

Italian tourist commits suicide
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An Italian tourist allegedly committed suicide as he was found dead in his room in Peshawar on Monday. Peshawar police said that the Italian tourist, identified as Joshua Moises was found dead in his room as he committed suicide. The Police said the dead body of the Italian citizen was moved to the hospital for postmortem after informing the foreign ministry.

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7 killed in road accident

KANDHKOT (INP): Seven people were killed and at least 18 injured in a collision between two passenger vans and a truck in Kandhkot city of Kashmir district in Sindh on Monday. The accident took place near a cadet college on the Indus Highway. As per rescue sources, the injured were shifted to a hospital and many of them were in critical condition. An emergency has been declared in the hospitals of Karampur, Kandhkot and Ghauspur.

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CPEC journey to move forward: PM

Kakar invites Emarati investors to explore Pakistan's conducive business market

F.P. Report

GWADAR: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday urged the people of Balochistan, particularly, the youth to avail the historic opportunity of development in their province as the detractors of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) were about to lose their relevance very soon.

The prime minister, addressing the inauguration ceremony of Pak-China Friendship Hospital and Gwadar Seawater Desalination Plant here, said the journey of CPEC would surely move forward, not the backward, so joining the development course would be a prudent decision. "Those who think to change the course (of CPEC) by force, violence or any other means are committing historic blunder as their relevance will be over very soon. The prudent decision in the nation's fate is to join the course of development, instead of resisting it and miss the opportunity," he remarked.

The ceremony was attended by federal ministers Sami Saeed and Shahid Ashraf Tarar, Caretaker Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Mardan Domki, Chinese Ambassador in Pakistan Jiang Zaidong and the Chinese and Pakistani officials attended the event. The prime minister said the ease in the form of reduced travel durations across the province was just due to CPEC intervention.

He told the gathering that trade worth \$36 trillion was expected to take place in and around China in the near future, therefore it was a must to join the journey through skill development and claim the share, instead of showing hostility. He said the journey of China's modernisation was significance and steering millions of

people out of poverty was unprecedented.

The prime minister said that the development of China had a positive impact across the region, particularly Pakistan and its Balochistan province. He said the clean drinking water had been an issue faced by the Gwadar people and the desalination plant project would address it to a great extent. Besides, the construction of a 150-bed hospital would provide quality healthcare to the people, he added.

The prime minister also thanked the Chinese ambassador for announcing the solar power project and emergency services for Quetta. Prime Minister Kakar assuring the all-out support of the federal and provincial governments on the matter of security, reiterated that the Pakistan Army, police and law enforcement agencies would safeguard the Chinese workers even at the cost of their lives.

He expressed the hope that Gwadar would complete its course of development soon to become a trade hub with the Pak-China cooperation for the benefit of future generations. He directed the authorities concerned to connect Northern Zone with main grid to address the electricity issue. Earlier, the prime minister, along with the Chinese ambassador and Balochistan chief minister unveiled the plaques to inaugurate the projects which followed the presentation of the souvenirs to the prime minister as well as the envoy, PM Kakar, later talking to reporters on the occasion, said the direction of the progress of Balochistan was set forth and expressed confidence that the province would witness a new era of development. He thanked the provincial government on completion of the development projects, which he said, would facilitate the locals of Gwadar.

The prime minister hoped that the financial crunch would be over with the steps taken by the interim government.

To a question on funds allocated for flood-hit areas, he said the world was ready to dole out billions of dollars, however, it depended on how Pakistan could secure the climate financing. In his address, Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong congratulated the people of Balochistan over the inauguration of the desalination plant providing clean drinking water.

He thanked the federal and provincial governments particularly the prime minister for their support to the projects which manifested their commitment to the CPEC. He said both the projects of hospital and desalination plant would help uplift the living standard of the people of Gwadar. He expressed the hope that the both countries would continue to strengthen their cooperation to accomplish the next phase of CPEC.

Chief Minister Ali Mardan Domki said the projects were another example of Pak-China friendship as they would serve the masses by providing quality healthcare facilities and around 500,000 gallons per day of drinking water. He said the shortage of clean drinking water had been a long standing problems faced by the people of Gwadar and the desalination plant would address it. He reiterated that the government remained committed to uplift Gwadar at par with international standards.

In his address through video link, the Chief Executive of the Agency of International Economic Cooperation of China, appreciated the government department, Chinese embassy and project staff for their efforts in the completion of the project.

(Continued on Back Page)



GWADAR: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar addressing the inauguration ceremony of Pak-China Friendship Hospital Project and China-Aid Gwadar Seawater Desalination Project.

Army's help sought for elections

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Monday sought the help of the Pakistan Army to ensure the law and order situation during the general polls, set to take place on February 8 next year.

In the lead-up to the polls, all political parties have geared up for a face-off, while the ECP has notified the final list of delimitation of constituencies of the national and four provincial assemblies. The electoral watchdog is also expected to announce the election schedule, later this month — 54 days before the polls in line with the law.

During the elections, the security situation is a grave concern for the authorities concerned and to ensure that nothing goes south, law enforcers are deployed at polling stations and they are also on patrol. "While the ECP takes all necessary steps to organise an election, [...] it also expects the same commitment from the executive authorities and law enforcement agencies to maintain law and order in the area of the constituencies during the conduct of elections," the ECP's letter to the interior ministry read.

In its bid to prepare for the elections, the ECP had sought a report from all inspector generals of police to determine the availability of police personnel for the polls. Responding to the ECP's request, IGP's from all the provinces and the capital said that they did not have enough personnel. Around 4,500 were short in Islamabad, 169,110 Punjab, 56,717 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 33,462 Sindh, and 13,769 in Balochistan — totalling 277,588.

ECP Secretary Omar Hamid Khan, in the letter to Ministry of Interior Secretary Aftab Akbar Durrani, said that keeping in view, the deficiency of police personnel, the services of the Pakistan Army and civil armed forces (CAFs) shall have to be "requisitioned in static mode". The letter mentioned that the armed forces need to be deployed at polling stations to ensure "smooth elections" in light of the country's "fragile security cum law and order situation".

Special court to indict Imran, Qureshi on 12th

PTI ex-chief wants 'ex-army general, US envoy' to be summoned for cipher trial

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan on Monday stated that he will include former army chief General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa and US embassy officials as witnesses in his defence in the cipher case.

"Will include General Bajwa and US embassy officials as witnesses [in the case], General Bajwa did everything on Donald Lu's directives," claimed Khan during an informal conversation with journalists in Adiala jail during the cipher case hearing. A special court established under the Official Secrets Act 2023 held an open court hearing in Adiala jail where Imran Khan and Shah Mahmood Qureshi are incarcerated.

The court is conducting the trial afresh after the Islamabad High Court nullified the jail trial on November 21. Both of them were indicted on October 23 but the indictment stood cancelled after the IHC order. Speaking to the media person today, the former prime minister pre-

dicted that his party would win the February 8 polls, adding that he was arrested under a plan.

Khan said he was thankful to those PTI leaders jumping the ship. He also rejected reports that he held negotiations in jail. In November, PTI President Parvez Elahi claimed that officials of the European Union and the International Monetary Fund routinely visit Imran Khan at Adiala.

He also shared that he did not face any difficulties in jail. Khan also spoke about the allegations put forward against him by Khawar Maneka — the former husband of his wife Bushra Bibi. He stated that he saw his wife's face for the first time after their nikkah. The former prime minister also claimed that Bushra's sons were being pressurised to give a statement against their mother.

Meanwhile, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, the co-accused in the cipher case, said that the PTI was in his heart and no one could take it out of there. "I do not need any post in PTI anymore," said Qureshi while talking to journalists. The special court hearing the

cipher case has set December 12 as the date of indictment for Khan and Qureshi.

The indictment date was set by Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain after both the suspects were provided with the case record during the hearing held in the Adiala jail. During the hearing, PTI lawyers urged the court not to hand over the record, while the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) special prosecutor asked the court to go ahead.

Today was the second open court hearing after the judge decided to hold the trial in jail due to "serious security risks" brought to light by the prison's superintendent. The federal cabinet last week had also approved the summary to hold the jail trial of Khan and Qureshi in the cipher case after it was moved by the Ministry of Law and Justice. The court had also stated that the proceedings can be attended by anyone who wishes to do so including the journalists. Despite those orders, only six journalists were allowed to attend the hearing today by the jail authorities.

No crisis in meeting ECP's financial needs for holding elections: Solangi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday ruled out any "crisis" on meeting the financial needs of the ECP "in order to hold free, fair and transparent general elections in the country."

"The Cabinet had approved Rs 42 billion for the budgetary needs of the ECP. An amount of Rs 10 billion was already released," the minister wrote on X formerly Twitter. He said the Election Commission of Pakistan had approached to release Rs 17.4 billion, out of the budgeted amount.

"Whatever budgeted amount is needed by the

ECP, will be released as per its needs accordingly," Solangi added. He said the caretaker government firmly stood behind the ECP in holding free and fair elections as mandated by Article 218(3) of the Constitution.

INP adds: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday took notice and summoned the Secretary of Finance for non-provision of allocated funds reserved for the general elections 2024, sources said on Monday.

Sources close to the development revealed that a total of Rs 42 billion was reserved for the preparation of the general election 2024 in the financial year budget, while the Ministry of Finance has

only released Rs 10 billion so far. Sources within the ECP state that the remaining funds for the election are being interrupted without any prior justification from the ministry, as the electoral watchdog is currently in need of Rs 17 billion immediately.

The ECP sources claimed to pen down a reminder and approached the Ministry of Finance repeatedly for the provision of election funds, but failed to get any positive response. Sources claimed that the ECP chief has decided to inform the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and will write a detailed letter regarding the non-provision of funds.

Pashteen arrested

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) chief Manzoor Pashteen was arrested after police were fired at from his vehicle, Chaman Deputy Commissioner Raja Athar Abbas said on Monday.

The statement came nearly four hours after the PTM itself alleged that Pashteen's vehicle was fired at by law enforcement agencies (LEAs) while he was on his way from Chaman to Turbat — where protests have been taking place against an alleged extra-judicial killing.

Speaking to media, Abbas said Levies and police personnel had arrested the PTM leader from the Gudhama area. "Today, police were fired at from Pashteen's car on Mall Road," the official said, adding that a case had also been registered against the PTM leader. He said that Pashteen was arrested in connection with today's incident as well as a ban on his entry into Balochistan. He said that the PTM leader would later be presented before a district magistrate.

However, the PTM had earlier stated that Pashteen, alongside a caravan, was headed from Chaman to Turbat when "police and army carried out straight firing on his vehicle". The statement by the PTM's social media team was posted on Pashteen's account on X. It also said that efforts were under way to arrest the party chief and "police, Frontier Corps and the army had besieged" the area.

Overcharging millions KE, other Discos to face 'legal action'

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) Monday decided to initiate legal action against K-Electric (KE) and other power-providing companies after it was found that they were charging millions of consumers excessively, media reported.

"Legal proceedings against all Distribution Companies including KEL under NEPRA Fine Regulations, 2021 for violation of the provisions of NEPRA Act, CSM and tariff terms & conditions etc.," a statement issued by the power regulator said. The authority took "very serious" notice of the complaints that were reported from all over Pakistan regarding excessive, inflated, and wrong bills charged by the distribution companies to the consumers during two months — July and August.

Following the complaints, the power regulator held detailed hearings during which it found that snaps of "meter readings are either invisible or deliberately not taken. Similarly, some cases were reported that monthly meter readings are being taken beyond the billing cycle of 30 days, which resulted in undue/inflated charging of upper slab bills to the less user consumer(s) hence, changing the category from protected to un-protected". The authority also found out that numerous distribution companies were charging meter readings, whereby, snaps "readings differ from the readings recorded on the consumers' bills".

The authority then constituted a committee to probe into the matter of excessive billing issues. The committee found that 5.7 million Multan Electric Power Company (Mepco) consumers were charged for more than 30 days of the billing cycle in the month of July followed by Gujranwala Electric Power Company (Gepco) i.e., around 1.2 million in August.

Similarly, Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco) i.e., more than 800,000 in August, Lahore Electric Supply Company (Lesco) around 700,000 in both

months, and Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (Hesco) more than 500,000 in the month of July. This resulted in the change of slab from lower to higher, change of status from protected to un-protected, and change of status from life-line to non-life line for thousands of consumers.

"It is further noted with grave concern that during the months of July and [...] August, thousands of consumers were served electricity bills having invalid snaps, in which MEPCO, LESCO, QESCO, and SEPCO are major contributors," the statement mentioned. As per the notified tariff terms and conditions, the billing period means a billing month of 30 days or less reckoned from the date of the last meter reading.

However, the above findings showed that billing cycles carried out by different DISCOs range from 30 days to 40 days and in some instances, even more. The authority said it is "alarmingly noted" that thousands of consumers were charged for more than 40 days of billing.

This was the major cause of overbilling during the months of July and August. In this regard, MEPCO followed by GEPCO, FESCO, LESCO, and HESCO, are the DISCOs who have heavily done such overbilling. Overall, all DISCOs are responsible for such an unjustified exercise, it said. According to laws, the defective meters are required to be replaced immediately however, in case of non-availability the meters are required to be replaced within two billing cycles.

It is evident from the findings, the statement said, that due to the non-replacement of defective meters, thousands of consumers were charged on an average basis for more than two months — and even in a large number of cases one year to three years and even above three years. "The respective DISCOs did not bother to replace the defective meters even after three years," the statement mentioned.

KP CM decide to give waiver in fee to disable candidates in ETEA tests

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As an important relief to special persons, the caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah has decided to give waiver in test fee to the disable candidates appearing in all kinds of screening tests under Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA); and now onward disabled candidates appearing in such screening tests will be exempted from test fee.

This, he decided while chairing the 31st meeting of the Board of Governors of KP. ETEA here on Monday. Provincial Caretaker Minister for Higher Education, Dr. Qasim Jan, Secretary Higher Education, Arshad Khan, Secretary Health, Mehmood Aslam and other

members of the board attended the meeting. It was decided in the meeting to constitute a committee headed by Provincial Minister Justice (R) Irshad Qaiser for evolving a mechanism to dispose off the cellular phones confiscated from candidates during screening tests.

The committee will come up with final proposals to this end after looking into all the legal and technical aspects of the matter. Various matters related to curb the menace of cheating in examinations and screening tests came under discussion in the meeting; and it was decided to put in place an effective mechanism to curb the illegal use of technological gadgets for cheating in examination and screening tests; and all the concerned stakeholders were directed to sit

together and evolve a mechanism in this regard.

It was further decided to take strict action against the networks of individuals involved in breaching the secrecy of examinations and screening tests; and the Chief Minister directed the concerned authorities to work on the required amendments in the relevant laws with the aim to propose more stringent punishment to people involved in such illegal activities, the Chief Minister termed cheating as a menace and a crime against society; and directed all the concerned quarters to sit together and come up with feasible plan of action to curb this menace effectively. The meeting also approved the budget estimates of ETEA for the financial year 2023-24.

KPTMA delegation calls on KP CM:

A delegation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textile Mills Association (KPTMA) led by Ex-Senator, Salim Saifullah Khan called on the Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah here on Monday and apprised him of the problems faced by the Textile Industries of the province with special focus on the exorbitant price hike of gas for industrial sector.

Caretaker Provincial Minister for Industries, Aamir Abdullah, Secretary Industries, Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, Secretary Energy & Power Nisar Ahmad and other relevant authorities were also present on the occasion. The delegation expressed serious reservations on the recent decision of

Economic Coordination Committee with regard to increase the price of gas for industrial sector; and appealed the Chief Minister to take up the issue with the federal government on urgent basis.

The delegation informed that the ECC had taken a decision to enhance the price of industrial gas from Rs. 1238/MMBTU to Rs. 2400/MMBTU adding that it has also taken a decision to supply blended gas to the industries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under which 80% natural gas and 20% RLNG will be supplied to the industries of the province which will further increase the price of industrial gas to Rs. 3100/MMBTU.

KPTMA remarked that if the decision was not reverted by the federal government, then they will be left

with no other option but to close down the industries in the province, as it would be impossible for them to run factories with such high rates of gas. The delegation said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a surplus gas producing province with a total gas production of 550 MMCFD and a total consumption of 200 MMCFD, whereas its industrial gas consumption is only 35 MMCFD; adding that article 158 of the constitution guarantees preference to the gas producing province with regard to the use of gas. The Chief Minister termed the concerns of the delegation as genuine; and ensured to take up the issue with caretaker Prime Minister as soon as possible and hoped that the Prime Minister would consider the concerns of KPTMA favorably.



CTD busts auto theft gang, recovers stolen car

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Monday announced the dismantling of a five-member gang engaged in auto theft, accompanied by the recovery of a stolen car in their possession. The CTD apprehended the suspects within the jurisdiction of Sachal police station and found the vehicle registered as BCR-572, which had been reported stolen from Mubina Town, as per the CTD spokesperson.

The apprehended individuals, namely Javed Ali, Qurban Ali, Zeeshan, Khadim, and Aslam, disclosed during initial interrogations that they had been involved in auto thefts since approximately 2006 or 2007. Their modus operandi involved stealing vehicles from Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sukkur between the hours of Fajr prayers and 7 am. Moreover, the accused confessed to trafficking the stolen cars in Balochistan.

The detained suspects were transferred to the Anti-Vehicle Lifting Cell (AVLC) for further legal procedures.

Police nabs criminals in 3 operations

KARACHI (APP): The Mochko police station in district Keamari achieved success through operations carried out at three separate locations, apprehending suspects allegedly engaged in street crime, motorcycle theft, and smuggling activities. SSP Keamari, Arif Aslam Rao, confirmed these arrests and provided details of each operation.

During the first operation, Muhammad alias Bablu, accused of street crimes, was apprehended, and an illegal pistol with ammunition was seized from his possession. Authorities have initiated further investigation and filed a case against the suspect under the Sindh Arms Act. In the second operation, the Mochko police arrested Ashfaq Ahmed, known for his involvement in motorcycle thefts. The arrest was made based on a tip-off, leading to the recovery of a stolen motorcycle (in parts) from the limits Saeedabad police station. The accused, a habitual criminal previously imprisoned in three cases, has been handed over to the Anti-Vehicle Lifting Cell for deeper investigation.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued a power suspension programme for Tuesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM. Rawalpindi City Circle, Saidpur Road, Malikabad, Effendi Colony, Sadiqabad, Faizabad, Kuri Road, Al Noor Colony, Tariq Shaheed, Gangal, Committee Chowk, Gulshanabad.

Minister desires elected representatives to serve people

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Caretaker Information, Minorities Affairs and Social Protection Minister Mohammed Ahmed Shah while desiring the elected representatives to serve the people, said that the general elections would take place.

Talking to media persons during his visit to the Karachi Press Club (KPC), the minister said that his meeting with the caretaker Sindh chief minister was scheduled, in which he would raise journalists' issues for timely resolution.

Ahmed Shah said, 'I am focused on working journalists' and the issue of murdered journalists including Jan Mohammed Mahar would be taken up with the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh. The minister said that the issue of journalists' dues would also be discussed with the quarters concerned.

He said that the Karachi Press Club had

been his first place of training and he had been associated with it almost for 45 years.

He said that the resolution to issues of journalists community would be among his priorities. He further said that a training workshop would be held for the working journalists. To a question, the caretaker information minister said that the ongoing projects must not be stopped in the province. Ahmed Shah said that the way to make the country stronger could only be achieved by working at the cultural level.

He said that they had worked so much in that area. He said that the KPC had always stood for the truth and it was the oldest Press Club in the country, adding the club had progressed so much. Earlier, KPC President Saeed Sarbazai and Secretary Shoaib Ahmed along with senior journalists welcomed the caretaker minister and raised issues of journalists with him.

World needs to work together to support countries affected by climate change: Mayor

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that the world needs to work together to support the countries affected by climate change.

He said this while addressing the Pavilion Mayors Conference held in Dubai, said a statement issued here on Monday. He said that according to the vision of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto, the Pakistan Peoples Party accepted the challenge of reconstruction of 2.1 million houses destroyed during the 2022 floods in Sindh province and took necessary steps to rehabilitate the affected people as soon as possible. The Pavilion Mayors Conference held in Dubai is an important event that provides an opportunity for mayors from different cities around the world to share their experiences and make suggestions regarding climate change. I have the honour to participate in this important platform with city mayors at the event.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab

shed detailed light on the problems of Sindh province, especially Karachi, their solutions and resources. He said all possible steps are being taken to provide basic facilities to the citizens in their daily life, and the road network in industrial zones and commercial centres is being improved to promote economic activities. Karachi can establish solar and wind farms with financial cooperation that provide affordable and clean energy to people, he said.

He said that due to the increasing population, the problems of Karachi continued to increase due to which it was necessary to develop the basic infrastructure of the city, improve the roads and highways as well as modernise the water supply and drainage system in Karachi. Efforts are being made to provide maximum facilities to the citizens through the construction and expansion of storm-water drains, parks and playgrounds, he said.

Community based disaster risk planning workshop concludes



F.P. Report

SWAT: A 5-days community-based disaster risk planning workshop was conducted in Panjigram Swat, to discuss restoring flood-affected infrastructure and building resilience. The workshop, organized by the Community Resilience Activity – North (CRA-North) was attended by 45 males and 15 females from Panjigram, Gulabad, and Dugiya villages in Bahrain. The workshop aimed to equip participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively plan for natural disasters and build a resilient community.

The local community members, including elders and youth from three different villages (Gulabad, Panjigram, and Dugiya), participated in the workshops. The closing ceremony was graced by Mr. Muhammad Ayub (Sub Divisional Account Officer) from the

Irrigation Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as chief guest.

During this workshop, participants were equipped with various knowledge and skills, including how to craft village DRR Plans, understand disaster-related terminologies, conduct Stakeholders analysis, comprehend early warning systems, establish committees and their roles and responsibilities, and participate in demonstrations on various subjects such as first aid, search and rescue, and firefighting.

The five-day training session also included a Transect Walk, during which participants explored the community's response to validate potential risks and vulnerabilities, moreover district 1122 technical team also delivered a detailed session on emergency aid with both male and female participants.

During the event, the

Chief Guest, Mr. Muhammad Ayub (SDC), expressed his support for the activity and emphasized the importance of planning and preparedness in disaster management. He mentioned that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is also working on effective planning and encouraged other organizations to do the same. The community members appreciated the knowledge gained about risk planning and expressed their readiness to work together towards minimizing the impact of natural hazards. Female participants highlighted the vulnerability of women and children during disasters and stressed the need to prioritize their safety.

Overall, the community resilience activities conducted by CRA-N include training workshops and rehabilitation activities, which aim to better prepare and effectively respond to natural disasters and overcome their effects.



LAHORE: Chairman NAB Lt. Gen. (R) Nazir Ahmed and DG NAB Lahore Amjad Majeed Aulakh distributing certificates among the students.

CM inspects Kot Khawaja Saeed Hospital, removes MS

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited Kot Khawaja Saeed Teaching Hospital here on Monday and dismayed to see cats roaming beneath patients' beds due to inadequate cleanliness arrangements.

The pervasive filth and the sealed radiology ward added to the concerns. Complaints from patients and their attendants further highlighted the deplorable conditions. After seeing this, the CM ordered to remove the MS immediately and telephonically directed the health secretary to establish a Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC) Satellite Clinic at the hospital.

During the inspection, he ordered to shift a child to the children's hospital for treatment. Different patients and their attendants raised concerns about repetitive vaccine administrations, leading the CM to scrutinize the doctors' duty rosters and enforce time-bound duties. The CM inspected different departments and reviewed the upgradation work of the hospital.

In one part of the hospital, no workers were working, while in the other part, the number of workers was very low. The CM directed to deploy an additional labor force to accelerate the upgradation work. Taking note of a differently-abled individual's issue, CM not only directed its resolution but also expressed strong disapproval of the overall deplorable condition of the hospital. He assured that necessary steps would be taken to enhance treatment facilities in the hospital.

CM inspects Govt Abdul Rahim Memorial Hospital: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday visited the Government Abdul Rahim Memorial Hospital Sodival to check the treatment facilities being provided to the patients.

