders his regret as he falls for 96.

Warner set to miss West Indies white-ball matches for ILT20

SYDNEY (INP): David Warner is expected to miss the white-ball portion of West Indies' tour of Australia in February as he looks to start maximising his T20 league availability following Test retirement in Sydney next week. Warner has a deal with Dubai Capitals in the ILT20 with that tournament running from January 20 through to the final on February 18. Australia played West Indies in three ODIs and three T20Is between February 2 and 13. "Nothing that I could've ever imagined" - Starc reacts to becoming the costliest IPL auction buy. Warner is set to play BBL for Sydney Thunder after his last Test against Pakistan although there remains some doubt as to whether he would be available for finals should Thunder qualify. The chief executive of the Australian Cricketers' Association indicated on Thursday that he expected Warner to apply for an No Objection Certificate to play in the ILT20. "I think the short answer to that is probably yes," Greenberg told SEN when asked if Warner would likely miss some home cricket. "I know he's pretty committed to the BBL. "There's no doubt in the next phase of Dave's life he's going to be looking to ply his trade where he gets the best return on his investment. I don't think there's anything wrong with that, in fact I'm encouraging him to do that. "There will be times where he'll be looking to miss certain games and tours. That's the sort of flexibility we've got to get our heads around. Some people won't like that, but that's the modern world of which we're living in and we have to embrace it." Warner being unavailable for international duty in favour of a domestic T20 deal would be the most significant occurrence of its type in Australian cricket. However, understands the selectors had long-planned that Warner and other senior players might not play the series against West Indies. But the plan is that they will select a full-strength side for T20Is in New Zealand in preparation for June's World Cup in the Caribbean and USA with Warner expected to be part of that.

Aisam, Aqeel through to semifinal of Serena Hotels Tennis C'ships

ISLAMABAD (APP): Aisam ul Haq Qureshi and Aqeel Khan advanced to the men's doubles semifinals of the 8th Serena Hotels National Ranking Tennis Championships 2023 after registering wins in the quarterfinals at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex, Islamabad on Thursday. The seasoned pair pulled off a comfortable win against M. Salar and M. Hamza Aasim 6-0, 6-1. Meanwhile, Aqeel also reached the men's singles semifinals as he got past Barkatullah 6-2, 6-3. The fixtures in other categories also took place on Thursday. Following are the results: Men's Singles Quarterfinals: Muhammad Abid bt Abdullah Adnan 6-4, 6-1; Aqeel Khan bt Barkatullah 6-2, 6-3. Ladies Singles 1st Round: Labika Durab bt Sandana Rabi 6-1, 6-0; Amna Ali Qayum w/o Amna Saqib; Mahrugh Sajid bt Lalarukh Sajid 7-6(3), 7-6(6). Men's Doubles Quarterfinals: Aisam ul Haq Qureshi / Aqeel Khan bt M. Salar / M. Hamza Aasim 6-0, 6-1; Muzammil Murtaza / M. Shoaib bt Mudassir Murtaza / Abdullah Adnan 6-3, 6(10-7); M. Abid / Shahzad Khan w/o Sami Zeb / M. Zaryab; Yousaf Khalil / Barkatullah bt Hamid Israr / Asadullah 6-2, 6-2. Boys 18& Under Quarterfinals: : Hamza Roman bt Ahtesham Humayun 6-2, 6-3; Hamza Aasim bt Haamid Israr 6-4, 6-2; Asad Zaman bt M. Salar 6-1, 6-4; Ahmed Nael Qureshi bt Mahatir Muhammad 7-5, 6-2. Boys 14& Under 2nd Round: Sameer Zaman bt Junaid Meher 4-1, 4-0; Amir Mazari bt Hassan Usmani 4-2, 4-2; Razik Sultan bt Mahd Mehmood 4-1, 4-0; Ruhaab Faisal bt M. Yahya 4-1, 4-2; Abdul Basit bt Zohaib Amjad 4-1, 4-0; Haziq Areejo bt Saqib Ali 4-1, 4-1; Ansarullah bt Lاراib Shamsi 4-1, 1-4, 4-0; M. Haziq Aasim bt Orhan Sohail 4-0, 4-0.

KP Karate National Referee Course begins in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Karate Association with the collaboration of Pakistan Karate Federation organized a three day National Referee Course with Examination-2023 here at Hayatabad Sports Complex on Thursday. The aim and objective of holding the Referee Course under qualified international referees is to equip Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with international referees for future to hold international events, Shah Faisal, who is a qualified Referee and Coach of the World Karate Federation. "We want to develop these sectors at the door steps of the local referees wherein invited local referees from all districts across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including merged tribal areas," Shah Faisal said. Shah Faisal warmly welcomed the local referees attending the three-day course here and assured them that they would be facilitated by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Karate Association. The course was officially inaugurated by Director Hayatabad Sports Complex Azizullah Jan, who was accompanied by Director Sports (Development) Niamat Ullah Marwat, Coordinator of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Karate Association International Qualified Coach Shah Faisal. International Qualified Referee of Pakistan Karate Federation Ijazul Haque, Asrar and other personalities were present during the inauguration ceremony. During the three-day Course the local referees would be introduced with the new rules of World Karate Federation by giving them complete knowledge theoretical and practical sessions would also be organized. The successful participants will be given referee license, referee badge, tie and certificate by Pakistan Karate Federation before appearing in the examination to be held under the aegis of qualified Referees of the Pakistan Karate Federation.



Third round of President's Trophy 2023-24 kicked off

KARACHI (PPI) The third round of President's Trophy 2023-24 kicked off at three venues in Karachi. Shah Nawaz Dahani registered his best bowling figures in first-class cricket and also made headlines with a brilliant hat-trick on his way to a six-wicket haul. Abdul Faseeh and Saad Nasim also struck centuries to take their respective teams to dominant positions. Ghani Glass vs PTV at National Bank Stadium, Karachi. Ghani Glass found themselves in the driving seat on day one as they posted 319 for the loss of nine wickets in the allotted 80 overs. In reply, Pakistan Television (PTV) lost two wickets in just 1.5 overs without a single run on the board. Shoaib Akhtar removed Hasan Nawaz and Mohammad Junaid for ducks before stumps were drawn. PTV opted to bowl first and reduced Ghani Glass to 48-4 in the first session. Later in the day, the tide turned in favour of Ghani Glass as Saad Nasim (150, 198b, 21x4s, 1x6) took the team out of the trouble on the way to his 10th first-class hundred. Skipper Hussain Talat (49, 66b, 7x4s, 1x6) and Shahbaz Javed (45, 78b,

