

Fawad's remand extended
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Accountability Court on Tuesday extended the physical remand of Fawad Chaudhry for allegedly involved in financial irregularities in construction projects near Jhelum. The Duty Judge Shahrukh Arjumand of the Accountability Court presided over the hearing, where the NAB sought an extension in the physical remand of Fawad Chaudhry for 10 days.



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Blinken tells Israel to avoid more harm

US Secretary of State brings Arab message to Israel: Keep hope of Palestinian state alive

TEL AVIV: United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken has urged Israel to avoid further civilian harm in its war on Gaza and to seek a path towards the creation of a Palestinian state as a way to resolve the long-running wider conflict.

In a Tel Aviv meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday, Blinken "stressed the importance of avoiding further civilian harm and protecting civilian infrastructure in Gaza", State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said. He reaffirmed US "support for Israel's right to prevent the terrorist attacks of October 7 from being repeated", Miller added, and "reiterated the need to ensure lasting, sustainable peace for Israel and the region, including by the realisation of a Palestinian state".

The top US diplomat is on his fourth visit to the Middle East since the war broke out on October 7 when Hamas launched an attack on southern Israel that killed 1,139 people, according to Israeli authorities. Israel responded with a devastating bombardment and a ground invasion of Gaza that has destroyed much of the territory and killed more than 23,200 people, mostly women and children, according to Palestinian officials.

The secretary of state voiced hope that, after the war, Israel could push on with its efforts towards regional integration following its US-brokered normalisation deals with the United Arab Emirates and other states. "I think there actually are real opportunities there, but we have to get through this very challenging moment," Blinken said after meeting Foreign Minister Israel Katz.

In Riyadh, he said countries in the

region wanted integration with Israel but only if plans to normalise relations included a "practical pathway" to a future Palestinian state. Blinken was to meet with families of captives taken by Hamas and discuss the "relentless efforts" to bring them back. Several dozen protesters gathered outside the hotel where he was having meetings and called for a ceasefire to secure the release of the captives.

Israel said that of about 240 people seized by Palestinian armed groups on October 7, 132 are still being held in Gaza and 25 have died in captivity. Blinken travelled to Turkey, Greece, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates before reaching Israel and the occupied West Bank. In Jordan on Friday, Blinken noted "real concern" over the Israel-Lebanon border, where the Israeli army and Hezbollah are trading fire and stoking fears of a wider regional conflagration.

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Israel's defence minister was quoted as saying in a government statement that increasing pressure on Iran was "critical" as it could prevent a regional escalation as war grinds on in Gaza. "An increase in the pressure placed on Iran is critical and may prevent regional escalation in additional arenas," Gallant was quoted as saying. — Aljazeera

PTI symbol stripping case; PHC adjourns hearing

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprised of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Syed Arshad Ali adjourned hearing till 9.00am today (on Wednesday) in plea against Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) decision to declare PTI intra-party polls null and void as well as stripping it bat as electoral symbol, on Tuesday.

On December 26, the high court announced the verdict on Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI's) petition challenging the ECP's verdict, which had stripped PTI of using the 'bat' symbol. During the hearing Qazi Jawad and Naveed Akhtar advocates on behalf PTI appeared before court Sikandar Bashir represent-

ed ECP today. "Can the ECP approach the court against the high court's ruling?" questioned PTI's lawyer. He further said that the PTI wants the ECP to conduct free and fair elections.

It worthy to mention that ECP had filed a review petition in the high court against its December 26 decision which had suspended the ECP's order and restored the party's 'bat' symbol till a final decision on the matter.

The ECP, in its order, had declared PTI's intra-party polls "illegal" and seized its election symbol of the 'bat' symbol. Following its order, the PTI approached the PHC seeking restoration of its party symbol ahead of the general elections slated for February 8. In its petition,

the ECP then requested the court to review the PTI's intra-party elections and its decision related to the election symbol. PHC's divisional bench adjourned furthering till today 9.00am (on Wednesday) after completion of PTI's lawyers' arguments while ECP counsel will argue the plea today.