The hospital was found lacking in essential services, including the absence of free medicines and blood supply. Moreover, the absence of a medical superintendent and inadequate sanitation arrangements drew complaints from attendants of female

patients. Taking notice of the grievances, CM Naqvi issued a stern warning to the MS and ordered the reimbursement of money to families who had purchased medicines from outside. He emphasized the need to enhance sanitation arrangements and stated unequivocally that any shortcomings in providing free medications to patients would not be tolerated. The CM took a round of different wards to inspect the medical facilities available to patients. He inquired about healthcare services and the provision of free medicines to patients. He also checked the water filtration plant and congratulated the relatives of a newborn child.

Meanwhile, Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the first-ever one-window operation to streamlining the services of investors here on Monday.

Under one roof, 20 provincial and federal departments now facilitate a swift system, issuing 106 NOCs within a remarkable 15 days.

LDA seals 55 properties, demolishes five

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) on Monday sealed another 55 properties and erased five during an operation against illegal construction on different localities of the city.

On directions of Commissioner Lahore and Director General LDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, the teams took action against fee defaulters and illegal constructions in Shadman, Samanabad, Shadbagh and Canal Road.

During the operation, LDA teams sealed 55 properties and demolished 5, after serving multiple notices for compliance.

The properties included private schools, beauty parlors, private offices, clinics, academics, biotech labs, pharmaceutical offices, cloth shops, hostels, farms, and more. Operation Director Zone 1, Aisha Mutahir, supervised the operation under the guidance of Commissioner Lahore and DG LDA.

Punjab Art and Culture Expo from 29th

LAHORE (APP): The first Punjab Art and Culture Expo will start on December 29 at Cultural Complex Lahore. Executive Director Punjab Council Syed Bilal Haider, in a statement on Monday, said the main objective of the expo was to keep alive dying art in Punjab and provide a platform for financial well-being of people associated with it.

He said that Punjab is the only unique region in the world which changes its culture after every 80 kilometers called a bar, adding the present Punjab consists of 12 bars. In the coming Art and Culture expo, the culture of Punjab would be presented in a remarkable way which includes traditional dishes, local sports, folk tales, mystic poets, saints and local heroes with which the new generation is totally unfamiliar, he added.

Bilal Haider said these factors would be displayed so that the new generation could also know their original and traditional culture of Punjab.

The first Punjab Art and Culture Expo will be the first of its kind.

Turkish & Pakistani Commerce Ministers met in Istanbul to rejuvenate trade ties



F.P. Report

ISTANBUL: Turkish & Pakistani Commerce Ministers met in Istanbul to rejuvenate trade ties.

Care Taker Federal Minister for Commerce, Industries & Production Dr. Gohar Ejaz during his meeting with Turkish counterpart H.E Mr. Omer Bolat said

huge potentials exist to enhance bilateral trade between Türkiye and Pakistan and called for exploring all new avenues of investments at the optimal level.

Furthermore, he said the bilateral trade and economic relations weren't to the level which needed to be as Türkiye & Pakistan have enjoyed a strong trade, eco-

nomic, diplomatic and common cultural relations.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz mentioned that the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) was signed in August 2022 between Türkiye and Pakistan, which is a step forward to further improve the mutual trade and economic relations between the two countries.

LESCO detects 125 power pilferers in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 125 connections from where customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) on the 86th day of grand anti-power theft campaign.

The LESCO spokesman told media here Monday that the company has also submitted FIR applications against 125 electricity thieves, out of which 65 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while two accused have been arrested. Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations.

The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of

electricity theft. The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them are also being brought to justice.

On the 86th consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units.

Among the seized connections 4 were commercial and 121 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 123,100 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 5.152 million. Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he explained that LESCO charged 24,000 detection units to an electricity pilferer in Bhaati Gate area; 7,605 detection units to a customer stealing electricity also in Bhaati Gate area; 7,605 detection to a power thief in area of Chah Miran; and 7,000 detection units to a power thief in Data Nagar area.

Incentives necessary to boost fodder sowing

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Minister for Livestock Ibrahim Hassan Murad on Monday directed the relevant authorities to present complete data of fodder cultivated till now. He presided over a meeting here which reviewed BN hybrid fodder cultivation and provision besides performance of Buffalo Research Institute Bahadurnagar, Pattoki.

It was told in the meeting that there were 21 Livestock farms in Punjab. Hybrid fodder is cultivated on 18,880 acres of land in 13 farms. Minister was briefed that 'Qalma' of Hybrid fodder was being prepared in the Livestock department. Almost 11,000 animals were being given hybrid fodder in government farms and buffaloes were giving good results after eating simple fodder, meeting told. It was further told in the meeting that our buffaloes were among best milk producing animals in the world. The minister said that good amount of forex could be fetched through exporting hybrid fodder, adding that incentives had to be given to farmers to boost cultivation of fodder.



LAHORE: People enjoying the colorful water fountains at Jilani Park.



Women empowerment must for country's development

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali on Monday emphasized that Islam has bestowed upon women dignity, protection, and all rights and the status given to them by Islam is unparalleled.

He said this in a two-day international conference organized by Shaheed Benazir Women University Peshawar under the supervision of the Border Rural Support Program aimed at empowering women.

In the inaugural session of the conference, held on the first day, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali distributed electronic tablets among Afghan female students and

highlighted the importance of technology in women's education.

He also inspected the products crafted by Pakistani and Afghan women and lauded their creative abilities and business interests.

Speaking on this occasion, Governor Ghulam Ali urged the participants not to view degrees solely as a means to employment, emphasizing the need to create opportunities for both men and women in business and trade.

He advocated for providing economic and social autonomy to women, stating that the progress of society is contingent upon

empowering women.

The governor underscored the importance of changing societal perspectives towards women, urging for respectful treatment in all aspects of life.

He encouraged women to actively participate in businesses alongside their husbands, parents, and brothers, stressing the need for collaboration and support.

Governor Ali expressed the need for training women in the jewellery industry, focusing on gemstone polishing and cutting skills.

Highlighting the potential of the gemstone market, especially in the jewellery

sector, he suggested that skilled women can contribute significantly to the business.

Governor Ghulam Ali called upon financial aid institutions to provide special scholarships for female students in educational fields.

He announced plans for a joint Pakistan-Afghan Expo, aiming to provide business opportunities and facilities for Pakistani and Afghan women.

In conclusion, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali reaffirmed his commitment to women's empowerment, stating that it is essential for the economic and social progress of society.



PESHAWAR: VC SBBWU Prof. Dr. Safia Ahmed, SRSP CEO Masaud ul Mulk and UNHCR KP Head Kofi Ohenenana Dwomo giving shield to Governor KP Haji Ghulam Ali during 1st International Women Conference on Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges, Uniting Women's Voice for a Better World.

PTI's leaders interim bail extended F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Anti-corruption court Peshawar extended bail pleas of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) parliamentarians including former Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser till 19th December, on Monday.

The counsel Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah advocate requested for Asad Qaiser exemption from appearance before court and argued that former Speaker National Assembly is behind the bars another case.

However, interim bail pleas of three PTI's parliamentarians including former speaker national assembly Asad Qaiser extended till 19th December due to unavailability of Anti-corruption court Peshawar Judge Babar Ali Khan.

It is worthy to mention that former Speaker Asad Qaiser, Member Provincial Assembly Rangeez Khan and Aqib Ullah had approached court for interim bail after allegation regarding corruption and illegal recruitment.

CS reaffirms commitment to eradicate polio

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry here Monday reaffirmed commitment to eradicate polio from the region.

A delegation of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation comprising Chairman Polio Oversight Board and President Global Development BMGF, Dr. Christopher Elias, Deputy Director Polio Eradication Michael Galway visited Peshawar and met with the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and Caretaker Health Minister Dr. Riaz Anwar to discuss imperative matters related to the eradication of polio in the region.

It was agreed to further enhance the ongoing collaboration in achieving this goal through sustained vaccination campaigns and improved access to communities.

Both sides thoroughly deliberated on campaign initiatives, discussed effective measures and the way forward for the complete eradication of polio.

The meeting was also attended by the Secretary Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Coordinator Emergency Operations Center and other relevant officials.

New office bearers congratulated

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker minister for finance Ahmed Rasul Bangash on Monday congratulated the newly elected office bearers of the Artist Action Foundation, which is the first of its kind in KP and the entire country.

The oath-taking ceremony was jointly organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority and the Artist Action Foundation here at Nishtar Hall, Peshawar.

The caretaker minister for finance, Ahmad Rasool Bangash, senior artist Khayal Muhammad, and artists from across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were present at the ceremony.

Addressing the oath-taking ceremony, Minister Finance said that artists are the custodians of our heritage, our past, and our future, adding that their work transcends borders, becoming a universal language that speaks to the hearts and minds of people around the world.

Provincial Finance Minister Ahmed Rasul Bangash said that further steps would also be taken for the facilitation of the

artist community.

He also appreciated their efforts in promoting KP culture, heritage, and a positive image.

Ahmed Rasul Bangash, further said that "Pashto folk music, poetry, and art are the true representatives of Pashtoon culture. Among all the folk genres, Pashto folk poetry and singing comprise Tappa Charbitha, Nimkai, Loba, Badala, Ghagoona Gharey, Rubayee, Misraeeza, Ghazal, and Sundaray.

He said that the Pashto language is proud of it because this genre is rare to be found in world literature anywhere in any language, especially in oriental languages.

He said that it is the only form of folk poetry that is very impressive and effective in highlighting the culture of Pashtoons.

The caretaker minister said that artists are a great asset to the nation, and the provincial government has taken all possible steps for the welfare and development of artists in the province.

He said that efforts will be made to promote digital and visual art as well.

A musical evening was also held on the occasion, attended by a large number of renowned artists. Various cultural shows were presented and largely appreciated by the audience."

AIDS patients rise to 6,966

PESHAWAR (INP): The total number of registered AIDS patients in KP has alarmingly risen to 6,966, with Peshawar accounting for the highest number of cases. Bannu follows closely behind, highlighting the province's growing AIDS epidemic. 4,865 of the registered AIDS patients are male, while 107 eunuchs are also battling the disease. The former tribal districts have not been spared either, with 107 confirmed cases.

These alarming figures underscore the urgent need for comprehensive awareness campaigns and accessible treatment facilities to combat the spread of AIDS in KP. government must prioritize preventive measures and allocate adequate resources to effectively address this public health crisis.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chairing 31st Meeting of BoGs of Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency.

Power suspension notified

PESHAWAR (APP): PESCO on Monday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Badaber Grid Station on 5th December from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. resultantly the consumers of Saifan feeders will face inconvenience.

It said power supply will also remain suspended from Badaber grid station on 5th December from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly the consumers of Badabei, PAF, Hassain Khan, Livestock feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will also remain suspended from Charsadda grid station on 6th December from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. resultantly the consumers of Charsadda grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from Mardan Grid Station on 5th and 7th December from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Shah Dand, Ghari Kapura, Ghari Dolat Zai, Col Jawad, Tawas and Zando feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from D.I.Khan Grid Station on 5th and 7th December from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumers of MES, FC, City 1, 2, Town Hall, University, Qayume Nagar, Tousif Abad feeders will face inconvenience.

District admin gears up anti-encroachment drive

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration, in its ongoing anti-encroachments operation, has demolished illegal structures built on graveyard land and recovered 59 marlas of encroached land.

The operation was conducted in Beri Bagh, Beju, and Zahid Abad graveyards, resulting in the arrest of three people for resisting the operation.

Under the directive of

Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Afaq Wazir, Administrator Auqaf Hameed Gagyani, and Additional Assistant Commissioner Saleem Ayubi conducted an operation against encroachments in graveyards.

A police force was deployed to prevent any untoward incidents. The administrators emphasized that the encroachers had been repeatedly warned,

but they failed to voluntarily remove the encroachments.

The district administration, therefore, conducted the operation to eliminate encroachments and restore the sanctity of cemeteries. Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Afaq Wazir, instructed officers to conduct daily inspections of markets and other locations and take strict action against violators of the law.

Hamza Foundation holds seminar, blood donation camp

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An awareness seminar about Thalassemia disease and its prevention and also a Blood donation camp was organized by Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Center and Blood Transfusion Services Peshawar. Their presence really highlighted the importance of the seminar, and they all applauded the joint efforts of the entire management of Swabi College of Nursing & Health Sciences.

As many as 60 healthy Volunteer Students after detail medical checkup by Dr. Kashmala Shah, donated their blood for saving precious lives of 1483 registered Thalassemia and Hemophilia patients kids of Hamza Foundation.

It was joined by Prof. Abdul Kareem, Principal of the College and also Ateeq ur Rehman Resource Mobilization Officer of Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Center and Blood Transfusion Services Peshawar. Their presence really highlighted the importance of the seminar, and they all applauded the joint efforts of the entire management of Swabi College of Nursing & Health and Hamza Foundation for the noble cause.

Students and teachers of different classes were also invited. Mr. Ateeq ur Rehman RMO of HF gave detail briefing about 18

years welfare services of Hamza Foundation and also about Thalassemia major disease and its prevention and motivated the students for donations of blood for saving the precious lives of 1483 registered patients of poor Thalassemia, Hemophilia patients.

Shields and certificates of appreciation were distributed among teaching staff and students. On that occasion a Special shield was presented to Prof. Abdul Kareem sahib Principal of the said College.

Founder Chairman Hamza Foundation Mr. Ijaz Ali Khan thanked the entire management and students.

Cold and partly cloudy weather to prevail in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Monday predicted that mainly cold and partly cloudy weather is expected in most districts of the province.

It said that dense foggy conditions are expected over Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Peshawar, Swabi and D.I. Khan districts, as well as, over Motorway (M1) / Highways in morning and night. Travelers on Motorway/highways were advised to take precautionary measures.

During the last 24 hours cold and dry weather prevailed over most districts of the province. Rainfall recorded (in mm) during the last 24 hours at different stations of KPK was nil.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar 24/07, Chitral 16/05, Timergara 20/07, Dir 20/-01, Mirkhani 18/00, Kalam 10/-04, Drosh 15/04, Saidu Sharif 17/03, Pattan 24/15, Malam Jabba 09/03, Takht Bhai 25/06, Kakul 16/03, Balakot 18/03, Parachinar 18/01, Bannu 24/09, Cherat 16/05, DI Khan City 25/10.



PESHAWAR: Youth Minorities Minister Jadoon presenting shield to Joseph Bishop Madan.



PESHAWAR: Central Spokesperson PTI Maozam Butt Advocate addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

Policy reforms stressed to safeguard public health

PESHAWAR (APP): Blue Veins in a move to address the growing concerns around the use of heated tobacco products (HTPs) and vapes, organized a comprehensive policy forum in Peshawar.

The event, marked by the presence of key government functionaries and diverse civil society organizations, aimed to reassess and improve the regulations concerning these products in Pakistan.

The forum was attended by representatives from the Health Department, Higher Education, Elementary and Secondary Education, Police Department, Local Government, Excise and Taxation, Peshawar Development Authority, Planning and Development, National Human Rights Institutions, media personnel, lawyers, and Public Health experts. The members from Provincial and Federal tobacco control cells also contributed valuable insights here on Monday.

The event provided an opportunity to discuss the existing policy landscape for regulating new nicotine and tobacco products,

alongside the emerging trends in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The forum also examined the existing mechanisms in place, addressing the challenges and potential uniform approaches within KP.

Dr. Waseem, from the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), emphasized the importance of the ban on e-cigarettes.

"The ban on e-cigarettes is not just a regulatory step but a necessary move to safeguard public health. It's crucial to recognize the potential risks associated with such products," he stated.

Naeem Akhtar, Focal Person Federal Tobacco Control Cell Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, stressed the need for a shift in behavior and attitudes toward reducing the use of nicotine and tobacco products.

"It's imperative to alter our approach and perception towards these products. Behavioral and attitudinal change is the cornerstone of effective tobacco control," he remarked.

The Assistant Commissioner of Peshawar

Zainab Naqvi called for comprehensive legislation and policy reform. "To effectively enforce regulations on newer nicotine and tobacco products, we need robust legislation and policy reform. This will not only help in regulation but also in educating the public about the risks."

Sana Ahmad Program Coordinator Blue Veins Said "We strives to address the emerging challenges posed by newer nicotine and tobacco products. Through our coordinated efforts, we aim to enhance synergies among stakeholders, advocating for effective policies and increased awareness. Our goal is not just to confront these health risks, but to pave the way for a future where public health is prioritized and protected against such evolving threats".

The provincial policy forum concluded with a consensus on the need for a collaborative effort from all stakeholders to strengthen policy reforms at Provincial and Federal level to address the challenges posed by newer nicotine and tobacco products.



In brief

Three killed, five injured

SARGODHA (INP): Three persons, including a woman, were killed and five others were injured in a collision between two cars near Chak No. 85 North Jhal near Sargodha police station factory area on Monday. According to police sources, well-known religious scholar Muhammad Basheeruddin Sialvi, a resident of Zafarabad Colony in Sallanwali, along with his wife Shamim Akhtar, daughter Urwa and son Muhammad Abu Bakr, were going to Grandsire Wedding Hall Sargodha in Sallanwali when their car collided with a speeding car coming from the opposite direction. As a result of the collision, Bashiruddin Sialvi, his wife Shamim Akhtar and Hasnain Nawaz died on the spot while their daughter Urwa, son Abu Bakr, Ehtsham and Osama were seriously injured. Rescue teams reached the spot immediately and shifted the injured to a nearby hospital while the bodies were shifted to Dr. Faisal Masood Teaching Hospital Sargodha for postmortem. Police said that the accident happened due to the high speed of both the vehicles.

Sindhi Cultural day celebrated

HYDERABAD (INP): Like other cities of the province Sindh Cultural Day was also celebrated in Hyderabad, a cultural Hub of the province. A large number of people including men, women and children clad in traditional dress code wearing Ajrak and Sindh caps flowed on the streets in dozens of rallies to mark the Sindh culture day. The people wearing ajrak and Sindh caps danced to the rings of Sindh songs as they moved in rallies in City, Qasimabad and Latifabad talukas as well as in Tandogram, Husri and other towns. Several political parties including Pakistan Peoples Party, Qaumi Awami Tehreek, Sindh Taraqi Pasand and other parties also organized their separate rallies. The rallies began in the morning and continued through the day with almost every other square and intersection in the city brimming with young people dancing to the tunes of cultural songs. In the evening the events for intellectual discourse were also organized by different groups and non-governmental organizations.

Three medical stores sealed

ATTOCK (INP): Health authorities in Attock took action against the medical and veterinary outlets and sealed two medical and one veterinary medicines store in Hazro town. According to officials, a team of health authorities, district drugs controller Dr Uzma, Drug Inspector Jand, Luqman Akram, Drug Inspector Pindigheb Saddam Hussain and Drug Inspector Hazro Syed Muhammad Ashar Naqvi carried out the crackdown against the medical and veterinary outlets in various parts of Hazro.

Accused held

HARIPUR (INP): Haripur police have arrested the accused involved in the Sangian murder case and recovered the murder weapon. According to Haripur police on Monday, an incident of killing Qasim son of Abdul Razzaq with a firearm took place on December 2 in the limits of the TIP police station in Sangian. On the report of the plaintiff, a case was registered against the accused under Section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code.

Jirga held in Kurram, emphasizes development amidst security steps



F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: In a significant development, a grand jirga took place in the border town of Hangu, located in the central Kurram, where coal mine contractors collaborated to discuss crucial matters. The event saw the participation of Commandant Thall Scouts, Khubaib Rasool, Colonel Umair, Major Adil, Major Najam, and other officers.

During the grand jirga, Commandant Thall Scouts, Khubaib Rasool, addressed the gathering, highlighting ongoing projects worth millions in various regions of kurram. Completed mega projects, including schools, colleges, roads, and hospitals, were mentioned, with plans to open more coal mines in the near future.

Commandant Thall Scouts stressed that with improved security, progress

and prosperity would follow. He acknowledged the current security challenges, as elements hostile to Pakistan seek refuge in the country's internal regions. He appealed to the local community, urging collaboration with the Pakistani armed forces and law enforcement agencies to thwart these malicious activities.

Additionally, he expressed concern over the sacrifices made by both the forces and civilians in the region's counter-terrorism efforts. Commandant Thall Scouts called upon the religious scholars, local leaders, and the public to join hands with the armed forces and FC police to eliminate the menace of terrorism and maintain peace in the area.

The Commandant emphasized that clearing the region of terrorists required cooperation not

only with the forces but also with the local community. He specifically addressed the youth, stating that they are the future of the nation and encouraged them to actively participate in anti-narcotics initiatives.

Furthermore, Commandant Thall Scouts called for unity between the armed forces and the public, stating that only together could they bring lasting peace, prosperity, and development to the region. The local leadership echoed these sentiments, assuring a united front against terrorism and pledging full support to maintain security.

In conclusion, the grand jirga served as a platform to address security concerns, highlight development projects, and foster collaboration between the armed forces and the local community for a safer and prosperous future in the central Karam.

Wealthy people asked to assist PWDs

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) was marked by different organizations by holding various functions in parts of the Lower Dir district here the other day.

The Helping Hand for Relief and Development (HHRD) in collaboration with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) arranged a function for special children at its Talash rehabilitation center which was attended by around two hundred disabled children. The PRCS district secretary Muhammad Islam, HHRD programme officer Muhammad Bilal, clinical psychologist Habibullah and others addressed the function.

They appreciated the participation of special children and said they were strong enough to face no barriers in all aspects of their lives. The speakers asked philanthropists, humanitarian organizations and well-off people to play their active role in making the PWDs useful citizens of society.

A clinical psychologist Habibullah said that the day was aimed to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities at every level of society and development, and to raise awareness of the situation faced by persons with disabilities (PWDs) in political, social, economic and cultural life. Some of the special children presented

speeches on the occasion and got applause from the audience. A drawing competition was held among special children during which they took keen interest. The guests distributed shields and prizes among the special children on their best performance.

The Lower Dir administration and district sports' department also arranged a



badminton championship among persons with disabilities at Mayor badminton hall to mark the Day. The PWD badminton players from different areas of the district participated in the event.

The PWDs including Muhammad Rehman, Hayat Muhammad and Abdur Raziq displayed their talent in the sports. The district sports' officer Ibrar Ahmad awarded trophies, medals and cash prizes to the winner, runner up teams and best players of the event on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion the DSO said that sports were vital for PWDs for their physical fitness and reducing stress and strain. He appreciated the special players and said the

sports' department would cooperate with them at any moment.

Meanwhile the Al-Khidmat Foundation and Sada Foundation distributed wheel chairs among 54 special persons during a function held at Timergara. A wheelchair race was also held among special children. The AKF district president Hafeezullah

Khaksar and Sada Foundation president Khurshid Alam, who himself is a special person, distributed prizes among the first three position holders of the race.

Speaking on the occasion Mr Khaksar and Khurshid Alam said that persons with disabilities could not be ignored as they were an important part of society. They said that PWDs needed extra care and it was the collective responsibility of the whole society to play an active role in making them useful citizens of the country. An agreement for collective efforts for uplift and rehabilitation of PWDs was signed among the AKF, Sada Foundation and Social Welfare department on the occasion.

AD&SJ grants bail before arrest to 105 PTI's activists

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Asim Riaz granted bail before arrest to 105 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf workers booked in First Information Report (FIR), till 13th December, on Monday.

According to details, PTI's workers were booked in FIR after Takhtbhai Convention. A workers' convention was organized in Tehsil Takhtbhai, in which an FIR was registered against 105 PTI leaders and workers in Jabar police station of Mardan, including former members of the Provincial Assembly Iftikhar Ali Mashwani, Zahir Shah Toru, Abdul Salam Afridi, Tufail Anjum, Ameer Farzand Khan and ILF lawyers Riaz Paindakhel, Ameer Ejaz Khan Advocate, Ejaz Khan Advocate, Faisal Anwar Advocate while the office bearers include Secretary Information Peshawar Region Engineer Adil Nawaz, President

Tehsil Mardan Ilyas Toru, Iqbal Chairman, Tariq Ariani, 105 members, including Shariq Khan, Bilal, Muaz Bacha, President of Youth Wing Tehsil Ghari Kapura, Zarshad Khan, Riaz Khan, Tehsil President Katlang, were also nominated for bail before arrest by Azhar's legal team in Mardan Court of Asim Riaz.

Rahim Advocate, Saeed Usman Advocate, Alamgir Khan Advocate, Sajjad Ahmed Chishti, Muhammad Athar Khan Advocate, Ikhtsham Ali Advocate and Tela Muhammad Advocate appeared before the Additional Sessions Judge who granted interim bail to all 105 members till December 13.