6x4s) contributed with vital runs as well. Mohammad Rameez Jnr (15 not out, 24b, 2x4s) helped Ghani Glass cross the 300-run mark. Mohammad Sadaqat picked up three wickets while Adil Naz struck with the new ball to bag two wickets. Hasan Mohsin, Uzair Mumtaz, Israr Hussain and Mohammad Junaid dismissed a batter each. KRL vs HEC at UBL Sports Complex, Karachi. Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) notched the second-highest total of the tournament as they raced to 411 for the loss of seven wickets in 80 overs. 20-year-old Abdul Faseeh (153, 171b, 15x4s, 6x6s) scored his fourth first-class hundred and set the tone of the KRL innings. Sharoon Siraj (64, 74b, 4x4s, 3x6s) and Waqar Ahmed (60, 79b, 12x4s, 1x6) chipped in with valuable half-centuries. Maaz Sadaqat (46, 45b, 3x4s, 1x6) helped KRL breach the 400-run mark. Mohammad Azab bagged three wickets while Waseem Akram, Aarish Ali Khan and Mohammad Junaid picked up one apiece. Higher Education commission

(HEC) closed the day with 41-1 as Arshadullah dismissed Jahanzaib Sultan (4, 5b, 1x4) early on. Saad Khan (21 not out, 25b, 3x4s) and Mohammad Huraira (14 not out, 19b, 2x4s) saw off the day as HEC trailed by 370 runs. SNGPL vs SBP at State Bank Stadium, Karachi. State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) bowlers, Mohammad Ilyas and Sameen Gul, struck regular blows with the new ball to leave Sui Northern Gas Pipelines 48-4 after being dismissed for 170 earlier in the day. Initially, SNGPL's decision to bowl first paid dividends as they bundled out SBP for a modest total in 59.1 overs. Shah Nawaz Dahani took a career-best haul of 6-40 in a fiery spell that included a hat-trick as well. Umar Amin (48, 97b, 4x4s) top-scored while Zain Abbas (36, 84b, 4x4s) and Muhammad Irfan Khan (32, 66b, 4x4s) departed after showcasing some resistance. Dahani's hat-trick broke the back of SBP's innings as he reduced them to 133-7. Mohammad Awais Anwar struck twice while Bilawal Bhatti and Mohammad Ali picked a wicket each.

Table Tennis trial begins in Bannu

PESHAWAR (APP): Trials of male and female table tennis players got under way at Qazi Mohib-ur-Rehman Sports Complex Bannu under the Prime Minister Talent Hunt Youth Program on Thursday. International Cricketer Khushdil Shah officially opened the trial while he was accompanied by Director Sports Islamia College Peshawar Ali Hoti, RSO Bannu Shafqatullah, Senior Vice President of Provincial Table Tennis Association Kifayat Ullah Orakzai, DSO Bannu Adil Shah, Sports Complex Administrator Ehsanullah, International hockey player Nazir Gul of Bannu

University and members of Trials Committee of Pakistan Table Tennis Federation including Nadeem Saleem, Masood Ali, Shazia. A large number of sports personalities and players were also present on the occasion. The two-day trials were organized by Islamia College Peshawar under the Higher Education Commission. Addressing the ceremony International Cricketer Khushdil Shah said that promoting sports in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is vital step for youth. He said KPK had made efforts to create a leading sportsmen and women.

He expressed the hope that trials under the Prime Minister Talent Hunt Program will gain results and best players will be born in table tennis too who will earn the name for this country and nation at national and international level. On this occasion, Ali Hoti said that our main aim is to provide sports activity to boys and girls. He further stated that sports is the right of every child, and this right is being given by the Prime Minister under the Talent Hunt Youth Program. He said that the trials of male and female players are being conducted at different places which will continue for two days.

South Africa skittle India to claim innings win in 1st Test

CENTURION (AFP/APP): Fast bowler Nandre Burger took 4-33 as South Africa bowled out India for just 131 in their second innings to win the 1st Test by an innings and 32 runs in Centurion on Thursday. Virat Kohli was the only batsman to test the home attack on the third day, top-scoring with 76 before being the last man out. South Africa had earlier taken a first-innings lead of 163 as Dean Elgar (185) and Marco Jansen (84 not out) extended their first innings to 408.

India were 62 for three at tea, still 101 runs in arrears, with Indian captain Rohit Sharma (0), fellow opener Yashasvi Jaiswal (5) and Shubman Gill (26) all back in the pavilion. The collapse began in earnest after the resumption as Burger, who had already removed Jaiswal with a sharp lifter, had first-innings centurion KL Rahul, Ravi Ashwin and Mohammed Siraj all caught behind the wicket. Jansen showed his all-round value to the team by taking 3-36.

Kagiso Rabada, who took five wickets in the first innings, picked up 2-32 and completed the victory by taking a sensational catch to remove Kohli whose 76 included 12 fours and a six. The India innings lasted just 34.1 overs and leaves them looking for answers ahead of the second Test in Cape Town next week. The loss means India will have to wait a while longer if they are to win a Test series in South Africa. They are the only regular Test-playing country where India has yet to win a series.

All-round Maxwell lifts Melbourne Stars to fourth

M E L B O U R N E (Agencies): Melbourne Stars continued their BBL resurgence, with captain Glenn Maxwell leading the side to a second consecutive victory in a rain-affected clash with Hobart Hurricanes. Stars bowled out Hurricanes to 155 before wet and wild conditions blanketed Blundstone Arena during the innings break and reduced the target to 67 runs from seven overs under the DLS method. Maxwell started the chase with Sam Harper but was stranded at the bowler's end as Hurricanes quick Riley Meredith sparked the hosts with two wickets in the opening over on Thursday night. Meredith sent the first ball of Stars' innings down the leg side for a wide, but then had Harper out hooking off the next delivery. Marcus Stoinis was out three balls later in much the same way, and when Hurricanes captain

Nathan Ellis bowled Hilton Cartwright in the next over, Stars were reeling at 6 for 3. But Maxwell and Thomas Rogers steered the Stars home to make it back-to-back victories after a slow start to their campaign. Maxwell had earlier taken three wickets to help restrict Hurricanes to a modest total. "I took a gamble to bring myself on," Maxwell told Fox Sports. "With that little bit of drizzle and that rain, it actually changed the pitch. I was able to get the ball to skid on a bit faster. You get a couple of lucky wickets with just timing." Haris Rauf chipped in with three scalps late in the innings as Hurricanes were bowled out with two balls remaining after a bright start. Macalister Wright set the pace early for Hurricanes until mistiming a waist-high full toss off Usama Mir to Stoinis diving low at deep mid-

wicket. Caleb Jewell maintained the momentum for Hurricanes and smashed three consecutive boundaries off Beau Webster in the ninth over. The Hurricanes opener sent a scare through Stars' camp with a sharp straight drive off Maxwell that left the Australia international needing attention after getting a hand on the ball to prevent a certain boundary. The offspinner responded with the next delivery, darting a straight ball into Jewell's pads to trap him lbw for 45 off 37 balls and spark a middle-order collapse. Nikhil Chaudhary looked set to rescue the hosts with positive play as he took ten runs off two balls from Rauf. But the fast bowler responded by taking pace off the ball as Chaudhary swung hard again but was caught in the deep for 32 off 16 balls before the rain arrived.



In brief

Proclaimed offender arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police on Thursday claimed to have arrested a proclaimed offender (PO) wanted in a double murder. According to a police spokesman, Chontra police conducted a raid and rounded up a PO Usman Khalil who killed two citizens Adnan and Numan over old enmity while Rafaqat was critically injured in firing. A double murder case was registered in 2015 in Chontra police station. Police working on scientific lines managed to trace and net the accused. Superintendent of Police, Saddar, Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar appreciated the police team directed to arrest POs and other criminals wanted in different cases.

Police lodge 80 FIRs against underage drivers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police have registered 80 FIRs against underage drivers during last 24 hours, said a police spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were taking action by the law against underage drivers. The CPO had directed the City Traffic Police to take solid steps to control traffic rules violations and underage driving, he said. Police had initiated a drive against underage drivers without any discrimination, he added. He urged the parents to keep a vigilant eye on their children to avert road accidents. The vehicles and motorcycles of the underage drivers were also being impounded in respective police stations, he said. In addition to issuing fines for underage driving, Police were also conducting awareness campaigns in schools and colleges to educate young individuals about the legal age requirements for obtaining a driver's license, he added. A total 4871 FIRs were registered under the campaign launched against underage drivers while 80 cases were registered during the last 24 hours.

16 drug peddlers netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other law-breakers here on Thursday arrested 16 accused besides recovering over 14.2 kg charras, 30 liters liquor, five liquor bottles, two pistols, ammunition and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Naseerabad police held two drug traffickers, husband and wife namely Amir and Sher Bano, residents of Peshawar and recovered over 7700 grams charras from their possession. He informed that the accused were allegedly involved in supplying drugs to the students of educational institutions in twin cities. Saddar Wah, New Town, Dhamial, Taxila and Pirwadhai police held Adnan, Imran, Niaz, Qaiser, Aliyan, Abdul Qadir, and Naeem and recovered over 6500 grams charras from their possession. Jatli, Kalar Syedan, Rawat, Sadiqabad and Dhamial police nabbed Husnain, Zahid, Akram, Amin, Hafeez ur Rehman, Akhtar, Ashfaq and Danish and recovered two 30 bore pistols, ammunition, 30 liters liquor, five liquor bottles and other items. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other law-breakers, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Trainings, Madad Ali Sindhi in a meeting with Advisor Planning HEC and Directory P&D QAU.

Sindhi takes notice of delay in development of QAU sub campus in Punjab

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi on Thursday took strict notice of the inordinate delay in the development of campus of Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) in Punjab. During a meeting with Advisor Planning HEC and Directory P&D QAU, he ordered an immediate inquiry to be done and the report to be presented to him by January 04, 2024.

Madad said that such delays are a major obstacle in the academic journey of our youth.

He ordered HEC and QAU to immediately resolve all of the pending issues related to it and further coordinate with the Punjab Government to ensure speedy construction of the campus.

Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training

Madad Ali Sindhi said that it is high time that the relevant departments are held accountable for inefficient and ineffective management. Madad Ali Sindhi also paid a surprise visit to the QAU Islamabad Campus. He visited the hostels and said that the existing condition of the hostels is deplorable. He highlighted the poor maintenance of the facilities.

Students met with him and highlighted their plea about insufficient academic facilities such as the availability of the Internet. Madad took notice of the situation and ordered an immediate revamp of the hostels.

Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi said that students cannot study unless they have the basic facilities.

He said that it was unimaginable for students

to focus on their studies if they had to deal with such problems.

Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi assured the students that he would order an immediate revamp of the conditions of the hostels. Madad said that we work towards student exchange programs with friendly countries but after looking at the conditions of the hostels, it is pertinent that we first fix our institutions before inviting foreign students to study here.

He said that it is a sad state of affairs and that this will limit opportunities for our students to go abroad in student exchange programs. Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi said that such problems need to be addressed on war footing and ordered the relevant authorities to resolve these issues immediately.

AJKU students receive over 1 million rupees in PEEF scholarships

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Vice-Chancellor of Azad Jammu and Kashmir University (AJKU), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kaleem Abbasi, expressed gratitude to the Punjab Government and the management of the Punjab Educational Endowment Fund (PEEF) for awarding scholarships totaling more than one million rupees to fifty students from Azad Kashmir.

He also announced that efforts would be intensified to secure additional scholarships from PEEF for fifty more students enrolled in degree programs within the current financial year, according to a press release.

Addressing the scholarship certificate distribution ceremony for PEEF recipients at the city campus of AJKU, the vice chancellor mentioned that the Student Financial Assistance Directorate of the university

initially obtained scholarships worth 180,000 rupees from the Punjab Endowment Fund in the 2016-17 academic year.

Furthermore, in 2021-22, nine students were granted scholarships totaling 2,332,000 rupees, and in 2022-23, 36 students were awarded scholarships exceeding 710,000 rupees.

He emphasized that the Directorate of Student Financial Aid, led by Director Majeed Zafar, is committed to securing over 7.5 million rupees in additional scholarships for fifty university students before the conclusion of the current financial year.

These scholarships aim to assist students facing financial challenges in continuing their education.

Appreciating the performance of the Directorate of Financial Students' Assistance, he instructed

officials to intensify their efforts in exploring national and international opportunities to secure scholarships for students whose parents cannot afford educational expenses. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kaleem Abbasi urged scholarship recipients to allocate the received resources for their educational needs.

He also encouraged them to study with diligence and dedication, living up to the expectations of their parents, society, and teachers.

The Registrar of UAJK, Prof. Dr. Ghulam Murtaza, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Prof. Dr. Abdul Qadir Abbasi, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, Dr. Bashirur Rahman Kanth, Director of Student Financial Aid Majeed Zafar, and others were present at the scholarship distribution certificate ceremony.

ANF recovers 2.4 tons drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover over 2.4 tons drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that in an operation at Allama Iqbal Airport, 85 Ice-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger's stomach. The accused was leaving for Saudi Arabia by flight number PA-470.

2 kg Ice was recovered from a Bahrain-bound passenger going on Flight No. PA-079 at Faisalabad Airport. 2000 kg hashish was recovered from a house in Qila Abdullah.

205.2 kg opium and 289.2 kg hashish were recovered from a vehicle near Sial Mor interchange on the highway. A total of 1 kg opium was recovered from three suspects netted from University Road Peshawar. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

Int'l Iqbal conference concluded

ISLAMABAD (APP): The two-day international conference on "Iqbal's Thought in the Perspective of the 21st Century and Two Great Poets of Islam: Iqbal and Akif" was concluded at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIQU) here Thursday.

The conference resulted in devising a road map of joint efforts and initiatives to promote the ideas of the two great poets of the Muslim Ummah, Iqbal and Akif. Yunus Emre Institute and Allama Iqbal Open University (AIQU) will organize seminars, conferences and other academic activities to convey the ideas of Iqbal and Akif to the new generation.

The closing ceremony was presided over by the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir while the distinguished teacher and scholar of Urdu language, Dr. Tanzeem ul-Firdos was the chief guest. Dr. Tanzeem, Dr. Fatima Hasan and other speakers congratulated Vice Chancellor AIQU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, Department of Iqbaliyat, Yunus Emre Institute and Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir for successfully organizing such an important event.

‘All segments of society need to play role in polio eradication’

ISLAMABAD, (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services, Dr. Nadeem Jan has said that role of all segments of society in eradication of polio from the country holds key importance.