Meanwhile, PTI workers, including Senior vice President Sher Afzal Marwat and Ex-MPA Iftikhar Mashwani in Mardan while dozen of senior PTI leaders separated ways from the party.

According to the details,

in Police Station of Jabar Mardan, an FIR has been registered against 105 PTI workers including Senior Vice President Sher Afzal Marwat and Ex-MPA Iftikhar Mashwani, following a workers convention in Takht Bhai Mardan. Police said that the gathering led to road closures, impacting the local polio campaign. Workers chanted slogans against the government and disrupted the routine activities. The FIR includes charges under sections 341, 188, 147, and 149 of the Pakistan Penal Code, related to unlawful assembly and rioting. The incident raises concerns about its effect on public health initiatives, emphasizing the need for political activities to consider broader community welfare.

The PTI Provincial Spokesperson, Zahir Shah Toru, condemned the police action against PTI workers, stating that they organized a peaceful worker convention without causing harm to public property or safety.

PMS Charsadda secures 2nd position F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Peshawar Model School (PMS) Charsadda Campus achieved a significant honor on a national level as its fifth-grade students secured the second position in the All-Pakistan Spelling Bee Competition held at Beaconhouse School System Islamabad. Three outstanding students from Peshawar Model School Charsadda Campus, Bibi Mahin Shan, Anam Fawad, and Dua Taj, earned the second position nationwide, receiving certificates, medals, trophies, and cash prizes.

This success illuminated the name of Peshawar Model School Charsadda Campus and the province throughout Pakistan. Special guest Musharrif Ali Farooqi, the founder and CEO of Storykit, along with Ramesha Khan, the Project Head of Pakistan Spelling Bee Competition, honored them with awards. The Director of Peshawar Model School Charsadda Campus, Khawaja Shiraz Naser, and Principal Nasrat Nazir expressed pride in the achievement, declaring it a significant accolade for the school.

They highlighted that alongside excelling in regional activities, Peshawar Model School Charsadda Campus consistently secures top positions at the board level, contributing to the promotion of quality and modern education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The school's director and principal praised the performance of the spelling bee team, attributing the success to their effective leadership, and emphasized that the students' accomplishment reflects the school's unique position in providing exemplary education in the region.

PTI's 22 activists obtained BBA F.P. Report

BUNER: The 22 PTI leader included 7 from PK 25, 7 from PK 26 and 8 from PK 27 were charged under sections 188, 280, 290, 3/4 got bail before arrest from the court of district & session judge on Monday.

PTI's activists including Riaz Khan, Sher Alam Khan, Haji Rozi Khan, Arshad Iqbal, Rahim, Anwar Said, Ata-ur-Rehman obtained BBA. Those included from PK 26 were Fakhar Jahan, Kamran Khan, Irshad Alam, Bakhrad Khan, Amer Zeb, Waqar-ul-Mulk Sharaf Khan, Those included from PK 27 were Kabir Khan, Sajjad Khan, Javed Khan, Fazal Akbar, Afsar Khan, Shahid Iqbal and Mubarak Husain.

The district & session judge heard the arguments presented by Advocate Inam Advocate Irshad and after satisfaction granted them bail before arrest against punishing surety bonds and directives the accused would be presented in the court. The PTI Legal team told media they were respecting courts and optimistic of bail confirmation as the FIRs were just political victimization and nothing else.

JUI-F hold conference: Jammiat Ulema Islam Fazal (JUI-F) held a grand Tufan Al Aqsa Convention at Jowar Ground area of Salarzai tehsil Buner district to show solidarity with Palestinians against Israeli war crimes.

The party provincial Amier Maulana Ataur Rehman Mustfi Kifayatullah Ataul Haq Darvesh Mufti Fazal Ghafur Hafiz Sadiq Qari Arifullah Saeedur Rehman Mufakir Maulana Ali Rehman Maulana Akbar Hayat addressed. The JUI KPK chief made it clear Masjid Aqsa was heart of Muslim and it would be defended by supporting Phalistine. He announced final battle for protection of Islam and Muslim adding all of world forces must listen there would be Islam in Pakistan otherwise all of Muslims would have to face martyrdom. He bitterly criticized west for supporting own agenda in Pakistan by imposing the PTI adding Imran was minus and Barrister Gohar would be minis by public in general elections.

KP Governor awards 356 degrees to KUST students



KOHAT: Inauguration of 870 KW solar system and KUST Jamia Masjid by Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali, Chancellor on the occasion of 14th Convocation 2023 of Kohat University of Science and Technology.

F.P. Report

KOHAT: The 14th convocation of the Faculty of Science and Technology of Kohat University was held in the Iftikhar auditorium of the university in which Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali, Vice Chancellor of Kohat University Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan, Deans of various Faculties, teachers, male and female students and a large number of parents also participated.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali awarded degrees to 356 students, while gold medals were awarded to 68 students from Kohat University, 38 students from affiliated colleges and 6 students from private candidates. In his address, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali congratulated the graduating students and their parents and expressed the hope that today's graduating students will be able to be patriotic Pakistanis along with their abilities.

He said that Kohat University of Science and Technology is the only university which prepared a five-year business plan and

carried out the plans formulated in it. Controlled expenditure within budgeted limits has resulted in increased financial reserves of the University for which Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan and his team deserve congratulations.

The Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said that Kohat University is continuously increasing its economic capacity, which is a clear proof of receiving the award of Sustainable University of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 2020-21. He praised the Vice-Chancellor and administration of Kohat University for the completion of several development projects.

Vice Chancellor Kohat University Professor Dr. Sardar Khan in his address highlighted the last three years of the university. In his address, Dr. Sardar Khan said that in the last three years, many expansion projects were completed in the academic and infrastructure sectors of the university. Keeping in view the market requirement, six new departments, eleven new degree programs and six new course-based MPhil programs have also been started. While this

year, two new faculties, Faculty of Management Science and Faculty of Health Science are included.

He said that with the establishment of Quality Enhancement Directorate, there has been significant improvement in the education quality and research areas of Kohat University and its affiliated colleges. For which the Higher Education Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has awarded this institution with the Quality Assurance Award.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan further said that the global ranking of Kohat University of Science and Technology is continuously improving, while recently in the Times Higher Education World Ranking, Kohat University got the sixth position at the provincial level and the twenty-fifth position at the national level. Which is a tool for this university. He said that three major projects have been completed in the last two years which include solarization of Kohat University, completion of Jamia Masjid and establishment of successful youth programme.

Khyber Rescue 1122 serves tribesmen to its best

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Rescue 1122 has dealt 9331 different types of emergencies across the district Khyber in the last four years report. In a report shared by the emergency officer of the Rescue department of Khyber, Syed Shoab Mansoor said last day that two stations in addition with nine referral points had been established to provide timely relief to the effectees.

Beside routine duties, Rescue 1122 workers had actively participated in Corona Pandemic, landslide incident in Torkham and other mishaps happen in the district, report revealed. As per report the department tackled 6092 medical emergencies including timely provision of medical assistance to the patients of heart attack, blood pressure, paralysis etc. and transported them to nearest health center for proper treatment.

Throughout the district 1375 traffic mishaps had

been reported in which Rescue 1122, Khyber helped the wounded and shifted them to hospitals. In the same way the Rescue 1122 workers responded to 309 different fire eruption incidents and provided needed relief. Medical help and other assistance were supplied during 347 of quarrels and firing happens. Similarly the rescuers facilitated 389 patients of Covid 19 patients in addition with dealing of effectees of 23 explosion incidents. They responded to 44 of drowning incidents next to 28 occurrence of falling from buildings. While relief was supplied in 724 recovery incidents. After launching a referral service in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2021, in the last four years, Rescue 1122 had delivered services in 5105 referral cases beside it had actively participated in Corona Pandemic, landslide incident in Torkham and other mishaps happen in the districts, it revealed.

The District Emergency

Officer maintained that the Rescue 1122 extended services to approximately 400 immigrants in Holding Center, Landi Kotal, in the ongoing Afghan repatriation. Moreover Rescue 1122, Khyber training wing imparted knowledge of first aid, fire rescuing and tackling of other emergencies to the government officials, volunteers of welfare organizations, students and people from different walks of life.

He went on that Rescue 1122 was public department, which functioned 7/24 to serve the masses therefore contact it in case of emergency and encourage the Rescue 1122 volunteers to enhance their competency.

Locals lauded the services of Rescue 1122, Khyber, it delivered during man-made or natural disasters and said since the first day of its establishment; unmatched services are being rendered by trained Rescue workers, Khyber that has earned a good name for the department.

KKKU, Karak mourns passing of renowned poet



F.P. Report

KARAK: The Department of Communication and Media Studies (CMS) Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak paid rich tributes to the late Raham Zaman Khattak, fondly remembered as Zalmay Khattak, during a condolence reference held on Monday.

Zalmay Khattak, a distinguished nationalist poet and writer of District Karak, left an indelible mark on the literary landscape of Pakistan, particularly in depiction of Pakhtun culture through his touching poetry. The condolence reference served as a platform for faculty members, students, and esteemed guests to reflect on the life and literary contributions of this luminary figure.

Shabeer Ullah, Lecturer of CMS department and the distinguished speaker at the event, articulately highlighted Zalmay Khattak's literary legacy, underscoring the profound impact of his works on the cultural and national discourse. Shabeer Ullah emphasized the significance of preserving and promoting the rich literary heritage that Zalmay Khattak has left behind.

Dr. Muhammad Anwar, Head of the CMS Department, expressed deep sorrow at the loss of Zalmay Khattak and underscored the enduring influence of the late poet's works in the realm of literature. Dr. Anwar affirmed the commitment of the Communication and Media Studies Department to perpetuate the memory and literary

works of Zalmay Khattak for future generations.

The condolence reference drew a diverse audience, including Assistant Professor CMS Wajahat Karim, and Lecturers Dr. Abdur Rauf Khattak, Shabeer Ullah Khattak, Mohammad Anwar Khan, Basar Ali, Abdullah Khan, and a large gathering of students from the CMS department. The attendees shared their reflections on Zalmay Khattak's contributions to literature and his profound impact on the understanding and appreciation of Pashtun culture. They offered fatiha for the departed soul. The CMS Department extended deepest condolences to the family and admirers of Zalmay Khattak, recognizing the irreplaceable void left by his departure.



South Africa: The region where political violence is on rise ahead of elections

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): Thirty years after the transition from apartheid to a democratic South Africa, Fergal Keane returns to a country experiencing increasing political violence in a key region to see what happened to the hopes and promises of a better nation. Thembinkosi Lombo may not have known the man who gunned him down - but he may well have known the person who ordered the hit.

The 35-year-old local councillor from South Africa's governing African National Congress (ANC) was shot dead in Greytown in the eastern coastal province of KwaZulu-Natal last year. He left behind a wife and nine children - the youngest at just two months old. His mother Lindeni Lombo, 75, tells us she believes the assassination was an inside job.

"He did tell me that from time to time there were cars that were suspicious that would follow him around," she says. "My son told me that within the ANC there was some rivalry - those who were anti- and those who were pro-him." A 20-year-old man was arrested and charged with the murder in March last year. In the past 12 months more than 20 councillors have been killed in the region - it brings the number of elected representatives and local government officials killed in over a decade to more than 150. Mrs Lombo keeps a big election poster of her son as a reminder of his life and of her pride in his election victory. She lives in the ward he represented, a remote rural community set in the undulating hill country of KwaZulu-Natal. Of the broader rise in political violence she says: "They're fighting for positions. "People want higher positions in the municipality, in the councils, and they are fighting all the time, competing for turf. They want money." Police Minister Bheki Cele said most of the dead councillors had been victims of internal political battles. The majority were from the ANC. Elected office can bring access to local government budgets. Billions of rand have been lost through corruption involving officials and politicians. In one notorious case, the school nutrition programme in the province collapsed because of corruption, leaving thousands of children from poor families without school meals. KwaZulu means "place of the Zulus", and has a long history of violence - from the 19th century wars of King Shaka, the struggle against the British Empire, then against apartheid, and the conflict between political parties that threatened to derail South Africa's transition to democracy in the 1990s. But now the killings are frequently carried out by hitmen for hire - "inkabis" in the Zulu language. It can cost anywhere between 10,000 rand (£420; \$535) to 500,000 (£21,000) to have a per-

son killed. The higher the profile, the greater the price. Drive out into the remote rural districts around provincial capital Pietermaritzburg and there is apprehension that next year's elections will bring increased violence. Alpheus Mzolo is a traditional leader in the Table Mountain district - a landscape of acacia trees and small settlements dominated by a brooding flat-topped mountain, not to be confused with the more famous Table Mountain in Cape Town. Mr Mzolo is an "induna" (headman) for a powerful chief. In times of war the Indunas are responsible for raising and commanding the chief's regiments. But his area is peaceful at the moment and he aims to keep it that way, refusing to align publicly with any party. The problem may come next year when political campaigning gets under way in earnest. "Yes, I'm worried about it because it's just near now," he says. "Our people, will get affected by this... so that makes me worried. Because of the elections. "Then you can see violence coming back and killing the people. Our own people." This is happening in a nation whose people were promised peace after the end of apartheid. Thirty years ago this month, as he was presented with the Nobel Peace Prize, Nelson Mandela pledged South Africans would become "children of paradise" through recognising their shared humanity. In Pietermaritzburg, I meet up with the ANC Mayor, Mzimkhulu Thebolla, and put it to him that the corruption and violence are an indictment of his party's nearly 30 years in power.

"We have challenges in this country," he says. "And some of those challenges are the corruption you're talking about, the crime you're talking about is the result of that. The underdevelopment of course is a result of that. "But we are saying that undoing what has been done and created for over 300 years cannot only take 30 years to repair." Apartheid certainly left a bitter legacy - of violence, inequality and poor policing. There is also factional violence in some of the other political parties in KwaZulu-Natal. But increasing numbers of South Africans are demanding that the ANC be held accountable for what has happened under its watch. In KwaZulu-Natal, that desire produced one of the more extraordinary local election results in South African history. Two years ago, a white, Zulu-speaking, gay man was elected as mayor of uMngeni municipality, an area with nearly a three-quarters black majority. Under the ANC, maladministration and corruption had wreaked havoc on the local budget. Chris Pappas, 32, of the opposition Democratic Alliance, set about tackling corruption. Within a year his administration had balanced the books.

British lawyers could be sent to Rwandan courts

LONDON (BBC): British lawyers could be stationed in courts in Rwanda as part of a treaty to allow the UK government to send asylum seekers to the country. Last month, the Supreme Court ruled the plans unlawful amid concerns about the Rwandan justice system. Downing Street said in response that it would publish a treaty with Kigali to address the court's concerns.

The BBC understands that Home Secretary James Cleverly could fly to Rwanda this week to finalise an agreement. The policy, first announced in April 2022, would see some asylum seekers sent to Rwanda to claim asylum there. Those not granted refugee status to stay in Rwanda could apply to settle there on other grounds or seek asylum in another "safe third country". The Supreme Court, the UK's highest court, rejected the policy on the grounds that it could not be guaranteed the Rwandan courts would

honour a principle of international law known as non-refoulement. The principle forbids a country that receives asylum seekers from returning them to their country of origin if doing so would put them at risk of harm. Following the decision, the government said it would seek a formal treaty with Rwanda, a move it believed would provide stronger legal guarantees than the current "memorandum of understanding".

An agreement is now close, and could see British lawyers stationed in Rwandan courts as part of efforts to address the Supreme Court's concerns, the BBC has been told. The Sunday Times reported that the treaty would also give Rwanda an extra £15m to pay for additional staff to improve and expand its asylum processing system. The UK has already paid the Rwanda government £140m for the scheme. The first flight was scheduled to go in June 2022 but was cancelled because of legal

challenges. The government has said it is "absolutely critical" that the first flights take off by spring next year. Aside from the new treaty, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has announced plans to introduce emergency legislation that would allow Parliament to designate Rwanda as a safe country. Mr Sunak met the Rwandan president, Paul Kagame, on the sidelines of the COP28 climate summit in Dubai, though declined afterwards to say how much more money he was willing to spend to see the asylum policy delivered.

The Rwanda policy was proposed following a steady rise in recent years in the number of people arriving in the UK illegally via Channel crossings in small boats. As of 13 November, 27,284 people had made the journey in 2023. Last year, 45,755 people made the crossing, the highest number since figures began to be collected in 2018.

Ukraine's security service alleges Russian plot

KYIV (Reuters): Ukraine's security service said it had prevented former president Petro Poroshenko from leaving the country on grounds that Russia planned to exploit a planned meeting with Hungary's prime minister to hurt Ukrainian interests. Poroshenko's political party, European Solidarity, said the former president had scheduled only meetings in Poland and the United States and warned the SBU security service against becoming involved in politics.

Poroshenko was turned away at a border post. The SBU said he had planned to meet Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who maintains ties with Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin and opposes opening talks on European Union membership with Ukraine. An SBU statement said Russia was preparing a series of "provocations" to discredit Ukraine among its foreign allies as the war against

Russia stretches beyond 21 months. It provided no evidence to support the allegations. Of the possible meeting with Orban, the SBU said: "Russia planned to use this meeting (like other 'working meetings with ... representative of countries voicing pro-Russian narratives) in psychological operations against Ukraine."

The SBU said Orban "systematically holds an anti-Ukrainian position", was a "friend of Putin" and sought the removal of sanctions imposed on Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine. Orban, who is open about his friendly ties with Putin, opposes the start of EU membership talks with Ukraine, to be considered at the bloc's forthcoming summit. He called this week for the creation instead of a "strategic partnership" with Kyiv. Orban has frequently been at odds with Zelenskyy on several issues related to Ukraine's EU membership

bid. European Solidarity, in its statement, called for dialogue with Orban who, it said, had a veto right over accession talks.

Under martial law, Ukrainian officials must secure approval to travel abroad. Parliament's deputy speaker, Oleksandr Korniyenko, said Poroshenko's permission had been cancelled after he had received a letter, which he could not comment on. Zelenskyy's office has made no comment and Orban's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Poroshenko, president from 2014 to 2019, accused Zelenskyy's administration of cancelling the permission and playing politics ahead of elections. The dispute comes amid slowly growing tensions between government and opposition - mostly over internal matters such as budgets and appointments - in contrast to the near-total unity at the start of the conflict.

11 climbers dead, 12 missing

JAKARTA: Eleven climbers have been killed and 12 more are missing after the eruption of Indonesia's Mount Marapi, local officials have said. Seventy-five people were in the area when the volcano in West Sumatra erupted, according to authorities, among whom 26 were not evacuated. "There are 26 people who have not been evacuated, we have found 14 of them, three were found alive and 11 were found dead," said Abdul Malik, head of the Padang Search and Rescue Agency.

Video footage of eruption showed a huge cloud of volcanic ash spread across the sky and cars and roads covered with debris. A minor eruption on Monday forced rescue workers to suspend their operations. Indonesia sits on the Pacific's so-called "Ring of Fire" and has 127 active volcanoes, according to the country's volcanology agency, including the 2,891-metre (about 9,500 ft) Mount Marapi. Mount Marapi, which is currently on the second alert level of Indonesia's four-step warning scale, is among the most active volcanoes on Sumatra. The volcano's deadliest known eruption, in 1979, killed 60 people. — Aljazeera

'A mother's search for her lost son'

MADRID: At her home in the Syrian town of Daraa al-Balad, Rania Abu Aoun spends her days waiting anxiously for news about her son, Ramy. It is agonising, she says. Ramy's phone has been off since January 3, 2022, when he left on a boat from Algeria heading towards Spain. He disappeared on that journey.

That day, the 30-year-old departed Algeria from the northwestern city of Oran, hoping to reach Europe and provide a better future for his three children, six-year-old Bayan, five-year-old Layan and two-year-old Hamza, who was born just three days after Ramy reached Turkey, the first stop on his long and arduous journey. Since the Syrian war erupted in 2011, the town of Daraa, and especially the neighbourhood of Tarik al-Sad where the Aoun family lives, has been caught up in intense fighting between opposition fighters and government forces, coming under heavy bombardment. Rania's house was hit by an air raid in 2013.

The relentless war and the economic challenges Syrians experience as refugees in neighbouring countries - notably Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey - pushed thousands to opt for the difficult journey to Europe. By March 2021, more than one million Syrians had arrived in Europe as asylum seekers and refugees. However, some, like Ramy and the three friends he was travelling with, seem to have never made it. "Ramy is quiet, loves people and enjoys studying," Rania tells Al Jazeera on the phone. Sobbing, she sent through pictures of her son when he was a child. "From a young age, he focused on school and in the summer, he worked with his grandfather in the olive fields. His dream was to study commerce and economics." In 2008, before the war in Syria began, Ramy moved to Lebanon to find work and eventually pursue higher education.

When he returned to Syria for a visit in 2011, it was the last time he set foot in his home country. That year, the revolution broke out. When attacks on his home town intensified in 2013 and the family home was hit, Ramy's mother, wife and children moved to Lebanon to live with him. But financially, things were dire. He was not earning enough, thanks in part to Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis, which worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

His job at a restaurant was bringing in \$50 a month, which could not support his family. "He had been thinking about migrating [to Europe] for some time. His objective was to bring a happy life to his children," Rania said. "Then, he met Latifa." That was May 2021. — Aljazeera

Floods, landslides kill dozens in Tanzania

NAIROBI: At least 47 people have been killed and 85 others injured in landslides caused by flooding in northern Tanzania, says a local official, with warnings the toll could rise. Heavy rain hit the town of Katesh, some 300km (186 miles) north of the capital Dodoma, district commissioner Janeth Mayanja said.

The death toll reached 47 and 85 injured," Queen Sendiga, regional commissioner in the Manyara area of northern Tanzania, told local media. Both warned the death toll was likely to increase. Mayanja added that many roads in the area had been blocked by mud, water and dislodged trees and stones. Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan, in Dubai for the COP28 climate conference, sent her condolences and said she ordered the deployment of "more government efforts to rescue people". "We are very shocked by this event," she said in a video message posted online by the Tanzanian Ministry of Health.

After experiencing an unprecedented drought, East Africa has been hit for weeks by torrential rain and flooding linked to the El Nino weather phenomenon. El Nino is a natural-ly occurring weather pattern that originates in the Pacific Ocean and drives increased heat worldwide, bringing drought to some areas and heavy rains elsewhere. The downpours have displaced more than a million people in Somalia and left hundreds dead. In May, torrential rains caused devastating floods and landslides in Rwanda that killed at



least 130 people. The Horn of Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change, with extreme weather events growing increasingly common and intense.

Since late 2020, Somalia as well as parts of Ethiopia and Kenya have been suffering the region's worst drought in 40 years. In 2019, at least 265 people died and tens of thousands were displaced during two months of relentless rainfall in several countries in East Africa. The impact of El Nino, a weather pattern that contributes to rising global temperatures, can be exacerbated by climate change, scientists say. In response, African leaders are pushing for new global taxes and changes to international financial institutions to

help fund climate change action. The launch of a "loss and damage" fund at the COP28 summit in Dubai earlier this week was hailed as a historic as it will see the biggest historical polluters pay for the damages sustained by countries that have been hit the hardest by the climate crisis, while also being the least responsible for it.

But details of the fund have not been fleshed out, and while 118 countries have pledged to boost clean energy at the summit, the world continues to fall far short of the Paris Agreement's target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7F). Scientists expect the worst effects of the current El Nino will be felt at the end of 2023 and into next year. — Aljazeera

Venezuelan voters reject ICJ jurisdiction in dispute with Guyana

CARACAS/GEORGETOWN (Reuters): Voters in Venezuela rejected the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) jurisdiction over the country's territorial dispute with Guyana and backed the creation of a new state in the potential oil-rich Essequibo region in a referendum. The court this week barred Venezuela from taking any action which would change the status quo in the area, which is the subject of an active case before the ICJ, but President Nicolas Maduro's government went ahead with a five-question "consultative" referendum.