While addressing National Ulama Conference in Islamabad on Thursday, he said that despite limited resources, the government was taking all measures to ensure the eradication of polio.

Dr Nadeem Jan requested the Ulama and religious scholars to use Masjid and Mehrab for the noble cause.

Speaking on the occasion, Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi said it was a national issue and it has no link with any sect.

He urged media to spread awareness among masses about the sensitivity of this very serious issue.

Commissioner visits Catholic Church, Holy Family Hospital to review facilities

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta here on Thursday visited the Catholic Church in Holy Family Hospital and reviewed the facilities.

During the visit, the Commissioner also checked the arrangements for the separate entrance of the church. Medical Superintendent, Holy Family Hospital, Father Sarfraz Simon, Babu Sajid, and Sheikh Arsalan were present on the occasion.

There is the joint entrance for the Outdoor Patient Department of the

hospital and the church, the Commissioner said adding, due to combined entrance, the patients and the Christian community face difficulties. There should be a separate entrance to enter the church which would help resolve many administrative issues, he added.

A committee would be formed comprising members from the hospital administration and church administrators to resolve the issue, he said.

The Christian community made many sacrifices for Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Chatta said. 100 kanals piece of the

land had been allocated in Rakh Dhamiyal graveyard for the Christian community cemetery, he said.

People of all religions have equal rights in Pakistan, he added.

Liaquat Ali Chatta informed that the administration was making Holy Family Hospital, a state-of-the-art hospital of the province.

On this occasion, the Commissioner Rawalpindi also cut the Christmas cake along with the Christian community and congratulated the Christian community on Christmas.

Experts call for anticipatory climate adaptation to cope crisis in region

ISLAMABAD (APP): The experts at a high-level roundtable called upon Thursday, the government and policymakers to come up with an inclusive and holistic approach to meet the exacerbating climate crisis through anticipatory adaptation.

The roundtable titled "Foresight and Futures Thinking for Anticipatory Adaptation in Pakistan" was organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) to address how various stakeholders are thinking of future risks, and how these risks could be integrated into existing plans and policies.

In his opening remarks, Dr Babar Shahbaz, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Agricultural Extension Education and Rural Development, set the ground for the participants to deliberate on pertinent issues precisely. To become future-fit, he said, it is important to understand future risks and take anticipatory actions.

Amina Maharjan, Senior Specialist Livelihoods and Migration, ICIMOD briefed the participants on the foresight and future thinking for anticipatory adaptation in the region, methods to explore future pathways in terms of foresight, scenario development, development of efficient strategies and understanding foresight beyond predictions.

She briefed the participants on the emerging concept of foresight as the method of scoping, sensitization, participatory scenario development, integration into plans and policies, gender-inclusive steps to address data gaps, and other shortcomings hampering climate resilient future development through a futuristic approach.

Sultan Mehmood, the World Food Programme (WFP) representative, mentioned the climate adaptation-related interventions being implemented through the WFP collaboration, particularly the Living Indus Initiative.

He underscored the need to address water management, governance, land cover area protection and multi-hazard vulnerability risk assessment (MHVRA) as crucial components to successfully meet the challenge of climate foresight.

Muhammad Farooq, Senior Joint Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, briefed the roundtable about the steps taken by the Ministry in the aftermath of the rising magnitude of climate catastrophes. He shed light on the development of the baseline data based on modern techniques, MHVRA being done for high-resolution data work underway on climate on mapping and prediction by 2050.

Farooq also pointed out lacunas in existing strategies particularly no linkage between adaptation and NDCs which has been done by developed countries.

Pakistan has submitted its National Adaptation Plan to UNFCCC and is the 40th country to do it. Moreover, adaptation cells have been created in the Ministries including cli-

mate change, planning and at provincial ministries.

Pakistan is losing 8% of its GDP due to climate-recurring catastrophes and it has crossed the tipping point of the climate crisis and entered into a new normal, he added.

Dr Shafqat Munir, Deputy Executive Director, SDPI informed the forum that amid discourse on anticipatory approaches, it is required to have systems capable to workout disaster risk reduction and climate change anticipatory adaptation and foresight models.

He said the stakeholders and partners are working in silos that need to end, whereas risk governance and financing need to be looked with an anticipatory approach. United Nations Environment Programme representative Arshad Samad Khan presented a brief view of climate vulnerability of the region and mentioned glacial melt in the north and sea level rise at the coasts in the south among the major climate crises faced by the country. He maintained that the lack of awareness at the community level was the problem that needed to be addressed at the priority.

Obaidur Rehman Zia from SDPI proposed the roundtable to shift from a deterministic to a probabilistic approach.

Shameen Raza, UNDP-Pakistan briefed the forum about the success of the GLOF project that significantly reduced losses of human lives and infrastructure in the glacial lake outburst flood-prone areas.

She mentioned that it was a promising intervention because of its localized nature and approach.



ISLAMABAD: A man on his way carrying a bundle of dry wood on his head for domestic use.

IDB grants \$24.6 million

KABUL (BNA): The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) has declared a new package of its assistance to Afghanistan, focusing on health and education sectors. The bank will fund several projects in collaboration with aid organizations, using \$24.6 million from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund under its management. The projects aim to improve food security, healthcare support, and education in different parts of Afghanistan, benefiting hundreds of thousands of people.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Jamadi-us-Sanni 15, 1445 — Friday, December 29, 2023

Japan to provide health aid

KABUL (BNA): Japanese envoy, Takayoshi Kuromiya, met with Minister of Public Health Dr. Qalandar Ebad discussed the collaborations in health sector. Dr. Ebad thanked Japan for its support in setting up infectious disease treatment centers and expressed his hope to receive more assistance from Japan in the future. Kuromiya praised the joint efforts and cooperation in the health field and announced that Japan will soon deliver equipped ambulances and health aid to Afghanistan.

WFP: Afghan refugees expelled empty-handed

KABUL (Ariana News): Concerns about the situation of Afghan refugees being deported from Pakistan and their uncertain fate are increasing daily and thousands of these people have been returned to Afghanistan empty-handed, the World Food Program (WFP) said.

WFP published a video on Wednesday of an Afghan immigrant who, according to him, was deported after 14 years in Pakistan.

This immigrant said without mentioning his name: "We didn't bring anything from Pakistan, we brought one or two blankets. We did not bring anything else. Now we don't know what to do. There is nothing we can do."

In November, the interim government of Pakistan officially started the process of deporting more than 1.7 million undocumented Afghan immi-

grants.

According to the United Nations and the International Rescue Committee, nearly half a million Afghans have been deported from Pakistan to Afghanistan in the last two months.

At the same time, Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs Maulvi Abdul Salam Hanafi, said on Wednesday during a ceremony to commemorate the 44th anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union that so far 800,000 Afghan refugees have been forcibly deported by Pakistan and Iran and that they are being processed by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Sirajuddin Haqqani, Acting Minister of Interior, also said that countries should treat Afghan immigrants according to international standards.

Haqqani said: "We say that something that is the

norm of the world or the common principles that they have made, should be treated in the same light." "Afghan immigrants are in trouble. They returned over the course of a month during the cold winter and moved here," he said.

This comes amid an ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country.

According to United Nations, more than 29 million Afghans need humanitarian aid.

Despite the fact that various human rights defenders have repeatedly asked the Pakistani authorities to stop the forced deportation of Afghan immigrants, Islamabad has paid no attention to these requests.

Meanwhile, various institutions, including the World Food Program and the IEA government, announced that they are providing aid to the refugees returning from Pakistan.

Businessman starts camel farm

KUNDUZ (TOLOnews): An Afghan businessman has built a camel farm in Kunduz at the cost of one million US dollars.

According to traders, he brought 500 camels from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates and keeps them on this farm.

Camel herds are kept in the forests of the Amu River Sher Khan Bandar area of the Imam Sahib district of Kunduz.

These camels will be exported to Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and other countries of the world.

"Currently, Arab countries demand camels from us for up to twenty thousand dollars," said Ahmad Fahim Rahimi, a farmer.

"When we didn't work on the farm we were faced with economic challenges," said Sayed Amir, a worker at the farm.

The Department of Agriculture and Livestock of Kunduz welcomed the establishment of the camel farm and called for support from investors in the province.

"Now the problem they have in the export sector is that our camels are exported by the name of Iran to other countries," said Najibullah Hassan, head of the department.

The owner of the farm said that he will try to increase the number of camels in this farm to 2,000 in the future and in addition to this, he will also create a camel milk processing plant.

Companies to invest in Afghanistan

KABUL (BNA): The Office of Deputy Prime Minister in Economic Affairs has announced that the Islamic Emirate has facilitated domestic and foreign investment in various sectors in Afghanistan.

As a result, dozens of companies from neighboring, regional, Arab, and Western countries have showed interest in investing in the country during the current fiscal year.

The statement adds that the volume of these potential investments is \$10.654 billion, of which \$6.682 billion have already been contracted in sectors such as mining extraction, power transmission, and infrastructure construction.

Moreover, the statement indicates that more contracts are expected to be signed soon in sectors such as power generation, establishment of commercial centers and economic zones, transportation, customs modernization, and other fields.

Afghanistan marks 44th anniversary

KABUL (BNA): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan issued a statement, condemning the military intervention of the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan 44 years ago.

The statement praised the Afghan people for their heroic resistance and sacrifice against the Soviet occupation, which lasted for a decade and ended with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops.

The statement also reaffirmed the Afghan nation's commitment to defend its sovereignty and independence from any foreign aggression or interference.

It said that Afghanistan does not meddle in the internal affairs of any country and expects the same from others. It expressed its desire to have good and strong relations with the international community based on Islamic principles and mutual respect.

The statement called on all countries and parties to fulfill their obligations in creating and ensuring better and stronger relations in accordance with Islamic principles, so that long steps can be taken for security and welfare in the region and the world, and the chaos, destruction and disbelief caused by the past wars can be eliminated.

Russian Minister praises IE for fight against drugs



KABUL (Ariana News): Abdulhaq Hamkar, deputy minister of interior, met with his Russian counterpart in Kabul for talks, including discussions on

counter-narcotics.

According to the ministry of interior, Hamkar called on Russia for cooperation in helping to find an alternative for farmers who

used to cultivate poppies. He also discussed the achievements accomplished by the Islamic Emirate in its fight against drugs.

In turn the Russian offi-

cial praised the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan for its efforts and said Russia would cooperate with Afghanistan in its fight against drugs.

Women at risk in Afghanistan: Taliban bans worsen gender violence and customs

KABUL (Khaama Press): The prevalence of harmful customs and gender-based violence, exacerbated by the advent of the Taliban administration, which includes bans on education and employment, threatens the lives of millions of women in Afghanistan.

A woman who suffered from domestic violence considered hanging herself with a rope as a way to escape her abusive husband.

Nilab, a 23-year-old woman, encountered domestic violence shortly after her marriage.

Domestic violence, deeply rooted in regressive customs and low literacy, is the most common form of gender-based violence in Afghanistan. After leaving her father's home post-marriage, Nilab's life became marred by constant abuse and torture

from her husband. Even during her pregnancy, she hoped for a change, but the violence was deeply entrenched.

One sunny afternoon, while pregnant, Nilab had to prepare food for her husband and his family despite her condition. Unaware that the food was saltier than usual due to her pregnancy fatigue, her husband reacted violently. The assault was so severe that it not only injured Nilab, causing multiple fractures and severe head injury, but also resulted in the loss of her five-month unborn child.

Nilab insists on anonymity, as her husband restricts her from leaving the home and seeking medical help. Before marriage, she was a promising midwife working at Malalai Hospital, but post-marriage, she faced

restrictions and was not allowed to continue her job. Her life with her husband is a continuous cycle of healing from one assault, only to be bruised again under various pretexts.

The violence intensified after Nilab gave birth to a daughter, reflecting a societal preference for sons over daughters.

After two years of enduring continuous abuse and with a daughter, Nilab became pregnant again. However, as she was about to give birth, her husband, eager to know the baby's gender, consulted doctors. The fear of bringing another daughter into the world and the subsequent violence loomed over her.

After giving birth, knowing the society and her husband's disdain for daughters, she contemplated suicide by buying a

rope from the market. She attempted to hang herself five days after her daughter's birth but was saved by neighbours and taken to the hospital.

Nilab, saved from her suicide attempt and recovering in the hospital, suffered severe throat damage.

Even after getting a second chance at life, her husband threatened her not to speak of the incident, warning her of consequences involving her daughters and family.

Despite the societal and personal challenges she faces, Nilab remains silent, enduring the pain for the sake of her children, fearing that speaking out might worsen her situation. Her only reason for not seeking divorce is her children and the societal stigma associated with divorced women.

Head of Educational Development killed

KABUL (Khaama Press): According to reports from media outlets, Abdul Ghafar Hamdard, who served as the head of the Medical Education Development Section at Kabul University of Medical Sciences, was murdered by individuals described as "unknown armed individuals."

A member of the Medical Education Development Section at Kabul University of Medical Sciences said that Mr Hamdard was killed around 4:00 PM Wednesday, December 27th in the Kart-e-Naw area of Kabul as reported by Etilaat Roz Newspaper.

He added that Hamdard was shot and killed inside his clinic at Roshan Hospital by unidentified gunmen.

The report says that

Abdul Ghafar Hamdard had previously served as the head of the Maiwand Hospital and was a member of the academic staff at the Kabul University of Medical Sciences.

So far, no individual or group has claimed responsibility for the murder of this university official.

The Taliban's security command in Kabul and the security institutions of this group have not yet commented on the matter.

Mysterious murders and the assassination of individuals have increased in various parts of the country, especially in Kabul, the capital, since the Taliban's resurgence in August 2023.

The perpetrators behind these killings are frequently labelled as "unknown armed individuals." This



vague identification points to the anonymity and elusive nature of the assailants involved in such violent acts.

Despite the grave nature of these crimes, investigations and follow-ups are uncommon. The lack of accountability and pursuit of these unknown assailants often leaves the cases unresolved and shrouded in mystery.