All questions passed with more than 95% approval, according to electoral authority president Elvis Amoroso, who said at least 10.5 million votes were cast for 'yes' but did not confirm the number of voters. Some political and security analysts have called the referendum a show of strength by Maduro and a test of support for his government ahead of a planned 2024 presidential election. The court said in April it had jurisdiction, though a final ruling on the matter could be years away. Venezuela has said the issue should be resolved by the two countries. Maduro cheered the "total success" of the vote. "The Venezuelan people have spoken loudly and clearly," he told a cheering crowd. At issue is a 160,000 square km (61,776 square mile) region that is mostly thick jungle. Venezuela reactivated its claim over the territory in recent years after the discovery of offshore oil and gas.

"The purpose of (Maduro's) government is to send a message of strength to Guyana," Central University of Venezuela politics professor Ricardo Sucre said, adding Maduro is also thinking of potential oil and gas developments. The maritime border between

the two countries is also in dispute. There was no organized campaign against the referendum and analysts expected voters who opposed it to stay home. There are more than 20 million eligible voters in Venezuela. Reuters witnesses visited voting centers across the country - many had few or no people waiting in line. In Maracaibo, in the oil-rich state of Zulia, poll workers told Reuters that turnout was low. "We have to vote for the defense of our nation because the Essequibo belongs to us and we can't leave it to the gringos (Americans)," said 80-year-old retiree Carmen Pereira at a voting center in Caracas.

Authorities extended voting by two hours. "The government is holding the referendum for internal reasons," said Benigno Alarcon, director of the Center for Political Studies at Caracas' Andres Bello Catholic University. "It

needs to test its electoral machinery." "If the opposition joins together and there is a willingness to participate (in the 2024 election) by Venezuelans, Maduro is out," added security analyst Rocio San Miguel. "He is activating a scenario of conflict" to perhaps suspend the election. The vote has caused anxiety in Guyana, with the government urging citizens to keep calm. Guyana's President Irfaan Ali participated in a patriotic rally, joining hundreds of flag-waving supporters. He has said the ICJ ruling prohibits Venezuela from "annexing or trespassing upon" Guyanese territory". Some in Georgetown voiced relief after the ICJ decision. "I feel the court made a right decision. ... I can breathe a bit easier now," said vegetable seller Kim Rampersaud, 41. Brazil said it had intensified "defensive actions" along its northern border amid the territorial dispute.

French FM says she is open to South Pacific resettlement requests

CANBERRA (AP): French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said on Monday she was open to any resettlement request from tiny South Pacific nations threatened by rising sea levels, similar to Australia's agreement with Tuvalu. Colonna said France had watched with "great interest" last month when Australia offered Tuvalu a lifeline to help residents escape the rising seas and increased storms brought by climate change.

At a meeting of Pacific leaders in the Cook Islands, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced a plan that will initially allow up to 280 Tuvaluans to come to Australia each year. Tuvalu has a population of 11,000, and its low-lying atolls make it particularly vulnerable to global warming. Colonna said she was not sure if the French Pacific territories of French Polynesia and New Caledonia had the capacity to make similar offers. "I'm open to consider any specific request," Colonna told the National Press Club.

"But ... the size of the Australian continent makes a big difference with the size and beauties of French Polynesia and New Caledonia," she added. Colonna said the Australian deal initiated by Tuvalu was one way to address some of the challenges posed by climate change. "I'd rather see climate change being controlled and mastered," Colonna

said. "Preemptive action maybe is better than taking some corrective measures when it is late," she added. She said she did not know the details of the Australia-Tuvalu treaty but was confident it respected basic principles of international law. The treaty commits Australia to assist Tuvalu in response to major natural disasters, health pandemics and military aggression, Albanese said in a statement. It also gives Australia veto power over any security or defense-related agreement Tuvalu wants to make with any other country such as China. Tuvalu Prime Minister Kausea Natano said the new arrangement with Australia respected both nations' sovereignty and committed each coun-

try to supporting the other through such challenges as climate change. Colonna spoke to the media ahead of a meeting at Parliament House with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong aimed at increasing the two countries' cooperation in the region. Defense Minister Richard Marles flies to New Caledonia this week to meet French Armed Forces Minister Sebastien Lecornu and their South Pacific counterparts. France and Australia's relations have improved with the election of Albanese's government last year after a previous administration angered Paris in 2021 by canceling a 90 billion Australian dollar (\$66 billion) contract for a fleet of French-built submarines.

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Attempted coup was foiled, says President Embaló

GUINEA-BISSAU (BBC): Guinea-Bissau's president says heavy gunfire that broke out in the capital was an attempted coup. He had been out of the country at the time, attending the UN's COP28 climate conference in Dubai. Speaking, President Umaro Sissoco Embaló promised "serious consequences" for the perpetrators.

This is the second foiled coup against his leadership in under two years. A man described as the leader of a group of soldiers who tried to free a detained minister and a senior state official in Guinea-Bissau has been caught, the military says. Members of the National Guard had taken the officials before seeking refuge in barracks south of the city. Special forces then intervened after attempts

to negotiate failed, resulting in an exchange of gunfire. Calm is said to have been restored later. Finance Minister Souleiman Seidi and António Monteiro, the secretary of state for the treasury, had been detained amid investigations into the alleged irregular withdrawal of \$10m (£8m) of state funds. They were questioned by an anti-corruption inquiry to clarify the payments to 11 companies.

In a parliamentary session on Monday, the leader of the country's main opposition party alleged that the owners of the companies were close to leaders of the country's governing coalition. Mr Seidi defended the payments as legal. After the questioning, Mr Seidi and Mr Monteiro were arrested

and detained so as not to jeopardise the investigations, local media said. National Guard soldiers later in the evening invaded the police cells, located near Bandim market, "with AK-47 weapons and bazookas" and extricated the detained officials, the privately owned O Democrata news outlet reported. It said the National Guard took them to an unknown location. Regional stabilisation forces deployed by the regional West African bloc Ecowas were seen patrolling the streets, the AFP news agency reported. Guinea-Bissau has suffered a series of coups and attempted coups since gaining independence from Portugal in 1974.

In February last year, President Embaló said he survived a coup attempt

after being under heavy gunfire for five hours - in an incident in which 11 people died. Without providing details, he said the attack was linked to drug trafficking in the country. Some however doubted the official version of the events, amid questions including who was really behind the attempt, how many people were involved and who was in command. Talking to the BBC's Newshour programme, Alberto Dabo, a journalist in Bissau, directly linked the recent events to what happened last year. "After the coup attempt, many high-ranking officials of the army who were held responsible for that are in jail without any judgement. And some high-ranking members of the army are demanding their liberation," he said.

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Gaza war and miliginancy of ICC prosecutor

HUNDREDS of Palestinians have been killed in Israeli air raids in the past 24 hours in Gaza, while the invading army ordered evacuation to the residents of Khan Younis, the second largest city in Gaza. The reports suggest that more than 700 Palestinians have been killed since Israel resumed bombardment after a seven-day truce collapsed on Friday. More than 1.5 million people have been displaced, since Israel launched a military offensive on October 7. The Chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan has recently paid an official trip to Israel and Palestine to have first-hand knowledge of the war brutalities and crimes against humanities perpetrated by warring Palestinian armed group in Southern Israel on October 7th and the Israeli military on Gaza and the West Bank in the past seven weeks. According to the ICC Prosecutor, his visit was not investigative but he was able to speak to victims on both sides of the conflict. Khan told the newsmen that he witnessed calculated cruelty at the sites attacked by Hamas. Those attacks represent some of the most serious international crimes that shock the conscience of humanity, crimes that the ICC was established to address. He further emphasized that the way Israel responds to these attacks is subject to clear legal parameters that govern armed conflict. Acknowledging that conflict in densely populated areas such as Gaza was inherently complex, international humanitarian law must still apply.

The war in Gaza entered its eighth week with scores of deaths, destruction, and a mass exodus of bereaved Palestinians is currently underway to avoid casualties and save lives from reckless bombardment and shelling of their staunch enemy. The world has witnessed dual standards of Western nations, the impotence of the UN, and prejudiced policies of its executive arm along with the betrayal of Arab neighbours, whom majority opted to protect their economic and political interests in deep contrast to international humanitarian law, human rights, civil freedoms and above all Muslim brotherhood. Meanwhile, the current conduct of the ICC prosecutor and Israel's cooperation with him at this crucial moment seems to be malignant and disastrous for the Palestinian cause.

As of now, Israel is neither a signatory to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court nor a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC). At the same time, Israel and its close ally have blatantly snubbed the former ICC prosecutor on initiation of an investigation into Israel's war crimes against innocent Palestinians on occupied Palestinian land, while rejecting the ICC mandate in its case. Surprisingly, the incumbent ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan not only visited Israel, a non-member state that previously challenged ICC's jurisdiction in its country but returned with bags full of evidence and proofs of crimes committed by Hamas in a few hours-long operation on Israeli land. Interestingly, the Jewish state neither objected ICC mandate nor obstructed Karim's visit to its country instead Tel Aviv colluded with Khan who in turn extended ICC's already ongoing investigation into Israel's crimes against humanity to the current Hamas-Israel conflict with malicious intentions to benefit Israel.

Currently, Israel is committing genocide of the Palestinian people and blatantly violating global humanitarian law that is categorically condemned by the majority of the nations. There is unbelievable pressure on the Jewish state and its allies because of their inhumane atrocities and crimes against innocent civilians. The cabal of aggressors has managed the trip of the pro-west ICC Chief to neutralize international pressure by alleging Hamas of war crimes in South Israel along with issuing a clean chit to the Jewish state on its genocidal actions in Gaza in the garb of the densely populated battlefield and complex war conditions. Hence, the world nations and Palestinian people must be aware of the development and outcomes of the ICC investigation into to Hamas Israel conflict, which smells bais and malignancy at an early stage of that collusion/conspiracy.

Sindh Culture Day

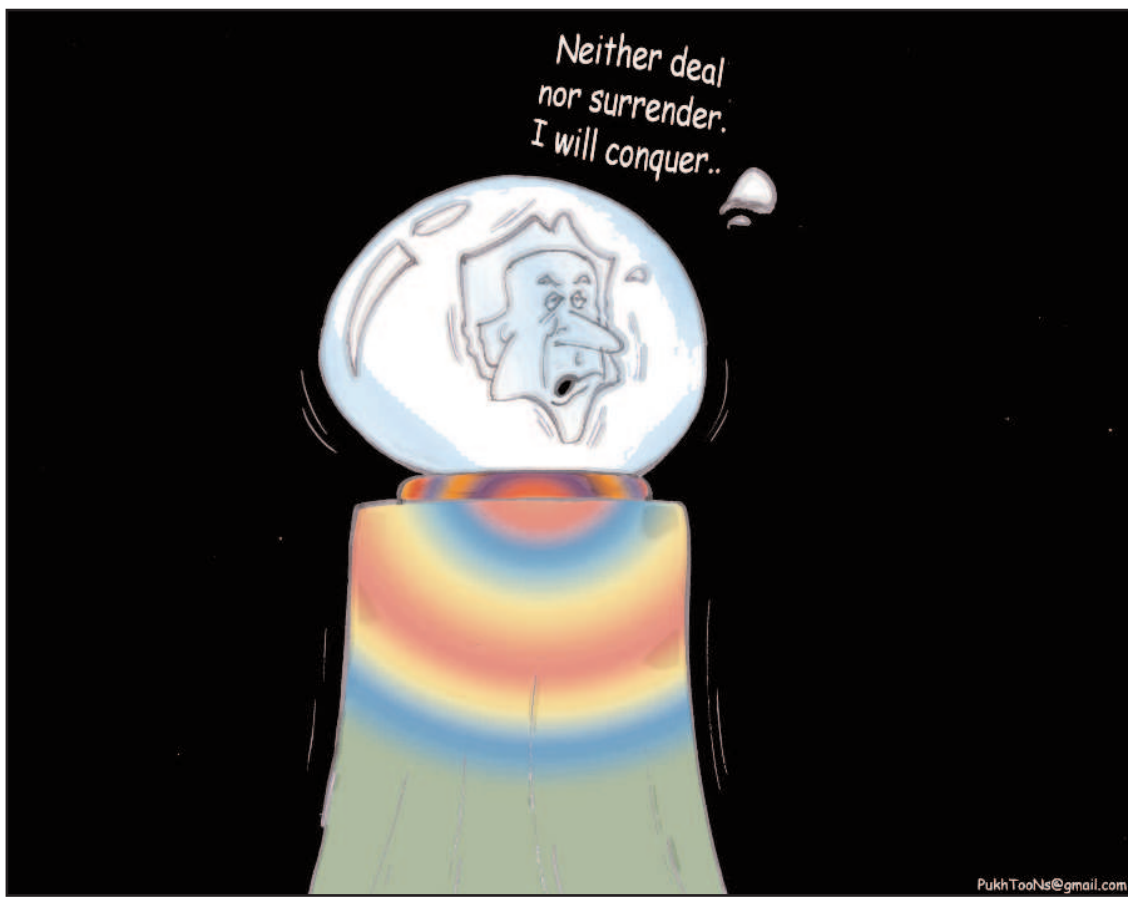
THE Sindh Culture Day celebrations commenced on Sunday across the metropolis and major cities in the Province, other parts of the country and the globe. Sindh Culture Day, also known as Sindh Ajrak and Topi Day, is celebrated every year on the first Sunday of December. On that day, Sindh's worldwide come together to showcase their cultural identity through music, dance, traditional attire, and various cultural events. It's a vibrant celebration that highlights the beauty and diversity of Sindh's culture. Every year, the Sindh government, civil society, non-government organizations and common citizens celebrate this occasion with traditional zeal and zest.

Historically, Sindh was the land of Sufis and Saints, who always taught brotherhood and love. The province also owes the honour of being the chapter of Islam (Bab e Islam), along with possessing ancient heritages and great Indus Valley culture which reflects a five-thousand-year-old Gandhara civilization. In fact, Sindh's Topi, Ajrak and Sindh languages have a distinct identity, that ties the entire Sindh community into unique bonds and relationships. Sindh language, culture and Indus Valley civilization give Pakistan unparalleled importance in the comity of nations in this world.

Diversity is crucial for national unity and cohesion as it fosters a rich tapestry of perspectives, experiences, and ideas. Multiculturalism promotes understanding, tolerance, and acceptance among people from different backgrounds, fostering innovation, creativity, and problem-solving. Embracing diversity strengthens communities, organizations, and societies by creating a more inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected, leading to a more harmonious and equitable society/world. The role of Sindh province in the establishment of Pakistan was unforgettable, while Sindh and Sindh's always played important roles in the economic development and prosperity of the country throughout the past. Such cultural celebrations highlight the local culture, values, traditions and culture, promote diversity, inclusiveness and tolerance among the masses. As a nation, we must embrace all segments of society, and assimilate all cultures into our national fold so our nation emerges as one of the most diverse, pluralistic and peaceful societies in the world.

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What ‘tunnels’ and ‘hostages’ mean in Gaza

Eman Mohammed

Ispent most of my life on a strip of land not much bigger than Manhattan, surrounded by a massive razor-wire fence. Most of the time, it felt like we, the residents of Gaza, were the only people who noticed we were living in an open-air prison. I pursued a career as a photojournalist to document life in Gaza and try to make the rest of the world understand its plight and its resilient people. In times of relative quiet, I focused on inspiring and uplifting stories. And, in times of violence and death, I tried to document the aftermath - the pain and the scars that would remain after the bombs stopped falling and the world lost interest yet again.

I am no longer in Gaza, and yet, as a Palestinian hailing from this tiny, fenced-off strip, I was not spared a deluge of accusatory messages over the past few weeks. My inbox has been inundated with messages asking about Hamas. They are not aimed at understanding Hamas or why they did what they did on October 7. Rather, they want me to answer for their actions. It does not matter that I have lost 50 colleagues in six weeks or that my neighbours and their families had been killed in an Israeli air strike after fleeing to the south as they were directed to do by Israel.

It does not matter that every day, I fear for the lives of my family who remain in Gaza, and every time I try calling them, I would have a small panic attack when there is no answer. The first question has always been whether I condemn Hamas. It has felt like I am being asked to audition for sympathy. Every day, I hear the words "tunnels" and "hostages" uttered in media reports or conversations condemning a "terrorist organisation".

But these words have a very different connotation for me. For me and the Palestinians of Gaza, tunnels have become something of an essential infrastructure. In 2007, Israel imposed a debilitating siege on Gaza, and as an occupying power, it has been able to fully control what can come through border crossings, including the one with Egypt at Rafah.

Throughout the past 16 years, the Israeli authorities have decided arbitrarily to ban certain goods from entering the strip as yet another form of collective punishment of its population. For example, in 2009, they decided that no pasta

could enter Gaza. Yes, pasta. So, the Palestinians dug tunnels to try to smuggle in pasta and any other essential items that Israel would randomly ban. Food, medicine and fuel started to trickle in from what came to be known as "the Metro" - which probably had more stops than Washington, DC's metro system and, I dare say, was a little bit safer. When my first daughter was born in 2011, I was in need of colic baby formula for her age 0-3 months, which was not available in local shops. I was relieved to be able to get hold of some boxes - courtesy of "the Metro".

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der crossing before we were permitted to leave. As our taxi driver drove through the gates, the Israeli soldiers suddenly opened fire. The driver turned around in horror, shouting at them to stop. We found out later that it was their lunch break, and they didn't want to be interrupted even though we should have been allowed to pass. So, our summer plans were cancelled, just like that.

"Hostages" is another word that rings with a different meaning in my mind. Many are now demanding the release of all Israeli hostages before a ceasefire can even be considered. Indeed, I wholeheartedly agree: All civilian hostages should be repatriated without condition. But this must also include Palestinian hostages. There are more than 2,000 Palestinians currently held indefinitely in "administrative detention" in Israeli jails without any charges. Many of them are children, some as young as 12. Those who have actually been charged are tried by a military court where the conviction rate often exceeds 95 percent, indicating that the prisoners likely lack even basic access to due process or the ability to examine "secret evidence" against them. Israel is the only nation in the world that regularly prosecutes children in a military tribunal.

The most common offence? Throwing stones. These "prisoners" are children held captives by an occupying army that has abruptly and brutally taken them from their families. Unfortunately, no one is putting their names and faces on posters across New York City or London. When people are imprisoned without charges and have no access to due process that is precisely what they are: hostages. I became a photojournalist in Gaza because I believed it was important to document the reality of life there, the reality that most don't see. And, while I no longer live there, I would not be fulfilling my duty as a journalist, much less as a Palestinian, if I did not try and tell you what has been our reality long before Palestinians broke through the razor-wire fence on October 7.

Aljazeera

Turkish economy on course to correct past mistakes

Yasar Yakis

WHEN the Turkish economy was riding high in the first years of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party's rule, it paid only lip service to the proper management of the economy. This is because the AKP had inherited the solid rules introduced by Kemal Dervis, the former vice president of the World Bank for the Middle East and Africa region, who had been invited to Turkiye to rescue its ailing economy.

Dervis served as the minister of finance and treasury in 2001 and 2002, when the present main opposition Republican People's Party was in power. After Erdogan came to power, he continued to support Dervis' policies. Though Dervis only served as Turkish economic minister for that brief period between March 2001 and August 2002, he had the experience of a 22-year career at the World Bank. When the AKP won a landslide election victory in November 2002, Erdogan did not want to undo the solid foundations that Dervis had laid. For more than a decade and a half, the Turkish economy managed to float, but it started to lurch after the rules introduced by Dervis became obsolete.

Two years ago, Erdogan's government introduced a new system that caused further deterioration in the national economy. It was called the "exchange rate-protected deposit" scheme. This mechanism was to function as follows: Irrespective of the fluctuations in the value of the Turkish lira against other currencies, lenders to the banks would not be negatively affected. This is nothing but a deviation from one of the golden rules of economics. If the exchange rate changed in favor of the foreign currency, the bank would update the exchange rate according to the new value of the Turkish lira. This method favors the richer segments of Turkish society because they can benefit from the increase in the value of the foreign currency, but not suffer from the loss in the value of the Turkish lira. In other words, those who can put money into their bank accounts will be protected from the depreciation in the value of the Turkish lira, while the poorer segments of society will be the losers.

So, the exchange rate-protected deposit system tilted the balance further to the detriment of the disfavored segments of society. It took more than a year for the government to wake up to this reality. After the elections held in May this year, Erdogan carried out a major reshuffle of the bureaucracy in charge of economic affairs. Two economists stood out among these appointments: One was Mehmet Simsek, who returned as finance minister, and the other was Hafize Gayerkan, the new governor of the central bank. Simsek was an important figure in the AKP, but he did not agree with all that Erdogan had in mind. He was born to a Kurdish family in the southeast of Turkiye, close to the Syrian border. He

comes from a modest family. He is the youngest of eight siblings. His parents did not speak Turkish. He learned Turkish after he went to school. He graduated from the Faculty of Political Science at Ankara University as the second-best student in his class. This school was established in 1859 in the Ottoman era to train high-level bureaucrats.

In his capacity as finance minister during his first spell in the Cabinet, Simsek formulated the fiscal policy of Erdogan's government. This helped Turkiye recover from the global financial crisis of 2008. He simplified tax regulations, enhanced taxpayers' rights and contributed to reducing the shadow economy. He worked as the chief economist and strategist for the emerging Europe, Middle East and Africa region for Merrill Lynch in London for seven years.

In 2013, he was designated as one of the most influential 500 people in the world by US magazine Foreign Policy and was awarded the title of Finance Minister of the Year for Emerging Europe for the year 2013 by Emerging Markets magazine. Simsek fiercely opposed politicizing the transactions of the central bank. When Erdogan understood that the central bank had to be kept above political considerations, he again knocked on Simsek's door. The latter hesitated for a while before eventually agreeing to be reappointed as minister of finance. It appears that Simsek was not eager to assume the responsibility for another collapse of Turkiye's economy.

Erdogan, seeing that the economy might collapse if it was put in incompetent hands, decided to accept the conditions put forward by Simsek. The latter did not promise miracles. He simply asked that the sound rules of economics be applied. So far, there have been no signs of an early recovery, but the Turkish economy is not deteriorating either. Trust is an important factor in the economy. The second important step in recovering the Turkish economy from the brink of possible collapse was the appointment of Erkan as governor of the central bank. She was recruited in 2005 by Goldman Sachs in the US. After nine years of service, she was transferred in 2014 to First Republic Bank, where she became the chairperson of the investment division and co-chairperson of the risk management department. In June 2016, she became the chairperson of the deposits division and, in 2017, the chairperson of the bank's administrative board. During her tenure, the total value of First Republic Bank increased from \$97.7 billion in 2017 to \$181 billion in 2021.

These two appointments changed the course of the Turkish economy. Nothing tangible has yet occurred since they took up their roles, but there is an optimistic forecast for the future. If Erdogan, for the sake of winning the local elections to be held next May, does not again step in with unorthodox rules, a slow recovery may be expected by the middle of next year.

Where does Washington stand on Gaza's future?

Eyad Abu Shakra

THE collapse of the temporary Gaza truce was expected, although some who do not like to acknowledge the facts were optimistic about a near-miracle, while the time for miracles has passed. However, the glaring truth indicated from the beginning was the need of both sides in this unbalanced war for a "warrior's break," in which both claim tactical victories, refocus psychological targeting, strengthen logistical mobilization and capitalize on the changes imposed on the ground, not to mention trying to give "moderation" a chance through prisoner and detainee exchange deals.

The Israeli side, which has historically enjoyed an amazing ability to paint itself as the victim, was undoubtedly able to win the battle of the political decision-making corridors in most of the world's influential capitals. This achievement was further enhanced by its victory in the war of financial and communication blackmail - the

de facto implementation of its permanent strategy, which is the complete displacement of the Palestinian people and the liquidation of a cause that is impossible to liquidate without eliminating its people. Indeed, even before the collapse of the temporary truce, there was a competition between the content of Israeli official statements and the blatant threats, exaggerations, provocations, fabrications and gloating spread by its "electronic army" on social media. Even in the middle of the prisoner and detainee exchange process, the uprooting and displacement plans were an open secret. There was no doubt among those who were following up on the "advice" given to the residents of the northern part of the Gaza Strip to leave it and head south, that the south - also targeted - was nothing but a temporary stop, whose turn will later come.

The words of Netanyahu and his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant - not to mention Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich - were clear and unambiguous. Although the Arab countries continued to bet patiently on a US stance that would rein in the Likud arrogance, the actions and stances of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken were never reassuring. Instead, they confirmed time and time again that Washington, despite its tendency to express "reservations" about the fate and results of the Israeli war, stands fully behind Netanyahu and his government.

Of course, the ready-made pretext to justify US condemnations of Hamas began with the Oct. 7 attack and continued with Hamas holding a number of hostages who could not be released during the first - and perhaps last - truce. Certainly, what contributed most to ensuring full US support for Netanyahu was the occurrence of individual violent incidents in the

West Bank, some of which Hamas claimed responsibility for. However, despite this, save timid condemnations of the violations of armed settlers, one could say that Washington ignored the Israeli forces' repeated violations of the temporary truce by launching killing and arrest operations in several areas of the West Bank. This got to the point that the number of Palestinians detained, killed or injured during the truce period was greater than the number of released prisoners. Consequently, what we are facing now is the reality that Washington remains the nurturing, supporting and sponsoring power behind the Israeli scheme, and seems determined to follow it through. Here, it is explicitly supporting the Israeli "handling" of Gaza's residents, and perhaps the residents of the West Bank in the future, without taking into account the concerns of most of its friends in the region. It forgets, or chooses to forget - according to an Arab politi-

cian and diplomat well versed in the file of Israeli-Arab relations - that the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank "have practically been living in a large prison besieged by Israel for about 20 years, left to their suffering without any political horizon." A situation that truly forewarned of a serious explosion.

Washington also still insists on monopolizing the file of Israeli-Arab relations, even though it has completely abandoned putting forward any peace initiatives since 2014, during the days of former Secretary of State John Kerry. Hence, by its reluctance to undertake any serious political effort aimed at peace, it has turned the idea of a two-state solution into an absurd and useless distraction. Instead of objective, responsible work to encourage peaceful approaches and strengthen them by giving them political credibility, the region has been thrown into the illusion of the Abraham Accords, from which only one party benefited.

Arab News

Experts’ takes on Chinese economy in 2023

Yao Yang, Vasilis Trigkas & Liu Qing

CHINA’S uneven recovery this year has raised the question of whether the Chinese economy is losing steam. Many observers believe that a lack of reform is one of the key reasons for the country’s sluggish recovery. The geopolitical tension between China and the United States has only aggravated the situation, with international investors worrying whether China will continue to open up to the outside world. However, neither of these concerns is warranted if one scrutinizes what is happening in China.

China’s uneven recovery is a short-term phenomenon related to policy choices. In the first half of this year, the government refrained from taking progressive measures to stimulate the economy. Since July, however, the government has geared up its fiscal measures. Most noticeably, restrictions on home purchases have been lifted or reduced, and lending has been resumed for qualified developers; the central government issued new debts of 1 trillion yuan (\$140 billion) for local fiscal spending and allocated local governments 1.5 trillion yuan of government bonds to swap for their short-term commercial debts; and 2.7 trillion yuan of government bonds scheduled for the next year have been moved forward to this year. Those measures have paid off: the profitability of enterprises has greatly improved since August.

On the international front, Chinese policymakers have always sought to establish a peaceful and open international environment for the country’s development, and the

FDI in the country has also declined. There is sufficient reason to believe that with the recovery of the economy, private investment will grow again.

They behave more like China's domestic private companies. But private investment has declined this year, so it is not surprising to find that FDI in the country has also declined.

recent meeting of President Xi Jinping with US President Joe Biden has been a major effort by the world’s two largest economies to moderate the tension between them.

Back home, the government has continued to roll out new policies to open the country to the outside world, its recent announcement of a unilateral visa-free policy for ordinary passport holders from six countries on a one-year trial basis being one example. The decline of foreign direct investment this year has more to do with China’s uneven recovery than with its policy toward FDI. A large part of the direct investment inflow into China is the reinvestment of earnings by foreign companies that are already operating in China. They behave more like China’s domestic private companies. But private investment has declined this year, so it is not surprising to find that

In the short run, the Chinese economy follows the pace of government policy. Much of the talk about China’s economy wrongly attributes its short-term fluctuations to so-called “long-term structural problems”, particularly the lack of reform. But China’s economic institutions have already undergone thorough reform and now it is time for China to stabilize those institutions. In fact, what China needs to do is to reinforce the reform achievements by deepening the reforms, and that is exactly what it is doing. Most of China’s economic reforms were undertaken in the 1990s. Price reform was concluded in 1994 when the dual tracks of the exchange rate were unified. This reform sealed the end of economic planning. Enterprise reform was one of the toughest reforms. SOEs have been reserved for strategic sectors, while private economy

booms in many other sectors and accounts for about 60 percent of China’s GDP. Together with enterprise reform, the financial sector underwent a complete overhaul. Bad loans were either written off or swapped for equity, and banks were recapitalized. Accession to the World Trade Organization concluded the decade of reform and set China on the road to its economic boom in the 2000s.

The reforms in the 1990s laid the foundation for China’s economic institutions today. This was why no major reforms have happened in the last 20 years. It is time for China to consolidate those historical reforms by perfecting these institutions so they can keep pace with economic developments over the next 20 years or longer. Chinese socialism has brought tremendous economic success to the country; yet it is still in the making. SOEs are vital for the Chinese economy, but the private economy plays an increasingly important role, especially in creating jobs. At the level of wealth distribution, common prosperity will be a central pursuit over the coming decades. But how should common prosperity be pursued? Chinese policymakers are obliged to explore an answer to this question based on the realities of the country. With explorations to find the answer, people’s expectations can be stabilized and their confidence in the Chinese economy bolstered.

The China Daily

The principle that animated Henry Kissinger’s foreign policies

Fareed Zakaria

HENRY Kissinger, who died this week at 100, may have been the most famous foreign policy practitioner in modern American history. But he practiced foreign policy for just eight of those 100 years. He left office as secretary of state nearly half a century ago. And yet, admired or despised, he managed to hold the world’s attention long after his power waned. What explains this remarkable run? He was that rare breed, a doer and a thinker, someone who shaped the world with ideas and action.

First, his accomplishments. Kissinger presided over a pivotal moment in the Cold War, when it looked to much of the world like America was losing. The United States was in fact losing a hot war in Vietnam - the first major defeat in its history - on which it had staked its reputation over four administrations. The Soviet Union was on the offensive, building up a massive nuclear arsenal and gaining allies across the world. At home, America was recovering from being convulsed by internal strife after the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy and riots in over a hundred American cities.

By the end of his eight years in office, things looked different. The Vietnam War was over. The Soviet Union’s forward momentum had been thwarted by a diplomatic coup, the opening of relations between Washington and Beijing. That one stroke moved China, the world’s second-most important Communist power, cleanly out of the Soviet camp. Simultaneously, relations with the Soviet Union softened, and negotiations yielded

major arms control agreements. In the Middle East, Moscow’s long-standing ally Egypt expelled its Russian advisors, moved into the American orbit and began negotiating with Israel, a process that culminated some years later in the first peace treaty between an Arab country and Israel. Kissinger was the motive force behind each of these four achievements.

Everything Kissinger did was surrounded by controversy. The right blasted him for the opening to China, which was seen as a betrayal of Taiwan, which until then was the only China that Washington recognized. Conservatives also hated the “detente” with Moscow. And many liberals believed that, with an obsession with credibility, Kissinger dragged out the Vietnam negotiations for far too long, agreeing to a deal in 1973 that was not so different from one that he could have accepted in 1969, which would have spared the lives of tens of thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians. Kissinger was especially sensitive to this last criticism. I once made it on television, and he angrily called me up reminding me that he began American troop withdrawals as soon and as fast as possible and then sent me a letter detailing what he gained in his negotiations.

It particularly irked him that the liberal elites who had been enthusiastically in favor of the Vietnam War in 1967 became his most vicious critics within a few years. (His own views on Vietnam were always more skeptical about America’s prospects for victory.)

He liked to say that getting out of a war that the United States had committed itself and its honor to for two decades was not as easy as switching off a television set. He presided over terrible failures as well. His support for Pakistan, as it tried to brutally crush a rebellion in what became Bangladesh, was an abomination - and a failure. The bombings of Cambodia and Laos caused untold human suffering and distorted the politics of the region for decades. His disregard for human rights in places like Chile and Indonesia left a long shadow over America’s reputation.

It is striking, however, the degree to which these policies are almost always attributed to him personally. In most other administrations, the president is lauded or lambasted for his administration’s policies. Yet it is odd that in this case, it is the secretary of state who is branded a war criminal, not the man who actually made all the decisions: his boss, the president. Kissinger was the first Jewish secretary of state and also the first immigrant to ascend to that office. 13 members of his family died in the Nazi death camps. That background shaped his worldview, though he spoke about it rarely. He grew up in Germany as Hitler came to power and watched perhaps the most advanced and “civilized” nation in the world descend into barbarism and mass murder.

He developed a lifelong obsession with order. He was too suspicious of democracy and human rights, but it was because he had seen demagogues like Hitler rise to power through elections. He often remarked, sometimes attributing it

to Goethe, that between order and justice he would choose the former, because once chaos reigns, there is no possibility for justice. I met him first three decades ago and over the years got to know him quite well. We had both been graduate students in the same department at the same university, and many of his colleagues had been my professors. He was a complicated man - warm, witty, proud, thin-skinned, sometimes paranoid but always deeply curious and intellectually serious about the world. He was the only celebrity I ever met who, when the lights dimmed, retreated to his library to read the latest biography of Stalin or reread Spinoza.

He once famously attributed his success in America to being seen as a lone cowboy pursuing his mission. The image of Kissinger as cowboy might seem odd, but he was right about being a solitary figure on the American strategic landscape. In a country of optimists, Henry Kissinger was a European pessimist. He began his career worrying about nuclear weapons and ended it worrying about artificial intelligence. Over the years, in our conversations, he would speculate gloomily that Japan was going to become a nuclear power, that Europe would fall apart, and that Islamic extremism would triumph. In our last lunch, just a few weeks ago, he worried about Israel’s ability to survive in the long run. From start to finish, over a century, Henry Kissinger’s abiding fear was that disruptive forces once set in motion could easily rip off the thin veneer of civilization and stability, pushing the world into the abyss - like the one in which he came of age.

CNN

Why has Meghan never really taken to Kate?

Camilla Tominey

It was the first, and only, joint royal engagement between the Dukes and Duchesses of Sussex and Cambridge, as William and Kate were then known - and it didn't go well. Appearing on stage together at the Royal Foundation Forum in February 2018, the tension between the so-called "Fab Four" was palpable as William admitted there had been family disagreements and Harry added: "Working as family does have its challenges, of course it does. But we're stuck together for the rest of our lives."

As Tina Brown later pointed out in her 2022 book The Palace Papers, Meghan “fluently” took up the majority of the airtime. “With blithe proprietorship, she deployed an issue that was not even on the foundation’s docket - women’s empowerment, then at its fervent height with the acceleration of the #MeToo movement,” she wrote. “Women don’t need to find a voice. They have a voice. They need to feel empowered to use it,” Meghan quotably exhorted as Harry looked on with awe and his brother and Kate stood by with expressionless irritation.” The event was supposed to be about promoting better mental health, and here was the Duchess, seemingly politicising it.

The quartet would never appear together again, except in the context of larger royal engagements, such as Trooping the Colour, the Platinum Jubilee, and of course, the late Queen’s funeral. But the awkwardness on display that frosty day provides an insight into the many reasons why Meghan appears never to have taken to Kate - and vice versa.

The Princess of Wales has once again been on the receiving end of criticism by the Sussexes’ unofficial spokesman, Omid Scobie, whose second book Endgame doubles down on the couple’s Oprah Winfrey interview, Netflix documentary and Harry’s autobiography Spare by depicting Kate as “cold”, “a part-time royal” and a “Stepford Wife”. It comes after he blamed Kate for failing to foster a “meaningful” relationship with Meghan in his first book Finding Freedom, which was written with the cooperation of the Sussexes. Although Scobie insists Harry and Meghan didn’t brief him for Endgame, the couple have yet to denounce the hagiography, which paints an entirely favourable picture of them while once again trashing their nearest and dearest. Although some believe the royal sisterhood broke down following a tearful row over a bridesmaids’ dress fitting for Princess Charlotte in the run-up to Harry and Meghan’s wedding in May 2018 - that Royal Foundation Forum proved to be a significant pinch point.

At the time the Beast from the East was sweeping through the UK, leading to freezing temperatures, heavy snow and heavy winds. Royal aides were therefore surprised to find Meghan had dressed in a summer dress for the summit - as Kate, who was seven months pregnant with Prince Louis at the time, opted for something rather more conservative. According to an insider with knowledge of the engagement, Meghan seemed uncomfortable having to so publicly play “second fiddle” to William and Kate as the superior royals in the palace hierarchy. “I think there was always a sense that Meghan felt she was a self-made woman whereas Kate hadn’t really had her own career. “She seemed to feel like she had more of a right to speak than her sister-in-law, who had married into the family as an unknown whereas Meghan regarded herself as a philanthropist who could teach the royals a thing or two about charity. I think she found it difficult that the Royal Foundation was already a well oiled machine by the time she got there,” said the source.

Around the same time as the Forum, Meghan’s mother Doria Ragland flew to London for her daughter’s baptism and other

wedding preparations but, curiously, she was never introduced to William and Kate - despite the Prince and Princess repeatedly asking to meet her. “It was all very bizarre,” said one source. “Meghan seemed to want to put a separation between them.” In truth, there had been a degree of frisson almost as soon as Meghan officially arrived on the royal scene in 2016 to a lukewarm reception from “formal” William and Kate, who as well as finding her “a little full on”, had no idea she would be a keeper, having met a succession of Harry’s girlfriends. The Prince and Princess of Wales may well have been influenced by mutual friends raising concerns following a shooting party at Sandringham when Meghan apparently clashed with 16 invited guests over issues including the imminent election of Donald Trump as US President in January 2017.

As Tom Bower revealed in his 2022 book Revenge: “Without hesitation, Meghan challenged every guest whose conversation contravened her values. Beyond Harry’s hearing, some friends questioned Meghan’s “wokery”. Meghan was a dampener on the party, they concluded. She lacked any sense of humour. Driving home after Sunday lunch, the texts pinged between the cars: “OMG what about HER?” said one; “Harry must be f***ing nuts.” To add insult to injury, as Harry revealed in Spare, when he first introduced Meghan to his brother - Kate remained in the garden, playing with the children - hardly the welcome they both wanted. From that point onwards, Meghan always pointedly insisted on calling the Princess of Wales “Kate” even though the rest of the family referred to her as “Catherine”. The Middletons’ also soon proved to be a bone of contention for the Duchess. She mistakenly believed that Kate’s parents, Michael and Carole, were cashing in on their royal connections to get special treatment. Harry had apparently already voiced concern about Kate’s sister Pippa Middleton publishing a book on entertaining called Celebrate in 2012, rather ironically accusing her of commercialising her links to the monarchy.

The Sussexes were then upset when Pippa declined to invite them to her wedding to James Matthews in May 2017, perhaps fearing she would be upstaged by Harry’s new girlfriend. She later relented and invited them to the evening reception “to keep the peace”. According to Harry in Spare, William and Kate then took exception to the couple moving the name places at the table - before being accused of doing the same when the Sussexes got married. Another bugbear for Meghan was the Windsor Suite, the VIP lounge at Heathrow. Wrongly convinced that Kate’s family had free use of the facility, which usually costs around £5,000 to access, she insisted Doria be able to use it when travelling to the UK, allegedly citing the risk to her safety. In fact, no one can recall the Middletons using the Windsor Suite - although William and Kate do use it whenever they travel through the airport. Doria was spotted there en route to Windsor for Harry and Meghan’s wedding. William and Kate’s superior accommodation at Apartment 1A, Kensington Palace was said to be another sore point for Meghan, who was confined to the rather more modest Nottingham Cottage with Harry until they moved to Frogmore Cottage in Windsor in April 2019, before the birth of their first child Archie.

William and Kate had not only used Nottingham Cottage as their London residence after their marriage from 2011 to 2013, but even had Prince George living with them there for several months - something Meghan either didn’t know or was apparently reluctant to acknowledge, preferring to think they had been living at the Middletons’ estate in Bucklebury, Berkshire. When Doria came to stay,

she made a point of cramming her into the cramped cottage, insisting she couldn’t stay at the nearby Royal Garden Hotel because it “wasn’t safe”. As well as seemingly resenting the close knit nature of the Middleton family - which was in stark contrast to her own rather more fractured upbringing - Meghan would “bristle” when praise was lavished on Kate for her mothering skills, wardrobe and general kindness. The Duchess was a woman in a hurry while Kate was the complete opposite: an introvert, uncomfortable with confrontation. Meghan was a natural oversharer while the Princess has always kept her cards close to her cards close to her chest. She was also seemingly unassailable when it came to the loyalty of their shared team. As one former aide pointed out: “The Princess of Wales is very popular with staff. I remember after Prince Louis was born, she popped into Clarence House, quietly knocked on the door of the staff quarters and introduced them all to the baby. They were really touched by that.”

In Spare, Harry insisted that his wife “spread kindness” with baskets of food and flowers, “bought pizza and biscuits” and “hosted tea parties and ice-cream socials”. Yet when an ice cream van was sent to Kensington Palace, it allegedly came with Meghan’s strict instructions that it should only be enjoyed by the Sussexes’ crew. On another occasion, Meghan allegedly gifted an employee a Charlotte Tilbury lipstick set, but only after she had removed her preferred shade. Having developed a habit of regularly exchanging letters with her father-in-law the King, parcels would arrive for Meghan in Queen Camilla’s distinctive bespoke wrapping paper, which rather runs contrary to the suggestion that they were all but abandoned by their royal relatives. While she certainly got on well with her father and mother-in-law, there was perhaps also a sense that William and Kate got on with them even better - and sometimes even gossiped about the Sussexes over dinner, as Harry suggested in Spare. Kate was also adored by the late Queen for the very reasons Scobie seeks to denigrate her in Endgame. She was “coachable”, “comfortable in her role” and “willing to bring the requisite smile and elegance to her duties as princess”.

Despite being comparatively less charismatic and an inferior public speaker, Kate was loved by the public for “never putting a foot wrong” - and carrying the mystique of someone who has never given much away about themselves. She was also a renowned clothes horse - and as a self-styled trend setter, the endless focus on her wardrobe appears to have irritated Meghan, who subsequently complained she had less help with her clothes and was forced to wear muted tones - even though she appeared in a vast array of colourful outfits. It perhaps can’t have helped that when Kate was first introduced to Meghan’s best friend and stylist Jessica Mulroney, “she fangirled like crazy”. The Canadian trend setter, who met Meghan in 2011 while she was working in Toronto on the US legal drama, Suits, had helped her to secure brand partnerships for her lifestyle blog, the Tig.

But when Meghan became engaged to Harry in November 2017, sources claim that she may have expected to receive even more preferential treatment from hand-picked suppliers than she had already grown used to. As with the family hierarchy, however, there was a pecking order: and to Meghan’s dismay, Kate always appeared to get first dibs on designers, including one of the Duchess’s favourites, Erdem Moral’o’flu.

“She was constantly competing with Kate,” said one observer, commenting: “Whatever she had, she wanted more.” Ultimately though, there was only ever going to be one Princess of Wales, replacing Princess Diana in the public’s affections.

The Telegraph

Israel is using the same tactics in Gaza that al-Assad employed in Syria

Daanish Faruqi

AS the humanitarian pause took effect in Gaza, footage of the massive destruction in the northern part of the enclave has started to trickle in. Seeing these images of devastation, one cannot but think of Thomas Friedman’s reference to what he calls the “Hama rules” in an article he published with The New York Times on October 14.

A neologism he coined many years ago, it refers to then-Syrian President Hafez al-Assad’s violent razing of the city of Hama in 1982 that killed more than 20,000 Syrians. Friedman argues that brute force commands legitimacy in the Middle East. This idea is deeply problematic, but the scale of destruction in Gaza suggests that the Israeli government and the military have embraced it. Indeed, Israel’s war on Gaza bears striking similarities to events in Syria. But we need not go as far back as the 1980s to find those parallels.

In 2011, when Hafez’s son, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, faced a nationwide uprising against his rule, he unleashed a violent campaign against the protesters that soon turned into a civil war. The tactics of collective punishment he used, aided and abetted by the systematic dehumanisation of the opposition by some parts of Syrian society, are similar to what we are seeing in Gaza today. In the earliest stages of the conflict, Israel justified a complete siege on Gaza, cutting off the supply of food, water, electricity and fuel, through systematic dehumanisation of its residents. Defence Minister Yoav

Gallant called the Palestinians “human animals”, while Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke of a “struggle between the children of light and the children of darkness”. Such language used by Israeli officials appeared to make the use of starvation as a weapon of war acceptable.

This sentiment seeped into social media where videos appeared of Israelis rapaciously mocking the residents of Gaza under siege by indulging in clean water or lavish meals. Some stooped even lower, producing racist vignettes making fun of Palestinian victims of Israeli bombardment. And as Israeli military targets came to include Gaza’s hospitals and other civilian structures, the dehumanisation campaign of the Palestinian population also expanded. The official government narrative, maintained by Netanyahu and others, states that “terrorists had used hospitals as military bases”. Accordingly, medical staff became “terrorist collaborators” while patients and families who had sought refuge in medical facilities were - willing “human shields”. Their deaths - even in the eyes of Israeli doctors - were therefore justified. But what seems lost in the present moment is that this campaign of dehumanisation is not unique. Since 2011, al-Assad has relied on eerily similar strategies to justify nearly identical military sieges and attacks on civilian infrastructure in rebel-held territories.

The 2015 siege on the town of Madaya near Damascus bears a

striking resemblance to the current Israeli weaponisation of starvation in Gaza. As the al-Assad regime dismissed the local residents as “agents of terror”, Syrians in government-controlled areas bought into the narrative. As the people of Madaya were reduced to subsisting on leaves, Syrian social media was filled with images and videos of detractors enjoying lavish meals and mocking their starvation. The Twitter hashtag “solidarity with the siege of Madaya” was flooded with culinary content to further brutalise an already brutalised population under siege. More than 420 people died in Madaya, including dozens of children, as a result of the blockade. The al-Assad regime continued this policy of “starve or surrender” in multiple rebel-held territories, including Aleppo, Ghouta, and Daraya, without any meaningful response from the international community.

In parallel, the al-Assad regime also targeted civilian infrastructure as a war tactic, especially hospitals. According to the International Rescue Committee, only 64 percent of hospitals and 52 percent of primary healthcare centres remain operational in Syria as a result of attacks on healthcare facilities. The al-Assad regime has justified these offensives under the nebulous banner of “countering terrorism”, claiming that 119 healthcare facilities were “taken over by terrorist groups”. But many of these facilities were put on a deconflicting list, shared with Damascus, and as the UN has pointed out, it was running at least one of them. An investiga-

tion by Human Rights Watch has also challenged the Syrian regime’s claims, pointing out they could not find any evidence of military equipment or personnel near the hospitals when they were targeted. Israel is currently playing by al-Assad’s rules of war, in large part because to date the Syrian leader has not been held to account for those war crimes, or the dehumanisation of his people that enabled them.

On the contrary, al-Assad has emerged from isolation by the international community, particularly after the February 2023 earthquakes in Syria. He has ridden the wave of normalisation by attending Arab League summits and has even been invited to the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai. Indeed, the victims of the Syrian regime’s brutality have recognised the parallels with Gaza. Zina Najjar, a Syrian activist, posted on X that what is transpiring currently in the besieged enclave is analogous to the events of Madaya eight years ago. Recollecting the brutal siege, Najjar warns that “international failure and silence” in Syria is encouraging the same crimes in Gaza. That international silence must end immediately, both in Syria and in Gaza. More pressingly, the Israeli government must face swift pushback from the international community for its dehumanisation of the people of Gaza and for the collective punishment it is inflicting on them. Otherwise, as in Syria, starvation and the deliberate bombardment of hospitals as war tactics will become chillingly normalised as par for the course.



SCCI voices concern over increase in gas prices

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq expressed concern over increase in gas prices for the industries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, including textiles to Rs3176 per mmbtu under the blended gas policy.

By imposing 80 per cent natural gas and 20 per cent RLNG rate on KP, he demanded to withdraw 18 per cent sales tax on industrial sector as the province is surplus gas production.

Speaking at a joint press conference here president of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fuad Ishaq and Chairman, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textile Mills Association Kamran Shah here at the chamber house on Monday said it is completely just to impose excessive gas prices on K-P wherein gas production is surplus which was also sheer violation of the article 158 of the constitution of the country.