Over 30% of university professors left Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Abbas Basir, the former Minister of Higher Education of Afghanistan, recently stated that after the rise of the Taliban administration, more than 30% of university professors, most of whom were educated at the doctoral and master's level in countries around the world, have left Afghanistan.

Basir, in an interview with Independent Persian, mentioned that the actions of the Taliban administration in the field of higher education in Afghanistan, including the dismissal of educated professors and changing the educational content, are a "dangerous trend" with "dire consequences."

According to him, Afghan universities, with the advent of the Taliban, have transformed from

places expected to produce "science and knowledge" into spaces limited to "literacy education."

The Independent also reported, citing Abbas Basir that "the Taliban have imprisoned science and thought, and universities are becoming religious schools." The Islamization of texts and educational content, according to Mr. Basir, "is mostly derived from the usual practices in Pakistani religious schools."

Abbas Basir was the last Minister of Higher Education in Afghanistan who handed over the ministry to Abdul Baqi Haqqani, a senior member of the Taliban, on August 28, 2021.

Independent, citing this former minister, wrote: Changes in the leadership of educational institutions

and the dismissal of educated and experienced individuals from the ministry's structure have caused the collapse of the educational system in Afghanistan.

Basir has warned of consequences he describes as "dire," stating that "more than 30% of university professors, most of whom were educated at doctoral and master's levels in countries around the world, have left Afghanistan."

According to him, the consequences of banning women's education, changing educational content, and the collapse of the educational system may not be seen in the short term but will be understood over the long term and after five or ten years, with negative effects lasting at least 50 years.

Aid distributed in Ghor



GHOR (Ariana News): As part of its winter aid campaign, Bayat Foundation has distributed packages of food and non-food items to dozens of poor families in Ghor province.

The aid items include flour, rice, oil and clothes.

Officials of Bayat Foundation say that the beneficiaries were added to the list of aid recipients after a survey by representatives of the foundation.

"It is clear to all that the Bayat Foundation is a charitable foundation that provides assistance to the needy, orphans, poor and earthquake-affected people in 34 provinces of Afghanistan in this season of the year," said Abdul Khaliq Kamgar, representative of the Bayat Foundation.

According to Bayat Foundation officials, the aid campaign will continue until the end of the winter

season.

"We hope that this aid will open a door to future aid for the poor people of Ghor province," Kamgar said. With the increase in unemployment and poverty in Afghanistan, the number of people in need of humanitarian aid increases day by day.

Aid recipients thank Bayat Foundation for its assistance and call on other organizations to follow suit.

Township in Herat completed and handed over to survivors

HERAT (Ariana News): Construction work on one of the new townships, in the earthquake-hit Zinda Jan district in Herat, has been completed and affected families have been moved in.

Thirty-three houses were built at a cost of about 24 million afghanis – paid for by the General Intelligence Directorate.

For victims of the earthquake, who mostly all live in tents, life is extremely difficult as winter has set in. Herat authorities say the new township also includes a mosque and a potable water supply.

Officials have said construction work is underway on other townships in the quake-affected province.

The projects are being rolled out across ten villages in Zinda Jan, Injil, Keshk, Rabat Sangi and Gulran districts of Herat.

The first to be completed is in Qala Nook village



of Zinda Jan and families are being settled as quickly as possible.

One earthquake survivor, who lost his house and all his belongings, is Mohammad Halim, who said his family is living in a tent.

"The air is very cold under these tents because

these tents are made of plastic and it gets damp, and during the night our children suffer from cold, and now that these houses have been built for us, we will spend the winter with our families in the house and we will be able to protect our children in the houses," he said.

According to the Herat Earthquake Victims Commission, construction of about 2,620 houses is currently underway in more than ten earthquake-affected villages.

Officials have said they are trying to finish the houses as quickly as possible.

UN efforts to strengthen girls' student skills in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): An organization known as the Women's Social Activities and Services Association, or "WASA," has announced that, in collaboration with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, they have assisted over 150 female students in the Herat and Badghis provinces.

They helped these students complete a training program in English language, computer skills,

and job placement.

This organization, through a post on its social media platform X, has referred to the graduation of these individuals after participating in the "job placement" program in Herat province as a "new journey in their professional path." The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has also cited one of the students, saying, "We have overcome feelings of hopelessness and found

hope in our lives."

According to the "WASA" organization, the achievements of 16 women and 12 men in Badghis and more than 150 women in Herat demonstrate their dedication and determination in pursuing their professional goals.

This comes at a time when it has been one year since the ban on women working in foreign and domestic non-governmental organizations in

Afghanistan, and the exclusion of girls from education has continued since the inception of the Taliban administration's rule.

Several international organizations and NGOs are working tirelessly to combat the ban on girls' education by establishing schools and hidden educational centres throughout Afghanistan or providing financial support for what is referred to as "home-based education."

KP cabinet okays Rs60m for Medical Transplantation Regulatory Authority

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker cabinet was held at Civil Secretariat Peshawar presided by Chief Minister Syed Arshad Hussain Shah on Thursday. The cabinet members and administrative secretaries participated in the meeting and deliberated on different agenda items taking important decisions pertaining to public interest in the province. These decisions are related to health, energy, communication, adjudication, finance, emergencies, good governance and development matters.

The caretaker cabinet approved the provision of Rs.60 million for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Medical Transplantation Regulatory Authority. The Authority aims to regulate, control and monitor all human organ transplantation and the various committees constituted under the KP Medical Transplantation Regulatory Authority Act 2014. It was informed during the briefing to the cabinet that the authority recognizes medical institutions, hospitals and transplant surgeons/physicians for practice of operative surgery in transplantation, grafting of human organs, tissues and cells, inspects recognized medical institutions and hospitals for examination of quality of transplantation, follow up of medical care of donors and recipients. It investigates and holds inquiries into the allegations of breach of any provision of this Act in the prescribed manner. It also addresses religious cultural and ethical issues that may arise related to transplantation. It was told that the authority has recognized five medical institutions or hospitals for kidney transplantation six for corneal transplantation and one bone bank, while three medical institutions registration is in the process. The meeting was informed that more than 421 kidney transplants 450 corneal transplants 41 bone grafting have been performed through regulated procedures in recognized medical institutions of the Province.

The cabinet approved the reconstitution of the technical committee envisioned in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government Rest Houses and Tourism Properties (Development, Management and Regulation) Act 2020. Technically, the reconstitution was necessitated by the shuffling in the Provincial Cabinet and reinvigorating the tourism sector. It was also directed that Commissioners Malakand and Hazara Divisions be taken as co-opt members concerning the properties located in their respective jurisdictions.

The cabinet approved the amendment in special purpose Kumrat and Kalash Development Authority Rules 2020. Under Section 19 (2) of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism Act 2019, the Special Purpose Kumrat

Development Authority was established which was followed by the notification of special purpose Kumrat Developed Authority Rules 2020. This time the Director General Special Purpose Kumrat Developed Authority furnished Service Rules/Regulations for Employees of Special Purpose Authority and Building Regulations 2022 which were approved.

Similarly, the amendment was required in special purpose Kalash Valley Development Authority rules empowering it to make by-laws to carry out the purpose of the Rules so framed already. The authorities concerned were directed to ensure the facilitation and safety of the tourists and also the tourist attractions areas at Kohat-Parachinar and Bajaur-Barawal transit.