Members of the business community said 50 percent industries in KP have shut after imposition of the blended gas policy in KP and RLNG rate, making not only running businesses

and industries difficult but impossible in the province.

In response to various queries of the reporters, Fuad Ishaq said that the total gas production of KP is 550mmcfds against its consumption 200mmcfds, and imposition of the blended gas policy on this province is highly alarming.

Not a single industrial gas connection was given to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa over the past 13 years, contrary to that industrial gas connections were provided in Punjab, which was tantamount of discriminatory attitude, Fuad Ishaq added.

During the presser, Senior leader of the businessman forum, former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, the SCCI senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ijaz Khan Afridi, former presidents Riaz Arshad, Malik Niaz Ahmad, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, executive member Affiaf Ali Khan, former chairman KPTMA Afan Aziz, KPTMA vice chairman Sikandar Kuli Khan Khattak, businessmen attached with textile sector include Irfan Moten, Ashaf Ahmad, Engr Ihsanullah, Muhammad Shoaib, Engr Matiullah, Muhammad Ayub, Arifullah, Muham-

mad Safdar Khan, former vice president Abidullah Yousafzai, and Saddar Gul, Faiz Rasool, Fazl e Wahid, Ishtiaq Muhammad and others present.

The businessmen said imposition of the blended gas policy with a ratio of 80/20 was completely unjust and against the constitution of the country.

The KPTMA chairman said the textile industry is the backbone for the country's economy.

He informed that out of 15 textile units, seven have almost shut in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the prevailing scenario while rest of industrial units were run with capacity of 50 per cent.

Furthermore, he informed textile industries consumed only 10mmcfds gas wherein the gas is surplus quantity and consumption less despite that discriminatory attitude is being carried out by KP industries, which is highly deplorable.

Former president of the KPTMA, Afan Aziz, said that after increasing the prices and supplying gas at RLNG rates, the prices have now been doubled under the blended gas policy, which is a complete injustice with Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa.

He said that efforts are being made to deprive the province affected by terrorism of constitutional rights which is very worrying and this discrimination should be stopped immediately.

Ilyas Bilour in response to a question of reporters said it is not the duty of the business community to fight with the government but we would try to raise issues of the community before it and resolve them with mutual consensus and table talks.

He demanded of the government to ensure due constitutional rights to KP. He added Punjab is also our brother but there should be take care of the rights of smaller provinces.

Fuad Ishaq to a question regarding any future line of action or protest, replied that the business community believes in unity, tolerance and harmony and would always try to resolve issues by negotiation with government and relevant authorities.

He, however, urged the government to review the massive gas price hike and revise its decision in the best interest of industries and the economy of the country.



HYDERABAD: Labourers women packing fresh tomatoes in wooden boxes at vegetable market.

Rupee gains 44 paisa against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Monday witnessed an appreciation of 44 paisa against US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs284.52 against the previous day's closing at Rs284.96.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs283.7 and Rs286.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs1.44 to close at Rs309.05 against the last day's closing of Rs 310.49, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paisa to close at Rs1.93; whereas a decrease of 33 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs360.38 as compared to the last closing of Rs360.05.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 12 and 11 paisa to close at Rs77.47 and Rs75.85 respectively.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Container vessel CMA CGM Nabucco berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal on Sunday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Manticore and Um Al Amad scheduled to load Rice and LNG also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during last 24 hours.

A total of 07 ships were engaged at QOA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, a gas carrier Onco left the port on Monday morning and three more ships Crina, Red Cosmos and Gold Trader are expected to sail on today afternoon.

A cargo volume of 60,401 tonnes, comprising 52,736 tonnes imports cargo and 7,665 tonnes export cargo, was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are eleven ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out a bulk carrier Double Eagle & five more ships MSC Rania, Marathapous, Umm Amad, TBN and Al-Dafra scheduled to load/offload Cement, Containers, LNG, Chemicals and Coal are expected to take berths at MW-2 QICT, EETL, EVTL PIBT on Monday.

Cement prices increased

ISLAMABAD (INP): The retail price of cement in Pakistan's northern regions has increased slightly over the past week, according to data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In the week ending November 30, the average retail price of cement per bag in the north was Rs 1,271, up 1.55% from the previous week. The price increase is attributed to higher transportation costs and supply chain disruptions.

In the south, the average retail price of cement per bag remained unchanged at Rs 1,187. However, prices varied across different cities, with Islamabad seeing the highest price of Rs 1,250 and Quetta the lowest at Rs 1,190.

PSX 100-index crosses 62,000 milestone

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) KSE-100 index Monday crossed 62,000 points milestone for the first time in history after gaining 770 points.

The PSX 100 index reached 62,461 points in comparison to the 61,691.25 closing on Friday.

Despite Pakistan's political and economic difficulties, the index has gained more than 48% this year, after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a \$3 billion loan programme in July to avert a sovereign debt default.

Some analysts believe the market is welcoming a successful staff level agreement for the second tranche of funds under the current IMF Standby Arrangement, along with a expected disbursement of the funds in December and other foreign exchange inflow from multilateral institutions.

"Despite the fact that the market is trading at an all-time high, the valuation of the market is still attractive as KSE100 index is currently trading at price-to-earnings multiple of 4.5 times as compared to the last 5-years average PE multiple of 6 times," said

Tahir Abbas, head of

research at Arif Habib Limited.

Companies' strong profitability and dividend payouts are also enticing investors confidence, he added.

On November 28, Pakistan's benchmark share index (KSE) breached 60,000 to trade at an all-time high of 60,500.61 points, data on the Pakistan Stock Exchange website showed.

Investors expect an imminent cut in the central bank's policy interest rate, currently set at a record high 22%. Inflation appears to have peaked, having slowed to 26.9% year-on-year in October.

Liquid foreign exchange reserves

It is pertinent to note that the total liquid foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) increased by \$77 million to \$7,257 billion during the week ended November 24, 2023, while total liquid foreign exchange reserves held by the country stood at \$12.392 billion and net foreign exchange reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$5.135 billion.

Gold prices in Pakistan experience decline

The gold rates in

Pakistan witnessed a significant decline. The 24-karat gold saw a dip, now priced at Rs217,000 per tola, while the 22-karat variant is available at Rs198,917 per tola on Monday.

Even in smaller amounts, these prices were still attractive, with 10 grams of 24-karat gold costing Rs186,043 and 22-karat gold costing Rs170,539. These fluctuations are closely tied to changes in the value of the US Dollar, highlighting the link of currency values and gold prices.

On a global scale, the price of gold has seen a rise, currently standing at \$2,087 per ounce.

It's noteworthy that gold prices in Pakistan can undergo significant variations throughout the day, influenced by trends in the global market.

The provided rates are obtained from reputable outlets, primarily located in Karachi and Multan.

For the most recent and accurate gold rates, it is advisable to check with local gold merchants and jewellers.

Staying informed about the dynamic nature of gold prices in Pakistan is crucial for those keeping an eye on market trends.

Services' exports increase by 3.34% to \$2,416m

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of services increased by 3.34 percent during the first four months of the current fiscal year as compared to corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The services exports during July-October (2023-24) were recorded at \$2,416 million as compared to the exports of \$2,338 million during July-October (2022-23).

The services' imports into the country also increased by 19.57 percent

by going up from \$2,729 million last year to \$3,263 million during the first four months of current fiscal year.

Based on the figures, the services' trade deficit increased by 116.66 percent during the period under review by going up from \$390 million last year to \$847 million this year.

Meanwhile, on year on year (YoY) basis, the services' exports from the country increased by 5.63 percent by going up from \$621.07 million in October 2022 to \$656.03 million

during October 2023.

The imports also went up by 18.11 percent by growing from \$701.10 million to \$828.07 million, according to PBS data.

On month on month (MoM) basis, the services exports increased by 5.11 percent in October 2023 when compared to exports of \$656.03 million in September 2023.

However, imports on MoM basis surged by 0.11 percent during the month under review when compared to imports of \$827 million in September 2023.

Gold strikes record on rate cut bets but equities struggle

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Gold hit a fresh record Monday on growing optimism the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates in the new year, with traders shrugging off boss Jerome Powell's attempts to temper expectations.

However, equity markets struggled to build on a positive lead from Wall Street, with attention now turning to key US jobs figures due at the end of the week.

Bets on an easing of monetary policy were ramped up when Powell said Friday that it was "well into restrictive territory" after more than a year of hikes that have put borrowing costs at a two-decade high. Stocks have rallied and the dollar has fallen in recent weeks as a string of data has pointed to a softening of the labour market and a slowdown in economic activity, while inflation continues to drop towards the bank's two percent target.

Gold prices jumped to as high as \$2,135 at one point Monday as traders flocked into bullion in recent weeks on safe-haven buying as the Israel-Hamas war started.

It has been given extra strength as a string of data

points to a slowdown in inflation that has led to speculation the Fed can slash rates. Bets on a drop in rates have weighed on the dollar, which has in turn made gold cheaper for international buyers.

Bloomberg reported that traders saw a 60 percent chance of such a move in March, while they have fully priced one in May. "Markets are piling in on the rate cut bets," Capital.com's

Kyle Rodda said. "Gold can run higher and will do at the earliest sign of a recession." Powell tried to dampen expectations after his remarks last week, warning that it remained "premature" to speculate on when policymakers will begin cutting. He added the bank was "prepared to tighten (monetary) policy further if it becomes appropriate to do so". His comments came after governor Chris Waller suggested a cut could come next year if data allowed it.

Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management said: "Despite earlier indications from Federal Reserve officials about the possibility of additional policy tightening leading up to the December (policy) meet-

ing, recent remarks from both Jerome Powell and Chris Waller have been widely interpreted as signalling the conclusion of rate hikes and the possibility of future rate cuts."

Bitcoin broke back above \$40,000 for the first time since May last year, helped by hopes that firms including BlackRock will be given US approval to sell the first spot Bitcoin exchange-traded funds.

Bloomberg said a batch of the products are thought to be given the go-ahead by the Securities and Exchange Commission by next month. Stock markets were mixed, however, with Hong Kong, Tokyo, Shanghai and Taipei in the red, while Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Manila, Mumbai, Bangkok and Jakarta rose. Wellington was flat.

London, Paris and Frankfurt all opened lower. In Hong Kong, troubled developer China Evergrande briefly surged more than 13 percent after a court in the city ruled on Monday that it will have until late January to put together a restructuring plan to avoid liquidation, extending a deadline previously set for December.

GIS urged implementation for Sindh small industries

HYDERABAD (APP): President Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry (HCSTSI) Muhammad Farooq Shaikhani on Monday has urged the Sindh government for implementation of Geographical Information System (GIS) for Small Industrial Initiatives in Sindh Small Industry Corporation (SSIC).

In a letter written to caretaker provincial Minister for Revenue, Commerce and Industry Muhammad Younus Dahga, he said that there was a need to master geographic information system through a modern technology that will lead to suc-

cess in database integration, overall productivity and creating superior management dashboards. He reminded that this system had already been implemented in the board of revenue, education department and PDMA and it was providing excellent results too.

The President HCSTSI briefly explained that this system would provide infrastructure for small scale industries, promote them, provide training to the youth of the province in various crafts and trades, encourage the establishment of small scale industries in rural areas and design the artisans accord-

ing to the market demand and also provide assistance in adaptation. It will also provide excellent support to SSIC in providing facilities to the artisans during participation in fairs and exhibitions in handicraft shops, local and foreign markets, he said.

According to him, this system will also provide insight into geographical aspects of operations, help in depth analysis, allocation of resources and identification of potential risks. It will help in finding new small scale industries in Sindh province.

He said that in order to implement this system, it

was necessary for the management to work as a team to understand the challenges and collect spatial data, maps, satellite images and other geographic information required for the dashboard along with effective use of the system.

He concluded by saying that the world was taking the help of technology to improve its systems and it was high time that the Sindh government should also make technology an integral part of its administrative affairs so that the province witness more development and investor's confidence could also be restored.

Minister, CCIs presidents visit center

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister of Industries and Commerce SM Tanveer along with presidents of various chambers of commerce and industry (CCIs) visited Business Facilitation Center (BFC), where the business community's representatives were briefed about the center's operations and facilities.

Punjab Industries Department Secretary Ehsan Bhutta, Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) Managing Director Asim Javed and other relevant officers were also present.

On this occasion, Provincial Minister SM Tanveer highlighted the Business Facilitation Center as a revolutionary initiative by the caretaker provincial government to bolster investment. Completed within a month under the efficient leadership of Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, the center is poised to significantly benefit the business community and accelerate the pace of industrialization, he added.

SM Tanveer mentioned that the center houses officers from 17 to 20 depart-

ments of both federal and provincial governments, ensuring a comprehensive and streamlined service to the investors and business community.

He emphasized the implementation of an effective feedback system to enhance the monitoring process, with room for improvement based on public feedback and suggestions.

CCIs presidents commended the establishment of Business Facilitation Center, recognizing its potential to catalyze positive change in the business landscape.

UBG, BMP (P) to play role for reviving economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the business community was passing through a difficult phase, however, the alliance of UBG and BMP (P) had a clear vision to address the key issues of the business community, increase exports, strengthen foreign exchange reserves and boost industrialization to revive the economy after winning the upcoming elections of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI).

He said this while addressing a reception hosted by Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General UBG at his residence in the honor of the candidates of UBG & BMP (P) alliance for the President, Senior Vice President and Vice Presidents of FPCCI. Over 40 General Body and Executive Committee members of FPCCI from Rawalpindi/Islamabad, Rawalpindi/Division, Gilgit Baltistan and other areas were present in the reception, said a press release issued here Monday.

Atif Ikram Sheikh, Presidential candidate of

UBG & BMP (P) alliance for the FPCCI said that they had a two-year plan to address the key issues of the business community and steer the economy out of troubles. He said that they would realize the mission of late SM Tanveer after winning the elections of FPCCI to make Pakistan a strong economy of the region. He thanked all the voters and supporters and assured them that he would deliver up to their satisfactions from the platform of FPCCI.

Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, alliance candidate for Senior Vice President of FPCCI said that after winning elections, they would work hard to revive the honor and dignity of FPCCI and make it a strong apex trade body of the country. He said that the stakeholder of respective sectors would be involved in meetings with the government to address issues of business community. Facilitation Desk for women entrepreneurs would be made in FPCCI and efforts would be made to establish more women chambers of commerce in the country to facilitate women entrepreneurs.

Asif Inam, candidate for

Vice President and current Chairman All Pakistan Textile Mills Association said that high energy cost is a major hurdle for business and industry and after winning the FPCCI elections, they would work on cheap energy solutions to reduce production cost and facilitate the growth of business and industrial activities.

Asif Sakhi, candidate for Vice President from Customs Agents Association said that he would play role to address the customs and FBR related issues of the business community from the platform of FPCCI after winning the elections.

Aman Paracha candidate for Vice President and former Chairman of Pakistan Tea Association said that the current leadership of FPCCI has failed to deliver and after elections, they would work hard to address the key issues of the business community and revive the economy.

Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Leader ICCI said that under the dynamic leadership of SM Tanveer, the alliance of UBG and BMP (P) would achieve landslide victory and play an effective role for improving the economy.

Court Notice

In the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Dagar. Appeal. No. 57/13. Institution 14/6/2023. Date of hearing. 12/12/2023. Nowsher Khan etc VS Mst Gul Meena etc. Notice to No. 5. Nadar Khan s/o Sher Aziz Khan resident of Torwarsak tehsel Daggarr Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 12/12/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



In brief

O'Sullivan admits lack of 'buzz'

YORK (AFP): Ronnie O'Sullivan said he gets more of a buzz from eating breakfast than winning the UK Championship after beating China's Ding Junhui to seal a record-extending eighth crown. The British snooker star became the oldest winner of the event in York on Sunday, 30 years after he claimed his first title at the tournament at the age of 17. O'Sullivan, who turns 48 on Tuesday, wrapped up a 10-7 win with an exhibition-style finish of 129 in raucous scenes at York's Barbican. Hauled back from 4-1 and 7-5 leads by Ding, the world number one dug deep when it mattered and consecutive breaks of 100 and 74 set him up for his final flourish.

But O'Sullivan was low key after his victory, admitting it lacked the "buzz" of some of his earlier successes, and said he had even found himself struggling for motivation as the opening session loomed. "I'm not sitting here with a massive grin and super-excited," he said. "I just go through the motions a lot of the time. It's great to win and I give my best when I'm out there and I want to win, but it's not the same excitement as years ago when I was winning my first world and UK and Masters titles, and you're buzzing. "Don't get me wrong, it's still a nice feeling and a job well done, but I get more of a buzz from going for a run in the morning or having breakfast with my mate. "I don't actually feel like ever playing. Once you get down there you think you're glad you've done it, but even in this match today I was thinking I didn't feel like it, I'd rather sit on my bed and watch a bit of Netflix. I feel like that a lot of the time." Ding, who was also beaten in last year's final, by Mark Allen, said: "The first half was disappointing because I had a chance to win more frames but 4-4 wasn't too bad because I was 4-1 down. I came back to 7-7 but he played so well. "All I could do was play good safety and make breaks. He just pushed me to make mistakes and it's all I can do -- I can't do anything else out there."

Tottenham fight back

MANCHESTER (INP): Manchester City were stunned by a Dejan Kulusevski's 90th minute equaliser earned Spurs a thrilling 3-3 draw at the Etihad on Sunday. Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou insisted he would not relent from his philosophy of relentless attacking football despite facing the might of City with a mounting injury crisis and earned his reward. Spurs captain Son Heung-min scored at both ends inside the opening 10 minutes. Phil Foden put City in front before half-time, but Giovanni Lo Celso levelled 20 minutes from time. Jack Grealish restored the home side's lead once more, only for Kulusevski's header to ensure City have now dropped points in five of their last eight league games. The English and European champions drop to third in the table, three points behind leaders Arsenal. A point lifts Tottenham into fifth and snaps a run of three consecutive defeats. The visitors' daring approach was met with an early reward. Son raced onto Kulusevski's ball over the top and Ederson failed to prevent the South Korean scoring his eighth goal against City. The lead only lasted three minutes as Son cancelled out his opener at the wrong end.



ISLAMABAD: Prize distribution ceremony of CAS-Serena Hotels International Squash Championship 2023.

Sarfraz upbeat for tough challenge in Australia Tests

CANBERRA (Agencies): Former captain Sarfraz Ahmed is ready to face the challenges that lay ahead in the upcoming four-day game against Australian Prime Minister XI.

Sarfraz Ahmed while talking to the media, recalled the inspiring innings of Chris Gayle at Manuka Oval and stressed the importance of the match against PM XI.

"I remember watching Chris Gayle's incredible innings of 200 runs against Zimbabwe at Manuka Oval. Now, as we brace ourselves for a four-day clash in Canberra against Australia, the weather seems to be good," said Sarfraz Ahmed. "This match holds an immense significance as it kickstarts the three-match test series against the formidable Australian team."

Expressing his confidence, Sarfraz highlighted the strength of the Pakistani lineup. "Australia boasts good batters, but we are no less. With Abdullah, Babar, Imam, Saud, and Agha in

our ranks, we are well-equipped for the challenge," he declared.

Sarfraz further praised the quality of Pakistan's bowlers in the Test squad.

"Shaheen and Hasan are exceptional, and we have the likes of Mir Hamza, Khurram Shehzad, and Fahim, who have proven their mettle in domestic competitions." The former captain then took a moment to extend his congratulations to the newly-appointed Test captain Shan Masood and acknowledged his leadership. "It's always an honour to lead your country, and I want to congratulate Shan Masood for his role," said the wicketkeeper batter.

"The camaraderie between Babar Azam, Muhammad Hafeez, and Shan Masood is a testament to the strong bond within our camp." Sarfraz Ahmed concluded with the humble mention that he is ready to play any role for the team in Australia. "I am happy to play any role – whether as a batter or a wicket-keeper –

in contributing to the success of the team."

Pakistan and Australia will square off in the first Test match in Perth from 14-18 December 2023. The second Test match will be played in Melbourne, from 26 to 30 December, while Sydney will host the last game of the tour from 3 to 7 January 2024.

Pakistan squad

Shan Masood (c), Aamir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Khurram Shahzad, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Noman Ali, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Sarfraz Ahmed (wk), Saud Shakeel and Shaheen Shah Afridi

Australia squad

David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins (c), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood, Scott Boland, Cameron Green, Lance Morris.

Noor Zaman annexes CAS Serena Hotels Int'l Squash C'ship title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Noor Zaman defeated compatriot Muhammad Asim Khan in the final to clinch the men's title of Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) -Serena Hotels International Squash Championship at Mushaf Squash Complex, Islamabad on Monday.

Noor outwitted Asim Khan by a scoreline of 11-8, 8-2, and retired hurt in 18 minutes.

In the women's event's final, Amina el Rihany of Egypt beat her compatriot Nadien Elhammy in a well-fought contest 13-15, 11-3, 11-7, 11-7 in 48 minutes to lift the title.

A group of 23 world-ranking men and women players from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Egypt and Spain participated in the championships.

Khawaja defends 'hero' Warner after stinging Johnson criticism

SYDNEY (AFP): Usman Khawaja jumped to the defence of his opening partner David Warner on Monday after stinging criticism of the veteran batsman from Australian great Mitchell Johnson.

Former fast bowler Johnson hit out after Warner kept his spot in Australia's squad to face Pakistan in the first Test later this month despite a poor run of red-ball form.

The three-match home series against Pakistan is expected to be Warner's farewell to Test cricket.

The decision to keep faith with Warner provoked a strong response from Johnson, who questioned why his former team-mate should be given a "hero's send-off" in light of his poor Test form.

"Can somebody please tell me why?" he wrote in The West Australian newspaper at the weekend, also bringing up Warner's central role in the notorious "Sandpaper-gate" ball-tampering scandal in 2018.

Steve Smith and Warner were both banned for a year for their part in the scandal, but Khawaja told reporters on Monday: "Davey Warner and Steve Smith are heroes in my mind."

"No one's perfect," Khawaja added. "Mitchell Johnson isn't perfect, I'm not perfect, Steven Smith isn't perfect, David Warner isn't perfect. "What they've done for the game from a positive point of view... far outweighs anything else they've done."

"So for (Johnson) to imply that Davey Warner or anyone else involved in the sandpaper (scandal), is not a hero, I strongly disagree with that."

The first Test against Pakistan in Perth starts on December 14, before the traditional Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, then Sydney, beginning January 3.

Warner has indicated he plans to quit the five-day game after the Test at his home Sydney Cricket Ground, but will continue in white-ball cricket.

Warner was in scintillating form at the recent 50-over World Cup, but he has scored just one Test century since early 2020 and averages only 28 since the 2019-2020 summer in Australia.

Haris Rauf, Usama Mir and Zaman Khan granted NOCs for BBL 2023-24

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has issued no-objection certificates (NOC) to fast bowlers Haris Rauf, Zaman Khan and leg-spinner Usama Mir for the Big Bash League (BBL) 2023-24.

The board has issued the NOCs considering the workload of players and the future tour programme of the national men's team.

The PCB understands that this decision is in the best interests of all the stakeholders involved while balancing the importance of game time with workload management.

Haris Rauf and Usama Mir have been granted NOCs for a total of five matches whereas Zaman Khan has been granted NOC for four matches.

All these games are set to take place from 7 to 28 December. Haris Rauf and Usama Mir are part of the Melbourne Stars squad, while Zaman Khan is part of Sydney Thunder in the BBL.

Haris Rauf has been representing Stars since 2019 and has picked 30 wickets from 18 games in BBL at an impressive average of 16.4.

Melbourne Stars Squad for BBL 2023-24
Glenn Maxwell, Scott

Boland, Joe Burns, Hilton Cartwright, Brody Couch, Nathan Coulter-Nile, Sam Harper, Joel Paris, Nick Larkin, Tom Rogers, Mark Steketee, Marcus Stoinis, Beau Webster, Haris Rauf, Usama Mir, Liam Dawson

Sydney Thunder Squad for BBL 2023-24
Chris Green (c), Cameron Bancroft, Ollie Davies, Matt Gilkes, Liam Hatcher, Nathan McAndrew, Blake Nikitaras, Alex Ross, Daniel Sams, Gurinder Sandhu, Jason Sangha, Tanveer Sangha, David Warner, Alex Hales, Zaman Khan.

Pakistani athletes show excellent performance in South Asian Karate Championship



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan athletes showed excellent performance in the 7th South Asian Cadet Junior Under-21 and Senior Karate Championship held in Nepal's capital Kathmandu.

Pakistani athletes won two gold, one silver and 24 bronze medals. Liaba Zia and Arzoo won gold medals by defeating Indian and Nepalese athletes. President of Pakistan Karate Federation Muhammad

Jahangir was the chief guest on this occasion.

Laiba Zia of Pakistan karate team won gold in 50 kg, bronze in under-21, under-21 kata, Arzoo won gold in 66 kg junior, bronze in team kata senior and junior, Farishta won Bronze in Individual Kata, Team Kata, 55kg Senior and Team Fight, Magul won bronzes in team Kata, 61kg Senior and Bronze in team fight, Fatima won bronzes in team Kata Senior, and

Junior, Anahita Fatima won bronzes in individual Kata Cadet and team kata junior, Aira won bronzes in team kata junior while Nazia Ali of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa won bronze medals in team kata senior, 68 kg senior and team fight.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Faisal performed as manager, Muhammad Anwar and Qaratul Ain as referee, while Naseem Qureshi and Imtiaz Ali as performed.

Pakistan aims to revitalize football after first-ever collaboration with Saudi Arabia



LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan is looking to reshape the future of football in the country after reaching out to Saudi Arabia for first-ever international collaboration in the field, the top official of the FIFA-backed Normalization Committee (NC) currently running the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), said in a recent interview.

Last week, the PFF announced its chairman, Haroon Malik, had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Saudi Arabian Football Federation (SAFF) in Riyadh to foster strong ties for the mutual benefit, promotion, growth and success of the sport in both countries.

Pakistan has faced many challenges in international football over the years, including multiple suspensions of the country's domestic premier division in the last six years. The last one was in April 2021, when FIFA banned PFF due to "third-party interference" after a "hostile takeover" of the body's headquarters in Lahore and the ousting of a FIFA representative by a rival group.

The international sports governing body restored PFF's membership in June 2022.

"I think the benefit [of signing the MoU] is that SAFF considers Pakistan to be a brotherly country and they want to develop football across Asia and they

are making sure that it helps to raise the standard," Malik told Arab News on Friday.

The PFF official said the federation was working on next year's calendar, which will include friendly matches with Saudi Arabia.

"We are very happy that it covers not only the men's national team but it also applies to the women's national team," he added.

"On the youth side, we hope that we will play some games, under 16, under 19."

Football recently came into the spotlight in the cricket-dominated country after Pakistan got its first-ever qualification for the second round of FIFA qualifiers, edging out Cambodia after ending a 13-match losing streak that dated back to 2018.

The faceoff was attended by over 13,000 fans in Islamabad as the country hosted its first international match after eight years, sparking jubilant celebrations not just for the victory but a homecoming of international football too.

The 193rd-ranked Pakistan, however, has suffered two consecutive setbacks in the first two matches of the second round and is currently the lowest-ranked team in Group G, which includes Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Jordan.

'Neutral venue'
Pakistan is scheduled to play its home matches of the FIFA qualifiers against

Jordan and Saudi Arabia on March 21 and June 6, respectively, though the football federation appears to be facing challenges in hosting night matches against the two teams.

Asked about the situation, Malik said he was hopeful the PFF would be able to get floodlights installed under FIFA regulations by January.

"The [Pakistan vs Jordan] game on the 21st of March, I do not think can be played during the day," he said, adding that his team was working with the government for requisite lighting to ensure they were in place for both matches.

"If not, we will have to consider a neutral venue," he added.

'PSL-like football league'

In a major boost for the sport, he said the PFF had been working on formalizing domestic football, promoting talent development through encouraging commercialization.

"If there is not enough commercial opportunity, the people, of course, will not choose [football] as a career option," he maintained.

"We have All Pakistan Championship that is currently going on to find the best clubs that play in the country," he said. "The second is to have a championship-style competition, something like the Pakistan Cricket League [Pakistan Super League]."

Discussing the national women's team, the PFF chief said the federation was planning a football championship to establish a women's league, to enable female footballers to display their talent and playing style.

The PFF, he noted, is also arranging visits from international teams to Pakistan, ensuring fans can enjoy high-quality matches.



In brief

IRSA releases 88,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 88,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 43,3300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1493.90 feet and was 93.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 22,100 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1172.80 feet, which was 122.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,100 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 46,000, 43,500, 41,700 and 11,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

AIOU to hold Int'l moot

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-day international conference on "Modern Trends in The Arabic Novel in The 2nd Half of The 20th Century" is being held in connection with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). According to AIOU, the conference will take place on December 13 and 14, and more than 50 international scholars have submitted their papers to participate. Out of these, 13 papers have been selected for presentation. The opening session of the conference will commence at 10:00 a.m. on December 13, and it will be presided over by the Vice Chancellor of AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood. Dean, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Prof. Dr. Mohyuddin Hashmi, will explain the aims and objectives of the conference. There will be two parallel sessions held simultaneously on both days. Dr. Hashmi believes that this conference will be a milestone in the promotion of Arabic. Vice Chancellor AIOU, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has emphasized that Arabic is the language of the Holy Quran and it is very broad and sweet. Therefore, every Pakistani should learn it.

250 absconders arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have arrested 250 absconders and proclaimed offenders involved in heinous crimes during the last month, a public relations officer said. Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, he said that special tasks were assigned to all senior police officials to ensure the arrest of proclaimed offenders and absconders involved in heinous crimes. Following these directions, the different teams of Islamabad Capital Police arrested 250 absconders and proclaimed offenders involved in heinous crimes during the last month. ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan said that the Islamabad Capital Police is taking all possible steps to eradicate the crime from the city and those involved in heinous crimes and illegal activities will be dealt with iron hands. Safety of the lives and property of the citizens is the foremost priority of Islamabad Capital Police, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Jamal Shah inaugurating National Music Academy at PNCA.

NAB distributes cheques worth Rs 600 million among Arian city victims

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Deputy Chairman, Sohail Nasir Monday handed over cheques worth Rs 600 million to 450 affectees of Arain City scandal.

Commencing with the recovered sum obtained through a plea bargain with the management of Arain City, Fateh Jang, Rawalpindi, the funds were distributed among the victims in a simple ceremony held at NAB, Rawalpindi.

This returned amount, a product of meticulous scrutiny, is being distributed among the victims.

Addressing the cheque distribution ceremony here, the deputy chairman stressed the importance of ensuring social justice and self-accountability in

resolving the issues faced by the society.

NAB is actively conducting an awareness campaign through the media to educate the public about precautionary measures before investing in a housing society. It was emphasized that people should invest only in societies that are legal and registered.

He committed to returning every penny to the victims of fraudulent housing societies, seeking the public's support in honoring this commitment.

This aligns with the bureau's responsibility to protect the rights of investors and others.

He urged individuals to carefully assess the legality of a society before investing in it. Additionally, he recommended consulting

the relevant regulator to verify the authenticity of any housing society before making an investment. "We must prioritize respecting the rights of others and honoring our commitments," he added.

He highlighted the presence of mafias in the housing sector, advising people not to purchase files without verifying their legality and authenticity.

He commended the Arian City investigative team led by Ms Beenish Javed for successfully recovering Rs 600 million from the owners of Arian City, and rejecting incentives. He acknowledged the challenging working conditions of NAB officers and, as a gesture of appreciation, presented a shield to Beenish Javed.

HEC training programme for newly inducted faculty members concludes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), Higher Education Commission (HEC) organised the first cohort of in-service National Faculty Development Programme (NDFP) for newly inducted faculty members of higher education institutions (HEIs). Twenty-two faculty members from public sector HEIs of the federal capital, Rawalpindi, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan attended the training.

Chairman HEC Dr.

Mukhtar Ahmed was chief guest of the closing ceremony, while Director General NAHE Mr. Muhammad Faisal Butt was also present.

During his address, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed appreciated the performance of the participants throughout the intensive three-week programme. He emphasised the crucial role that teachers play in the country's progress. He said that being an educator is one of the most rewarding professions. "Knowing that you

can make a difference in the life of a person is one of the greatest acts of charity one can perform as a Muslim and as a human being," he underlined.

He added that the importance of teacher training cannot be underestimated. The better a teacher is trained, the better he or she can educate tomorrow's generation of the nation, he stressed. Mr. Muhammad Faisal Butt congratulated the participants on successful completion of the training programme.

1386 FIRs lodged against under-age drivers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police registered over 1386 FIRs against underage drivers during a special campaign so far, said a police spokesman. He informed that police on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi, Syed Khalid Hamdani were taking action by the law against underage drivers.

The CPO had directed the City Traffic Police officers to take solid steps to control traffic rules violations and underage driving, he said. The parents were also advised to discourage

driving by underage drivers. He said that fatal road accidents occur due to speeding and reckless driving of the drivers particularly underage.

The ongoing operation against underage drivers and other traffic rules violators had been accelerated on the instructions of the CPO.

The underage drivers indulge in speeding, reckless driving and wheeling which leads to fatal road accidents, he added.

Police had initiated a drive against underage drivers without any discrimination, he informed. Underage

drivers not only endanger their own lives but the lives of other road users, he said adding that parents should 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.

ANF seizes 31 kg drugs in eight operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover 31 kg drugs and arrested eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He informed a foreign passenger (Nigerian) who arrived from Bahrain by flight number GF-791 was arrested at Faisalabad International Airport. During the operation, 40 cocaine-filled capsules were recovered from his stomach.

1343 grams Ice and 558 grams heroin were recovered from a passenger's trolley bag at Jinnah International Airport. The accused was leaving for Jeddah by flight number PA-170.

240 intoxicated tablets (ecstasy) were recovered from two suspects arrested in the commercial market Rawalpindi.

3600 grams hashish was recovered

from a vehicle intercepted near Hangu Road Kohat while an accused was also arrested during the operation.

2400 grams hashish was recovered from a woman's bag rounded up near Kanpur Adda, Multan.

In another operation, 2400 grams hashish was recovered from an accused nabbed near Bab-e-Sakhi Sarwar in Dera Ghazi Khan.

The spokesman informed that in 7th operation, 11 kg hashish was recovered from a drug smuggler arrested near Agriculture University Tandojam, Hyderabad. ANF while conducting 8th operation recovered 10 kg hashish hidden for smuggling in an uninhabited area of Zakhakhel Khyber. Separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

USAID launches strategic planning at Pakistani universities

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the Higher Education System Strengthening Activity, organized a five-day workshop to launch strategic planning at Pakistani public sector universities. University administrators and faculty learned how to develop and implement strategic plans to improve their universities' management, market-relevance, and student support services. These strategic plans will support universities to increase students' employability after graduation.

USAID Mission Director Kate Somvongsiri addressed the university leaders, saying, "Higher education institutions are central to Pakistan's development. Your universities shape future leaders, said a press release issued here on Monday. Your degree programs give youth the skills to benefit from and drive Pakistan's economic growth."

She also commended the partnership between the University of Utah and the Pakistani universities for collaborating, exchanging ideas, and thinking strategically to solve shared challenges.

'CPEC and Gwadar Port are Pillars of Pakistan's Economic Landscape'

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A delegation from the Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Industries (GCCCI) called on Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, today at the Parliament House.

The discussions focused on fostering collaboration and addressing key economic issues, providing a platform for GCCCI officials to share insights on regional economic development and trade dynamics.

Chairman Senate expressed unwavering commitment to supporting the chamber's endeavors in promoting economic growth and displayed keen interest in understanding the challenges and opportunities facing the business community in Gwadar.

Economic policies, infrastructure development, and strategies to boost trade and investment in the Gwadar region were also discussed in detail.

Chairman Senate recognized the pivotal role of the business community in driving

economic progress and affirmed the Senate's dedication to creating an enabling environment for sustainable economic growth. Chairman Senate highlighted the significance of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Gwadar Port as driving forces behind future economic initiatives in Pakistan. He emphasized that Gwadar Port is not only important for Pakistan but for the entire region.

The Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Industries, represented by its officials, expressed gratitude to Chairman Senate for his time and attention to the economic concerns of Gwadar. They underscored the importance of collaboration with the government to promote economic prosperity, attract investments, and facilitate a conducive business environment in the region. Senator Palwasha Muhammadzai Khan and Senator Prince Ahmed Omer Ahmedzai were also present during the meeting.

Punctuality of trains reached 93 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The overall punctuality ratio of trains has improved from 76 to 93 per cent in three months owing to close monitoring and stern measures taken by Pakistan Railways at the divisional and ministry levels. "With the punctuality of trains and concrete measures taken by the department in last three months, the number of passengers has increased by over 20 million, which is ample proof of the department's achievement," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

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

"The technology aims to enhance the safety, punctuality and efficiency of train operations during adverse weather conditions, particularly in the presence of dense smog and fog," he added.

The system, he said the TDAS is set to revolutionize the way trains navigate through foggy landscapes. It promised not only to avert potential accidents but also to facilitate smooth train travel when visibility is severely compromised.

He said the capabilities of this digital system extend beyond improved visibility; it can also identify and monitor vital elements such as signals, level crossings, gates, track obstructions, and other potential hazards within the same 700-meter radius. The official said this comprehensive approach to training management promises to reduce the risk of accidents significantly.

Initially, he said the department was planning to install the anti-fog device in four engines. However, Pakistan Railways has outlined a strategic expansion plan, with the ultimate goal of equipping all trains with this life-saving technology in the coming year.

Senator committee chairman discusses ties with Austrian envoy

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Austrian Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E Andrea Wicke, called on Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, Chairman of the Senate's Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue, at the Senate Secretariat in Islamabad on Monday.

The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral relations and addressing mutual concerns. The discussion delved into various aspects, with Senator Saleem Mandviwalla outlining the economic challenges facing Pakistan and expressing the urgent need for robust reforms. He also highlighted Pakistan's vital geographical factors, including its coastline, road connectivity, and the strategic potential of Gwadar Port.

Among the critical issues addressed was the delay in the Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Project and the significant energy scarcity impeding progress in Pakistan. Trade relations between Pakistan and Austria were thoroughly examined, with Senator Mandviwalla shedding light on governance issues and emphasizing the necessity for comprehensive reforms.

Experts stress for adopting latest technology, distance learning to reduce educational expenses

ISLAMABAD (APP): Educational experts have come up with the notion of adopting proper planning, distance learning and the use of the latest technologies to reduce education costs at schools. For them, it might initially seem counterintuitive to invest in new technology, however, choosing the right software and tools can reduce the need for working capital and minimize the use of material resources.

"In many cases, private institutions are charging hefty amounts, and the government should actively engage with them to get fee structures rationalized," remarked former Vice Chancellor Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Dr. Shahid Siddiqui. "When they are earning millions of rupees, the chargeable amount is becoming unbearable even for middle-class parents, while kids of poor people cannot even think of studying at these institutions."

"The government and the owners of private institutions should sit together and think out a way forward to address this issue," he added.

He pleaded in favour of the idea of distant learning through the latest online techniques and said, "It will make us technologically efficient and help save money."

distance

Dr. Siddiqui said different schools use bulk paper to maintain records of teachers and students and prepare reports, timetables, syllabuses, and much more. "Imagine how much money is spent on maintaining this physical record. But, by going paperless and moving databases to the cloud, they can cut down on a sizeable amount of money."

He regretted that non-formal education had been a deprived area since 1974, as after AIOU, only Virtual University was established to provide distance education. "Virtual or distant learning is an easy source for students to access quality education on lesser fees than to physically approach the educational institutions."

"Then there is another dilemma of the number of books and notebooks," he mentioned and said, "It is unkindness to our babies, seen carrying kilos of books on their backs."

"Why do we overload our primary-level students with books and notebooks?" he stated. "Can't we reduce the number of books and shift them to the latest modes of learning in this era of the latest technologies?" He said the formal universities are converting to an online system, which will surely

reduce the cost of education.

Keeping in view the hardships of parents, Vice Chancellor Islamia University Bahawalpur, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali, came up with the idea of using science and technology parks as money-making hubs to meet the education expenses.

"First of all, the government should take education as a top priority and allocate at least 5% of the GDP for this sector," said Renowned educationist Murtaza Noor. "As per law, education is free from Grade I to 16, and the state should ensure facilities for such students, especially scholarships for those in dire need."

He suggested establishing students' alumni to support poor students, control the cost of education, and award scholarships to kids from marginalized segments through charity. "The private sector must also be bound to give fee concessions and scholarships to deserving students under corporate social responsibility (CSR)."

Fund allocation for the higher education sector in Pakistan was very low as compared to international standards, while the financial contribution by the provincial governments for HEIs had also been negligible, except in Sindh province.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Austria, Mrs. Andrea Wicke calling on Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue.

Exports total \$1.7 billion

KABUL (Ariana News): The office of the deputy prime minister for economic affairs said Monday that Afghanistan has reached an “unprecedented milestone” this year as exports have totaled \$1.71 billion in the past 11 months. In a post on X, the deputy prime minister’s office stated that fresh fruit, dried fruit, carpets, saffron, coal, and vegetables such as onions and tomatoes constitute the largest part of the country’s exports.

Japan announces aid

KABUL (BNA): The Japan Embassy in Kabul has unveiled a new \$58.4 million aid package for Afghanistan. The embassy stated in a statement that the goal of providing this support is to secure the delivery of humanitarian aid to meet the people of Afghanistan’s basic necessities. The embassy noted, “We hope that this assistance contributes to the preservation and improvement of the Afghan people’s dignified and self-sufficient lives.”

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

MoHE says curriculum review 70% completed

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Higher Education said the curriculum review is 70 percent complete.

The head of the curriculum department of the MoHE, Abdul Rauf Farahi, stated that the purpose of the review of the curriculum is to make the curriculum compatible with international standards.

“There are fields of medicine, computer science, agriculture, engineering, and science such as chemistry, physics, biology, social sciences, and journalism, the revision work of several fields has been finalized, and work is ongoing....” said Abdul Rauf Farahi.

According to Farahi, more than a hundred academic staff are working



in various fields, and the review of 73 fields has been finalized and the review of 35 fields still remains.

“The purpose of reviewing and developing the academic curriculum is renewal, and considering religious and national values and international standards in the academic curriculum,” said Abdul Rauf Farahi.

Some students said that the curriculum should be reviewed based on global standards.

“In public and private universities, the curriculum is very old, and we ask the Ministry of Higher Education to review the curriculum carefully,” said Mohammad Anwar Bahir, a student.

“We welcome the initiative of the Ministry of Higher Education to review and develop the academic curriculum and serious efforts should be made in the field,” said Obaid Sarwari, a student.

Meanwhile, the current government’s cabinet has assigned the task of reviewing the academic curriculum to the appointed committee.

IEA official must be invited

KABUL (Ariana News): The State Ministry for Disaster Management said that since Afghanistan has also been affected by climate change, a representative of the Islamic Emirate should have been invited to the ongoing United Nations climate summit in UAE.

Mullah Janan Sayeq, a spokesman for the State Ministry for Disaster Management, said that if a representative of the Islamic Emirate had been invited to the summit they could have had discussions on finding solutions to the problem in Afghanistan.

“Due to climate change, floods and droughts have caused a lot of human and financial losses to people in recent years. Based on government statistics and United Nations data, nearly 20 million people were severely affected by poverty, natural disasters, droughts, floods and earthquakes last year,” Sayeq said.

He said funds should be provided to countries that play a major role in the fight against climate change. The 28th United Nations conference on climate change started four days ago in Dubai.

UNAMA stressed that Afghanistan cannot go another year without a voice on climate change.

Scholars asked to promote successes



KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister in Administrative Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, met with some scholars and leaders of the Muslim Scholars Association in Kabul.

He asked them to convey the positive aspects of the Islamic Emirate to the world.

The Islamic Emirate has restored stability and order

in the country after decades of war and violence, implemented the Sharia law as the basis of governance and justice, respecting the rights and

duties of Muslims, has taken measures to eliminate corruption, drug cultivation, trafficking, and addiction, which have harmed the society and economy.

The Islamic Emirate has also initiated projects to improve the living conditions of the people, especially the poor and the displaced, and to promote education, health, and infrastructure.

Mawlawi Hanafi also mentioned the challenges faced by the Islamic Emirate, such as the expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, and called

for international cooperation to provide support on this regard.

The scholars expressed their support and appreciation for the Islamic Emirate and stressed the need for unity and solidarity among the Muslim countries.

They also praised the Islamic Emirate’s efforts to rebuild and develop Afghanistan.

The Muslim Scholars Association is a group of prominent Islamic scholars from various countries, who have visited Afghanistan to meet with the officials and the people of the Islamic Emirate.

Khail: Int’l sanctions on Afghan banking sector affects trade



KABUL (TOLONews): The head of the Afghan business council in the UAE, Haji Obaidullah Sader Khail, said that the Islamic Emirate has addressed the problems of the traders but the international sanctions on the Afghan banking sector remain an unabated challenge, which also

affects traders.

Sader Khail said that efforts are underway to solve the banking problems of Afghanistan.

There are problems in the banking sector. The traders have problems and cannot transfer money. This problem has yet to be solved. This is not related

to the government, if it was, it [interim government] would have solved it,” he said. The Islamic Emirate’s spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, said that they are in contact with the international community to address the economic sanctions, particularly in the banking sector.

“We have made a lot of effort in this regard and it is still continuing. The negotiations have been conducted through diplomatic paths with other countries. The negotiations have been conducted with the relevant entities which are influential and they have been asked to remove sanctions on the banking sector and facilitate this,” Mujahid said.

The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said that the banking sector is important to draw foreign investment into the country.

“It is very needed. This problem should be solved. The key gate for investment is the banking sector which should be facilitated, and the money transaction should be solved,” said Khanjan Alokzai, a member of the ACCI.

When the Islamic Emirate came to power, more than \$9.5 billion Afghan assets abroad were frozen in American and European Banks.

Spread of HIV/Aids decreased in Afghanistan



KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Public Health says over the last two years, due to the efforts of the ministry and the cooperation of international institutions, the spread of many diseases, including HIV/Aids, have been eradicated or decreased.

Marking World Aids Day in Kabul on Sunday, health officials said however that the lack of facilities and diagnostic equipment is one of the ministry’s major problems.

“Unfortunately, we do not have diagnostic serv-

ices in all provinces, and if they are available in some provinces, the services are not suitable for patients,” said Sharif Ahmad Ahmadzai, head of the national control program of the health ministry.

Meanwhile, the representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) also attended the meeting and said based on statistics, 12,000 people in the country are HIV positive.

“In Afghanistan, this disease currently exists at a

very low level. Based on the statistics of the United Nations Development Program, more than 12,000 people in Afghanistan are infected with HIV, of which 1,162 adults and children are receiving treatment, and we will cooperate with our Afghan partners,” said a UNDP representative.

Currently, 9.2 million people in the world do not have access to HIV or AIDS treatment, and according to reports, 1,700 people die of this disease every day.

Arab-Afghan women’s solidarity network setup

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) has announced the opening of the “Arab-Afghan Women’s solidarity” in collaboration with the Arab Research Center to strengthen solidarity and support the efforts of Afghan women.

In a press release, the centre announced that the “Arab women’s solidarity with Afghan women” network was established in collaboration with the “Arab Research Center” on Sunday in the capital city of Maraca.

According to the centre’s statement, the Arab Women’s Solidarity with Afghan Women program was launched with approximately 30 women activists from Afghanistan and 7 Arab countries. The Afghanistan Strategic Studies Center aims to address the situation of Afghan women and advocate for their fundamental rights in regional and international forums by establishing the “Arab Women’s Solidarity with Afghan Women” network.

TEHRAN (Khaama Press): The Secretary-General of Iran’s Drug Control Headquarters has rejected the Taliban’s claim about a reduction in poppy cultivation, stating that the statistics indicate an increase in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

Iskander Monini has considered the significant increase in the production of industrial narcotics in Afghanistan as a serious threat to Iran and the world.

Iranian media reported, citing Momini, who stated that the Taliban’s claim regarding the reduction of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is “unacceptable.”

He stated, “We have no clear prospects for reducing drug production in our neighbouring country.”

According to the Ministry’s spokesperson, Hafiz Zia, poppy cultivation has been eliminated compared to 2020. In 2020,

56.2% of Helmand province’s land was under cultivation, but by 2023, it had reduced to just 0.4%.