It also approved the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Deserving Artists Welfare Endowment Fund Rules 2022 for carrying out the purpose of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Deserving Artist Welfare Endowment Fund Act 2022.

The cabinet approved the transfer of 3 kanal 18 marla land in tehsil Kulachi district D.I.Khan to Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department for the establishment of Rescue-1122 station there. The Provincial Government had already decided to expand Rescue-1122 service to the entire Province in phase manner. The establishment of this station will facilitate the people of that backward area to easily manage emergencies and/or disasters.

The cabinet approved a supplementary grant amounting to rupees 609.119 million for payment of the decretal amount to the owners of the 209 kanal land acquired for the construction of Police Line-II, in District Mardan in compliance with the decision of the Supreme Court.

The cabinet approved the relaxation of the ban on transfer postings of the employees of the ex-CDLD in pursuance to Section 3 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Regularization of Services of Employees of District Governance and Community Development (CDLD) project 2022. Thus, the creation of 47 already created Supernumerary positions was also approved. It is worth mentioning that under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Regularization of Services of District Government and Community Development Project 2022. The Government has regularized the services of 296 employees of the District Governance and Community Development Project under initial recruitment quota in the Directorate General Local Government and Rural Development and its field formation. Yet the number of posts under the initial recruitment quota was less than the required strength of regularized

employees of CDLD therefore a need for 47 supplementary vacancies to adjust the remaining regularized employees.

The cabinet decided to take up the issue of payment of enhanced compensation of the 1480 kanal land, the defunct SDA (Now KP-EZDMC) has acquired for expansion of Nowshera Industrial Estate of which 185 acres had been transferred to PASDC (Pakistan Stone Development Company M/o Production and Industries) as per the decision of the Supreme Court. The land was acquired at a cost of Rs.47.329 million in 2007 but the Supreme Court had now increased it to Rs.1.6 billion plus 6% simple interest from the date of acquisition till the date of payment.

The cabinet approved the territorial jurisdictions of the public sector universities under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act 2012. The revival of the territorial jurisdiction of universities was necessitated by the problems faced by female colleges in the Province affiliated with Women Universities and determining the territorial jurisdiction of the newly established universities. The Higher Education Department defines the territorial jurisdiction of public sector universities from time to time after approval of the cabinet. As per the earlier notification dated December 28, 2021 the Department had defined jurisdiction of 29 public sector universities but a number of female colleges particularly those situated far away faced difficulties in correspondence and coordination with women universities coupled with increased financial burden on these colleges. The establishment of 3 more universities also necessitated the redefining of the territorial jurisdictions of public sector universities of the Province.

The cabinet approved the release of a Rs.40 million loan as bridge financing for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Transmission and Grid System Company, Energy and Power Department. The company had asked for a grant of Rs.107.405 but the Finance Department had agreed to release Rs.40 Million loan as bridge Financing and enable the Company to deposit the loan amount in its designated account in the Bank of Khyber.

Addressing on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that work on Khushala Pakhtunkhwa has been completed and it will soon be practically launched to address the problem of unemployment among the youth. He emphasized the careful utilization of resources for the welfare of the public at large. The Chief Minister also directed that cleanliness being part of our religion, all concerned should ensure the maintenance of a clean and healthy environment in their areas of jurisdiction.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) Maulana Fazl Rehman addressing a press conference at his residents.

Cadet College Petaro celebrates 61st parent's day

F.P. Report

KARACHI: An impressive ceremony of 61st parents' day was held at Cadet College Petaro. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

While addressing the gathering Chief Guest appreciated the quality of infrastructure, facilities, faculty and learning environment at Cadet College Petaro. He emphasised that such efforts will surely contribute in prosperity and progress of country as education is the only way out to progress. He also commended the collaborative efforts of Govt of Sindh, Commander Karachi, college administration and faculty for all out efforts to augment educational standards at the college. Furthermore, he advised the cadets that besides education they should also focus on character building.

Principal Cadet College Petaro, Commodore (Retd) Mushtaq Ahmed welcomed the guests and presented the annual college report. In his address, the principal highlighted the remarkable performance achieved by the cadets in academics, sports and co-curricular activities. He also mentioned about some of the development works completed during this year and progress on undergoing works at Cadet College Petaro.

Later, Chief Guest gave away the prizes to the award winners and congratulated them for their outstanding performance. Moreover, he appreciated cadets for immaculate turn out during annual parade, horse-riding, tent-pegging, gymnastic, PT show, physical fitness and their skills displayed in exhibition. A large number of civil and military officials, parents and other dignitaries attended the ceremony.

WB raises concerns about Pak's policies

ISLAMABAD (INP):- The World Bank has declared Pakistan's economic model ineffective, citing concerns that the country is trailing behind its counterparts due to a dysfunctional economic system that primarily benefits the elite class.

Naji bin Hussain, the Country Director for Pakistan at the World Bank, emphasized that the current economic development in Pakistan is unsustainable, with the benefits of growth disproportionately favoring a select few, says in media reports. In the World Bank's report, Hussain highlighted the need for addressing deficiencies in the agricultural and energy sectors, emphasizing that the economic growth should be broadened to have a more inclusive impact.

The report also expressed concerns about the environmental challenges faced by Pakistan. According to Hussain, policy changes are imperative to ensure sustainable economic development, especially in light of the growing realization that substantial past poverty reductions are stalling and poverty rates are on the rise again. The World Bank Country Director pointed out that the current system, cost of debt, and income sources in Pakistan are not sustainable. He urged a shift towards focusing on financial stability, improving distribution, involving the private sector, and exploring alternative, cost-effective methods of electricity generation in energy reforms.

50 killed in Gaza in Israeli attacks

GAZA: Fifty Palestinians have been killed by Israeli strikes in Gaza's Beit Lahiya, Khan Younis and al-Maghazi areas on Thursday, the Gaza Health Ministry said. The Palestinian Red Crescent says at least 10 people have been killed and 12 injured in an attack near al-Amal Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis.

Ajith Sunghay, the head of the UN Human Rights office in the occupied Palestinian territories, has told Al Jazeera a lack of accountability – and in some cases egging on from Israeli officials – has led to a spike in both settler violence and violence committed by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank.

Notably, Sunghay said, there has been an increase in group settler attacks on Palestinians. He spoke shortly after the UN agency released a report calling on Israel to curtail the violence, which has resulted in the death of 291 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank since October 7. Israeli settlers killed eight of those victims, and one Palestinian was killed either by Israeli troops or settlers, according to the report.

"I think that's extremely important to underscore – where there is impunity violations will continue to happen," he said. He added: "These statements [from Israeli officials] embolden settlers, give them a sense of security, it gives them a certain kind of permission to do what they want to do." A Palestinian man has been killed by Israeli forces near the tunnel checkpoint, west of Bethlehem. The ministry of health identified the man as Muhammad Sayel Abdelqader al-Jundi, 38, from Yatta, south of Hebron in the occupied West Bank. He was taken to the Beit Jala Hospital where he was pronounced dead.