This comes after an order issued by Hibatullah Akhundzada, the supreme leader of the Taliban, in April of the previous year, which banned the production of poppies in the country.

Meanwhile, according to the UNODC report, poppy cultivation in Afghanistan decreased from 233,000

hectares in 2023 to 10,800 hectares.

Following the dissemination of this report and the Taliban’s claim of a significant reduction in poppy cultivation, Iranian authorities have repeatedly rejected this claim.

Earlier, the spokesperson for Iran’s Drug Control Headquarters stated that the income of Afghan farmers from poppy cultivation and narcotic production had tripled in the past year.

Disabled people complain of economic challenges

KABUL (TOLONews): On International Day of Disabled Persons, some disabled people in the capital have complained about their salaries and lack of work.

Yalda, 8, is a disabled person and her father said that he tried many times to get treatment for his daughter, but no results have been obtained.

“We asked for help for these kinds of people so they can be treated in hospitals and take medicine,” said Musa, father of Yalda.

“With 3,000 Afghani how can they manage their 10-member family expenses, the activities that they had before also stopped for them,” said Mohammad Dawood, a disabled person.

An organization that is active for disabled people called on international organizations to address the challenges of these people.



“We call on the organizations that work in this field to pay attention to this issue,” said Mohammad Arif Ahmadzai, head of the organization.

The Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled

said that the payments for all disabled people is determined by considering the budget of the ministry.

“We are trying to allow all people with disabilities have a 3 percent share in every department, so this

work will provide for them,” said Faisal Khamosh, an official of the ministry.

According to the statistics of the ministry, 180,000 people with disabilities have been registered in the country.

Initiative underway to allocate land for returnees

KABUL (Khaama Press): Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, Nooruddin Azizi, along with the head of the committee for facilitating the return of businessmen, met with Abdul Salam Hanafi, the administrative deputy to the acting prime minister.

The committee’s primary objective is establishing industrial parks and allocating land for returning businessmen and investors.

The committee is contemplating tax exemptions as part of its strategy to entice them.

Abdulsalam Jawad Akhundzada, a Ministry of Industry and Commerce spokesperson, reiterated the committee’s goals.

Abdul Salam Hanafi emphasized the administration will provide facilities for entrepreneurs and investors, encouraging Afghan businesspeople abroad to invest in the country.

Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines’ deputy head, Sakhi Ahmad Payman, highlighted the potential for investments to thrive in Afghanistan, given its consumer market and capacity.

Efforts by the joint chamber of commerce of Afghanistan and Pakistan are focused on relocating Afghan investments from Pakistan to Afghanistan, with hopes for facilitation by the Taliban administration of Afghanistan.

The current investment climate in the country remains unfavourable, primarily attributed to issues such as the absence of legitimacy, political isolation, and an unrecognized administration.

Experts assert that to attract local and foreign investors, the Taliban must prioritize respecting human and women’s rights, promoting education and employment opportunities, and establishing an inclusive government that can inspire trust.

Only once these critical conditions are met will the interest of both local and foreign investors be piqued, potentially leading to increased investment in the country.

KABUL (TOLONews): The officials of the Public Works Department of Pakhtia said that the reconstruction of sections of the Gardez-Kabul Road that were destroyed due to wars and floods, has started at the cost of 22 million Afghanis.

“This road was destroyed as a result of the floods, and this year, the time of its reconstruction has started, and some part of it has been completed, and work is ongoing in some parts and will be completed soon, and the price of the project is 22 million Afghanis,” said Mohammad Rasoul Karimi, an official of the Public Works Department of Pakhtia.

Some passengers and drivers asked the authori-

ties to pay serious attention to the reconstruction of other parts of the road.

“If the road construction is completed, we will be very happy, our problems will decrease, and we will be relieved,” said Karim, a driver. “If they construct the road, it will be good for the people, it will be easy for the sick in the vehicles, we are very grateful to you, and may Allah make the Islamic Emirate construct all the roads,” said Mohammad Khan Zadrin, a passenger.

We call on officials to pay attention to the road because it’s one of the biggest provinces of the country, and the road is very damaged,” said Sabadar, a resident of Pakhtia.

Meanwhile, people also called for the reconstruction



tion of the Gardez - Khost

roads, which are important

importing goods from

Palestinians are running out of places to go

Israel orders mass evacuations as it widens offensive

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip: The Israeli military on Monday renewed its calls for mass evacuations from the southern town of Khan Younis, where tens of thousands of displaced Palestinians have sought refuge in recent weeks, as it widened its ground offensive and bombarded targets across the Gaza Strip.

The expanded offensive, following the collapse of a weeklong cease-fire, is aimed at eliminating Gaza's Hamas rulers, whose Oct. 7 attack into Israel triggered the deadliest Israeli-Palestinian violence in decades. The war has already killed thousands of Palestinians and displaced over three-fourths of the territory's population of 2.3 million Palestinians, who are running out of safe places to go.

Already under mounting pressure from its top ally, the United States, Israel appears to be racing to strike a death blow against Hamas — if that's even possible, given the group's deep roots in Palestinian society — before another cease-fire. But the mounting toll of the fighting, which Palestinian health officials say has killed several hundred civilians since the truce ended on Friday, further increases pressure to return to the negotiating table. It could also render even larger parts of the isolated territory uninhabitable.

The ground offensive has transformed much of the north, including large parts of Gaza City, into a rubble-filled wasteland. Hundreds of thousands of people have sought refuge in the south, which could meet the same fate, and both Israel and neighboring Egypt have refused to accept any refugees.

Residents said they heard airstrikes and explosions in and around Khan Younis overnight and into Monday after the military dropped leaflets warning people to relocate further south toward the border with Egypt. In an Arabic language post on social media early Monday, the military again ordered the evacuation of nearly two dozen neighborhoods in and around Khan Younis, Halima Abdel-Rahman, a widow and mother of four, said she's stopped heeding such orders. She fled her home in October to an area outside Khan Younis, where she stays with relatives.

"The (Israeli) occupation tells you to go to this area, then they bomb it,"

she said by phone on Sunday. "The reality is that no place is safe in Gaza. They kill people in the north. They kill people in the south."

The Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said the death toll in the territory since Oct. 7 has surpassed 15,500, with more than 41,000 wounded. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths, but said 70% of the dead were women and children. A Health Ministry spokesman asserted that hundreds had been killed or wounded since the cease-fire ended early Friday. "The majority of victims are still under the rubble," Ashraf al-Qidra said.

The Palestinian Civil Defense department said an Israeli strike early Monday killed three of its rescuers in Gaza City. The Palestinian Red Crescent rescue service said one of its volunteers was killed and an employee was wounded in a strike on a home in the urban Jabalia refugee camp, also in the north. An Associated Press reporter in the central town of Deir al-Balah heard shooting and the sound of tanks south of the line across which Palestinians from the north were told for weeks to evacuate, but there was no immediate visual confirmation. The military rarely comments on troop deployments.

Hopes for another temporary truce faded after Israel called its negotiators home over the weekend. Hamas said talks on releasing more of the scores of hostages seized by Palestinian militants on Oct. 7 must be tied to a permanent cease-fire. The earlier truce facilitated the release of 105 of the roughly 240 Israeli and foreign hostages taken to Gaza during the Oct. 7 attack, and the release of 240 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Most of those released by both sides were women and children.

The United States, along with Qatar and Egypt, which mediated the earlier cease-fire, say they are working on a longer truce. In the meantime, the US is pressing Israel to avoid more mass displacement and the killing of civilians, a message underscored by Vice President Kamala Harris during a visit to the region. She also said the US would not allow the forced relocation of Palestinians out of Gaza or the occupied West Bank, or the redrawing of Gaza's borders.

But it's unclear how far the Biden administration is willing or able to go in pressing Israel to rein in the offensive, even as the White House faces growing pressure from its allies in Congress. The US has pledged unwavering support to Israel since the Oct. 7 attack, which killed over 1,200 people, mostly civilians, including rushing munitions and other aid to Israel. Israel has rejected US suggestions that control over postwar Gaza be handed over to the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority ahead of renewed efforts to resolve the conflict by establishing a Palestinian state.

Palestinians who used last week's respite to stock up on food and other basics, and to try and bury their dead, are once again struggling to escape Israel's aerial bombardment. Outside a Gaza City hospital on Sunday, a dust-covered boy named Saaed Shehta dropped to his knees and kissed the bloodied body of his little brother Mohammad, one of several bodies laid out after people said their street was hit by airstrikes.

"You bury me with him!" the boy cried. A health worker at Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital said more than 15 children were killed. Israel's military said its fighter jets and helicopters struck targets in Gaza, including "tunnel shafts, command centers and weapons storage facilities." It acknowledged "extensive aerial attacks in the Khan Younis area."

The bodies of 31 people killed in the bombardment of central Gaza were taken to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Hospital in Deir al-Balah on Sunday, said Omar al-Darawi, a hospital administrative employee. Later, hospital workers reported 11 more dead after another airstrike. Israel says it does not target civilians and has taken measures to protect them, including its evacuation orders. In addition to leaflets, the military has used phone calls and radio and TV broadcasts to urge people to move from specific areas.

Israel says it targets Hamas operatives and blames civilian casualties on the militants, accusing them of operating in residential neighborhoods. It claims to have killed thousands of militants, without providing evidence. Israel says at least 81 of its soldiers have been killed. — Arab News



GAZA: Displaced Palestinians take refuge in Nasser Medical Complex as attacks continue in Khan Younis.

Shaukat declared absconder

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A local court of Shangla has declared PTI leader, Shaukat Yousafzai as absconder for avoiding his appearance in cases registered against him under sections 188, 186, 147, 109, 506 and 149.

Shangla police said an FIR was registered against former provincial minister, Shaukat Yousafzai and police were conducting raids for his arrest but the accused has gone underground to avoid his arrest.

Police said some extra sections have been included in the FIR against Shaukat Yousafzai and due to his non-appearance, the court has declared him as absconder. Earlier, the Shangla police reached Peshawar to arrest Shaukat Yousafzai for his possible participation in intra party election of PTI but the former KP minister did not attend the election to avoid his arrest. On police request a local court in Shangla declared Shaukat as absconder.

Fawad's interim bail extended

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Session Court on Monday extended the interim bail of the former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry in violation of the section 144 case. According to the details, Additional and Sessions Judge Tahir Abbas Supra heard the case of the former minister in the session court.

The court approved the exemption from the court request of Fawad Chaudhry and extended his interim bail till December 12, 2023. Meanwhile, the next hearing of the case is scheduled to be held on December 12. Last week, the former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry was granted B-class facilities in jail.

In compliance with a court directive, Chief Commissioner Anwarul Haq appeared before the High Court in a case involving the prison facilities of Fawad Chaudhry. During the court hearing, the Chief Commissioner presented an implementation report on former minister's requests. The report revealed that former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry has been granted B-class facilities in jail, and as per the court's directives, he has been permitted to meet with family and legal representatives.

UAE president defends climate science comments

DUBAI (AFP): The Emirati head of the United Nations climate conference has insisted that he respects climate science after he came under fire over a leaked video in which he questioned the science on fossil fuels.

Amid tough talks over the future of fossil fuels, Sultan al-Jaber, who is also head of UAE national oil company ADNOC, hit out at "repeated attempts to undermine" the work of the COP28 presidency in Dubai. "We're here because we very much believe and respect the science," al-Jaber told a press conference on Monday.

Al-Jaber complained to reporters that "one statement taken out of context with misrepresentation" had received "maximum coverage". Showing how touchy the issue has become, Jim Skeat, the head of the UN body tasked with assessing climate science, appeared alongside al-Jaber to face reporters. He said al-Jaber "has been attentive to the science as we have discussed it and I think has fully understood it".

Al-Jaber said global greenhouse gas emissions must be cut by 43 percent by 2030 to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels — a reduction outlined by Shea's UN Intergovernmental Panel on

Climate Change (IPCC). The Guardian newspaper published a video on Sunday showing al-Jaber having a testy exchange with former Irish president Mary Robinson during an online forum.

"I'm not in any way signing up to a discussion that is alarmist," al-Jaber told the SHE Changes Climate online conference on November 21. "I am factual and I respect the science, and there is no science out there, or no scenario out there, that says that the phase-out of fossil fuels is what's going to achieve 1.5 (degrees)."

The video sparked an outcry among NGOs, which were already outraged by the appointment of an oil company boss to head the crucial climate negotiations. "If the COP28 president is guided by science and 1.5C remains his North Star, he must draw the right conclusions: nothing short of a full and rapid phase-out of fossil fuels will get us there," said Romain Ioualalen, of Oil Change International.

Al-Jaber said on Monday that he has said "over and over that the phase-down and the phase-out of fossil fuel is inevitable". Although he also said it in the video, al-Jaber had previously only talked publicly of the inevitability of a "phase-

down" — a weaker term as it implies that fossil fuels would not completely go away. Adding to the confusion, the website of the COP28 presidency published a summary of the first few days of the talks which said that 22 heads of state and ministers discussed "the phase down of fossil fuels".

It did not mention a phase-out, which many heads of state and government and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for during speeches on Friday and Saturday. A first draft of a COP28 agreement released on Friday included both options — a "phase-down/out" of fossil fuels, which are the largest contributors to climate change. Negotiators must now find common ground during talks due to end on December 12, with an agreement on the fossil fuels seen as key to the success of COP28.

Participants in the talks told the AFP news agency that the European Union, several Latin American countries and island nations back the 1.5C target, which implies a rapid phase-out. Other developed countries, including oil producers such as the United States, Canada, Norway and Australia also defend the 1.5C goal but with less ambitious paths out of fossil fuels.

Four die as, Chennai airport runway flooded

CHENNAI (Reuters): At least four people died, factories closed and the runway of one of India's busiest airports lay submerged due to torrential rain, as two southern states were braced on Monday for the impact of a severe cyclone.

Cyclone Michaung was expected to make landfall on the coast of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh around noon on Tuesday, the country's weather office said, with sustained winds of 90-100 kph (56-62 mph), gusting to 110 kph. Four people had died in rain related incidents in neighbouring Tamil Nadu state, including two killed when a building wall collapsed, the state's disaster management minister and a top official in his department said.

In Tamil Nadu capital Chennai, the state's largest city and a major electronics and manufacturing hub,

cars were swept away as floodwater flowed through the streets, while its airport, one of the busiest in India, shut operations until Tuesday morning. Media showed pictures of grounded planes with their wheels submerged as the rain pelted down.

Taiwan's Foxconn and Pegatron halted Apple iPhone production at their facilities near Chennai due to heavy rains, sources familiar with the matter told Reuters. Several areas of the city were submerged in knee-deep water and there have been power outages since Monday morning, a Reuters witness said, evoking memories of December 2015 when around 290 people died after catastrophic floods.

Authorities in both states were on high alert, evacuating thousands of people living in coastal areas, officials in both states said, with warnings issued to

fishermen not to venture out to sea. Schools, colleges, offices and banks were closed on Monday and Tuesday in at least four coastal districts of Tamil Nadu, including Chennai, because of weather conditions, a government notice said.

Parts of Andhra Pradesh were likely to get more than 200 mm(8 inches) of rain over the next 24 hours, India's weather office said. In Andhra Pradesh, authorities had evacuated nearly 7,000 people in eight coastal districts and were preparing to evacuate a total of 28,000, depending on the cyclone's path and severity, a senior official in the state's disaster management department said.

At least 800 people have been evacuated so far from Bapatla, the coastal town in Andhra Pradesh where the cyclone is expected to make landfall on Tuesday, P Ranjit Basha, district collector of Bapatla, said.

ANP informs CEC about political transfers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Seasoned politician and ANP leader Mian Iftikhar Hussain on Monday said they had informed Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja about the repeated code of conduct violations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, saying any continuation of the ongoing practices would be considered as pre-poll rigging.

He was talking to reporters after a meeting with the chief election commissioner (CEC) on a day which also saw the MQM presenting their case about alleged injustices in the new delimitations and the support being extending to the PPP by the caretaker government in Sindh. Hussain said his party had especially pointed to the transfer and posting of district administration officers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which, according to him, were politically-motivated and being carried out under a special agenda.

The deputy commissioners were pressing politicians for joining the particular parties to get favourable transfers and postings, he mentioned. Demanding posting of impartial officials, he said the ANP wanted free and fair polls according the schedule announced by the ECP (Election Commission of Pakistan).

US and EU struggle to agree on funding for Ukraine

WASHINGTON: Uncertainty is growing over Western backing for Ukraine amid Russia's intensifying campaign to knock out the country's energy infrastructure. The White House has warned the United States Congress that funds designated for providing aid to Ukraine would run out by the end of the year, in a letter made public on Monday. The European Union is also facing difficulties in agreeing on a new 50 billion euro (\$54bn) lifeline for Kyiv.

"I want to be clear: without congressional action, by the end of the year we will run out of resources to procure more weapons and equipment for Ukraine," the director of the US Office of Management and Budget, Shalanda Young, wrote in a letter to House Speaker Mike Johnson.

In the face of an upcoming harsh winter of intensifying Russian assaults on civilian infrastructure, the lack of funding could mean defeat for Ukraine, warned the budget director. "If Ukraine's economy collapses, they will not be able to keep fighting, full stop," she wrote. The US narrowly averted a government shutdown last month, with a last-minute bill keeping federal agencies funded through the new year, but leaving out key foreign aid initiatives.

The US, Ukraine's biggest single-country donor, has sent more than \$40bn in aid since Russia's invasion in February 2022. In October, US President Joe Biden asked Congress to approve \$105bn in national security funding, which would include support for Ukraine. But right-wing congressional Republicans have expressed increasing scepticism towards approving more funds for Ukraine and some \$61bn in additional aid funds are now being held up by the US Congress. "There is no magical pot of funding available to meet this moment. We are out of money — and nearly out of time," Young wrote, urging Congress to act "now". At the same time, the EU is struggling to pass its own funding package, which would be part of the bloc's future joint budget. Hungary has

led arguments against the package. Prime Minister Viktor Orban has ploughed a pro-Russian furrow since Moscow's invasion. He is also thought to be hoping to use his threat to block the plan to try to unfreeze 22 billion euros (\$24bn) in funding for Budapest that Brussels is holding due to rule-of-law issues.

The victory of the far-right in the recent Netherlands election and fiscal challenges in Germany are also complicating negotiations over the budget, the Financial Times reported on Sunday. The delay is endangering crucial pledges to Kyiv made months ago. A budget agreement would be "very, very difficult", a senior official said. The 50 billion euro (\$54bn) instrument proposed is designed to keep Kyiv solvent to 2027. A failure to approve long-term funding, as well as a separate 20 billion euro (\$22bn) facility for weapons purchases, would hit Kyiv hard as the war grinds on. Olha Stefanishyna, Ukraine's deputy prime minister for European and Euro-Atlantic integration, last week described the EU summit as an "existential moment" for her country. The difficulties in securing the funds in Washington and Brussels have raised concerns in Kyiv that Western backers are experiencing "fatigue" with the drawn-out battle as fighting on the front line becomes bogged down in what some see as a "stalemate".

As Russia continues its campaign targeting civilians and infrastructure in indiscriminate bombings and drone attacks, Ukraine announced a 450 million euro (\$489m) expansion of a wind farm in its Mykolaiv region on Monday at the United Nations COP28 climate talks. Ukrainian officials highlighted how its turbines would be spread far enough apart to survive any Russian missile attacks. Also speaking at the climate summit, US Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources Geoffrey R Pyatt denounced Russia's targeting of energy infrastructure in the war, saying that Russian President Vladimir Putin "has made energy one of his weapons". — Aljazeera

CPEC journey to move forward: PM

(Continued from Page 1)

He said being all-weather strategic partners, Pakistan and China supported each other in development.

He told the gathering the projects would help improve the living standards of the locals. He reiterated that China would continue working with Pakistan to complete the projects like Gwadar Airport, and other CPEC projects. He said the Gwadar Port would play a greater role in high-quality development of CPEC and China would fully support Pakistan in the development of Gwadar.

Meanwhile, in an interview with Gulf Today, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is Pakistan's largest trading partner in the Middle East North Africa region with an average annual trade of \$9 billion and urged the UAE investors to explore Pakistani market for new avenues.

He said Pakistan is planning a comprehensive investment promotion strategy in major countries including the United Arab Emirates (UAE). PM Kakar said Pakistan's exports to the

UAE include agriculture products, textiles and manpower, while the UAE exports petroleum, petrochemical products and hi-tech equipment to Pakistan.

The two countries also exchange services with each other. Information Technology, Artificial Intelligence and Financial-technology are new areas of collaboration with much greater potential. Pakistan-UAE bilateral trade during 2022-23 amounted to \$9 billion, he said. He expressed satisfaction that Pakistan's exports to UAE surged to \$1.4 billion in fiscal year 2022-23, highest in the last five years.

On prospects of UAE's investment in Pakistan, he said attracting foreign investment in all sectors of Pakistan's economy was the government's top priority. "Pakistan's Investment Policy has been designed to provide a comprehensive framework for creating a conducive business environment for attraction of Foreign Direct Investment from all parts of the world including the UAE," he said.

Currently, he said, there are over 1,000 multinational companies profitably operating in Pakistan, and for

many, Pakistan is the most profitable part of their franchise. Foreign companies, individuals, multinational corporations can own 100 per cent shares in locally incorporated or unincorporated firms, he added.

Stressing enhanced investment cooperation, the prime minister said the two countries could explore the areas such as agriculture, energy, mining, information technology, logistics and defence. PM Kakar mentioned that in order to revive economy, the government recently established the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) to generate new and attractive investment opportunities from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in priority sectors such as agriculture, mining, IT manufacturing and defence.

He mentioned the Pakistan Investment Road Show, organised by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in Dubai, which attracted a large number of global businessmen and investors. He said utilising the platform, 30 Pakistani firms presented their project proposals and growth strategies encompassing various domains including

Agriculture, IT and energy.

H said Pakistan and the UAE enjoy time-tested fraternal relations rooted deep in common faith, shared history and people to people contacts. "We would do our best to further strengthen and diversify our brotherly ties by focusing on trade, investment and people-to-people contacts," he said. On Conference of Parties (COP28), he said Pakistan wholeheartedly appreciates the efforts of the UAE government in hosting the COP28 in Dubai.

Pakistan's delegation at COP28, he said, would highlight the proactive actions the government was taking towards climate change. The Pakistani contingent would also contribute towards deliberations, negotiations on establishing a Loss and Damage mechanism, agreeing on a New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG), shaping the Framework for Global Goal on Adaptation and towards the streams on mitigation, global stocktake and Enhanced Transparency Framework. "Pakistan holds the belief that with collective action based on Common but Differentiated Responsibilities

and Respective Capabilities (CBDR) we can make a common ground," he said. He stressed adopting a framework based on fast track energy transition and an agreement on climate finance goal. The developing countries require around \$2.4 trillion in annual investment by 2030 focusing on adaptation, resilience, mitigating loss and damage, he added. About the 1.8 million overseas Pakistanis in the UAE, he said their valuable contribution through remittances significantly supports the Pakistani economy.

He said since 1971, more than 4.2 million intending emigrants were registered for overseas employment in the UAE and their contribution had been instrumental in maintaining economic stability of both countries. PM Kakar said the UAE stands as the second-highest destination following Saudi Arabia from where Pakistan receives remittances. Over the past five years, Pakistan has received a substantial remittance amount of \$28.4 billion from the UAE.

He said Pakistani workers' remittances inflow of \$ 8.8 billion has been recorded during the first four months of Financial Year 2023-24; out of this

an amount of \$1,497.6 million has been received as remittances from the UAE. He mentioned that to facilitate overseas Pakistanis back home, the Government of Pakistan offered various incentives such as National Remittance Loyalty Programme (NRLP), Roshan Digital Account, Sohni Dharti Remittance etc. to increase the volume of remittances and to promote legal channels of sending remittances back.

Also, the provision of an active bank account has been made mandatory for registration of foreign employment agreement at Protector of Emigrant offices so that emigrants may remit their earnings to the given accounts. In this regard, an account opening facility is being provided at each Protector Office. The prime minister said recently, the e-Protector registration has also been launched to facilitate the intending emigrants on Direct Employment Visa. He said Overseas Pakistanis Foundation was providing access to education and healthcare services for the families of overseas Pakistanis with the aim of improving the overall well-being of those who have migrated.