The US Treasury says in a statement that it has sanctioned the head of the Currency Exchangers Association in Sanaa, Yemen, and three exchange houses in Yemen and Turkey. The entities are "responsible for facilitating the flow of Iranian financial assistance to Houthi forces and their destabilizing activities," the Treasury said. "Today's action underscores our resolve to restrict the illicit flow of funds to the Houthis, who continue to conduct dangerous attacks on international shipping and risk further destabilizing the region," said Treasury official Brian E Nelson, according to the statement.

Last week, the US announced the formation of an international coalition to counter the effects of the Yemeni group's continued attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea, which the Houthis say are being carried out in sympathy with the Palestinians. Houthi officials have said that this coalition will not deter them. The meeting will reportedly be the first time the cabinet, created at the beginning of the war, will discuss what happens when Israeli operations in Gaza eventually end.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has previously rejected the prospect of an international force taking control of the enclave, saying Israel would take indefinite control of Gaza's security. Netanyahu has also said that neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority would take administrative control of Gaza, but he has not presented a more detailed plan. Far-right minister Itamar Ben-Gvir criticised the reported meeting on X, saying the war cabinet was created to manage the war, not "the day after". Ben-Gvir is not a member of the war cabinet, but is a member of the wider security cabinet.— Aljazeera

IHC stays cipher trial against Imran till Jan 11

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Thursday turned down the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's petition seeking a stay on the in-camera trial of the cipher case.

The former PTI chief, who remains behind bars, had last week moved the IHC against his indictment in the cipher case as well as its proceedings by the special court, established under the Official Secrets Act. However, Khan's plea requesting a stay on the trial, filed by his lawyer Usman Gul, was rejected by IHC's Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb. The court said it would first issue notices before issuing an order pertaining to the matter.

In this regard, the IHC issued notice to the federation and asked Khan's lawyer Usman Gul to submit all necessary documents related to the cipher trial at the next hearing. Highlighting the alleged irregularities in the cipher case, the PTI counsel contended in the court that a first information report (FIR) was lodged before the filing of a complaint.

The judge asked the PTI founder's lawyer what the point of the petition was. "The point is that the legal procedure was not completed before the indictment," said the lawyer, responding to the judge. He said that a legally authorised official can file a complaint directly in court.

"You are saying that an

authorised officer can file a complaint directly," asked the judge. The PTI founder's lawyer requested that the IHC direct the trial court to conduct the hearing of the case after five or six days. "The trial court can complete the trial in the meantime," he added.

"How many witness statements have been completed so far?" the judge questioned. The lawyer responded by saying that statements of 25 witnesses have been recorded, while cross-examination of three has been completed out of the total 27 witnesses. The cipher trial being conducted on a daily basis, the PTI counsel told the court. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Prosecutor Raja Rizwan Abbasi received the notice in the courtroom.

FO terms 2023 active year for Pak's diplomacy

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office has said the outgoing year 2023 remained an active year for Pakistan's diplomacy.

At a roundup media briefing here in Islamabad on Thursday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan's diplomatic efforts are aimed at building relations with countries in all regions of the world with frequent high-level exchanges and visits. She said Pakistan continued its efforts to pursue political and sectoral dialogues to institutionalize bilateral partnerships and also pursued active multilateral diplomacy during the outgoing year.

About relations with India, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan has consistently maintained that bilateral relations cannot fully normalize until the resolution of core issues especially the settlement of disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir. Replying to a question, she strongly condemned the decision of the Indian authorities to ban the Muslim League Jammu and Kashmir Masarat Alam faction for five years.

She said the suppression of Kashmiris and incarceration of their leadership reflect India's disregard to international norms and human rights laws. The Spokesperson urged India to lift curbs on political parties in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, release all political prisoners and create conditions for realization of the inalienable right of self-determination of Kashmiris in accordance with the UN Security Council's resolutions.

Answering another question about statements of some foreign missions on the issue of Baloch protestors, she expressed regret over their interference saying that Pakistan is fully capable of handling its internal matters.

Solangi, Iranian envoy vow to boost cooperation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Iran on Thursday emphasized the importance of mutual cooperation in trade and economic sectors, especially in the scope of ECO organization, corridor from East to West, bilateral cooperation on the ports and expansion of relations between two brotherly countries.

During a meeting between Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi and Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam, multiple important issues, including cooperation in the fields of media, exchange of cultural delegations, bilateral trade relations, Iran Expo 2024, were discussed.

The minister and Ambassador expressed the willingness on the part of both countries to explore opportunities for promoting bilateral relations. Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi said that Pakistan valued the brotherly relations with Iran as both were

bound by deep religious, cultural and linguistic relations.

"Cooperation between the two countries in the fields of media is the need of the hour," Murtaza Solangi said adding Pakistan was keen to promote cooperation with Iran in the fields of film and drama.

He said a memorandum of understanding has already been signed between the Associated Press of Pakistan and the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). Additionally, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) and Iran's Audio Visual Media Regulatory Authority (SATRA) and the Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications, Pakistan Television and Iran's audiovisual and cinema sector, had been working on the MoUs to promote bilateral cooperation, he added.

They agreed to expedite the process of agreement between Pakistan Television Corporation and Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting. The visit of Iran's cultural delegation to

Pakistan was also discussed in the meeting. The minister said that the visit of Iran's cultural delegation to Pakistan was welcome since these visits would promote cultural relations between the two countries.

The Cultural delegation of Iran would be visiting media houses, press clubs and other cultural institutions of Pakistan, he added. The Ambassador of Iran informed the minister about the opening of Bureau Office of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting in Islamabad. The Bureau Office of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting will start its working in the third week of January next year, he added.

The establishment of the Bureau office of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting would further promote cooperation in the field of information between the two countries, Murtaza Solangi said. He said several such agreements were under discussion to enhance cooperation between television, films, cinema, literary and linguistic institutions with Iran.

No difference between PML-N, PPP & PTI: Siraj

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Sirajul Haq has said that there is no substantive difference between the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), as these former ruling parties are essentially two sides of the same coin.

Addressing a press conference at Mansoorah on Thursday, he said many so-called leaders who are part of these parties were opportunistic, turn coats and acted as migratory birds that align themselves with whichever party is poised to come into power.

The party chief alongside JI Secretary General Amirul Azim, also launched the JI election symbol "Scale" on the occasion. Sirajul Haq said the political workers have no place in the so-called mainstream parties when it comes to distributing party tickets, as these parties tend to favor their relatives. These parties, he said, function as family clubs, primarily focused on capturing power and securing their interests.

Despite frequently coming to power, he contended that the mainstream parties have consistently failed to address the country's problems. He said a new class of political brahmans was now

also emerging on country's political landscape with the launch of the sons and daughters of the heads of the ruling parties.

The JI chief said that the ruling elite amassed wealth for themselves and their families, looting resources, taking loans, and subsequently having those loans waived off. He asserted that 90 percent of foreign loans were utilized for their personal benefits, contributing to the country's massive debt. He said the corrupt ruling elite annually utilizes \$18 billion of resources for personal gain, rendering the current system incapable of benefiting the common man.

اطلاع برائے

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