Meanwhile, PHC Election Tribunals had accepted eight appeals of PTI's candidates from different constituencies by revoking Returning Officers' decisions. PTI's NA31 candidate Shandana Gulzar along with Shehryar Afridi and others had filed appeals against Returning Officers' decisions for rejecting their nomination papers for general election scheduled on 8th February 2024.

Imran, Bushra indicted in Toshakhana case

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: An accountability court indicted on Tuesday PTI founder Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana reference.

Accountability Court Judge Muhammad Bashir announced the decision during a hearing in the case today which was conducted in Adiala jail. NAB Deputy Prosecutor General Sardar Muzaffar Abbasi and Amjad Pervaz, Special Prosecutors Irfan Bhola, Sohail Arif and others appeared in the court. Imran Khan and his wife have been named in the list of accused for possessing gifts received from international dignitaries, which they were obligated to deposit in the Toshakhana.

The reference, which alleges that Imran failed to share details of the gifts he retained from the Toshakhana (during his time as the prime minister) was filed by lawmakers from the ruling coalition last year. The Toshakhana issue became a major sticking point in national politics after the Election Commission of Pakistan disqualified the PTI chief for making "false statements and incorrect declaration" last month.

The judgement added that the former premier was found to be indulged in cor-

PTI founder arrested in GHQ attack case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has been arrested in GHQ attack case. The R A Bazaar Police Station has requested physical remand from the court.

The proceedings have started with a video link in jail, and all 12 cases with the relevant records including the attack on GHQ. The development took place a day after a Special Court under the Official Secrets Act had issued an order for the release of PTI founder Imran Khan. Judge Abul Hasanat Zulqarnain had issued the order, observing that the bail for PTI's founder had been approved. Since Imran Khan is not nominated in any other case, he should be released. Bail has been approved in the cipher case, but due to arrests in the Toshakhana case and the £190 million case, PTI's founder will remain in jail.

Meanwhile, Special Anti-Terrorism Court on Tuesday granted two-day physical remand of founder of PTI to the police in 12 cases relating May 9 incidents. Judge of Special ATC Rawalpindi, Justice Malik Ijaz Asif gave a decision whereby police of all stations would be able to interrogate PTI founder in Adiala Jail. The special court ordered the police to submit complete investigation report about the cases on Jan 11 and will again hear the cases at 10 am on the day at Adiala Jail.

rupt practices under sections 167 and 173 of the constitution. "A criminal proceeding will be initiated against him over filing a false statement." "His disqualification under Article 63, 1(P) has been for his current parliament membership", the ECP said in its 36-page detailed judgment of the reference.

"The amount in his bank account was around half of

the value of the state gifts. Imran Khan was bound to declare the cash and bank details in his returns but he didn't declare it," ECP decision read. "Imran Khan being declared disqualified and unseated from his National Assembly seat," the ECP said, adding: "He has been disqualified under Article 63, 1(P), over submitting a false statement and declaration".

Missing Persons Commission submits report

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Missing Persons Commission has diligently complied with a court order, submitting detailed information to the Attorney General on Tuesday in Islamabad.

According to the report, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) recorded the highest number of missing persons cases, totaling 3,485. The disappearances from KP were attributed to factors such as mischief and drone attacks. Additionally, Balochistan reported 2,752 cases of enforced disappearance, with instances of individuals leaving the country without informing their families during war situations.

The report disclosed that 744 production orders were issued to locate missing persons, but only 52 were successfully implemented. Alarmingly, 692 production orders issued by the commission remained unimplemented by relevant authorities. Police and sensitive institutions submitted 182 requests to review production orders, while 503 unexecuted orders pertain to cases from KP.

From March 2011 to December 2023, 4,413 missing persons returned home, while 994 individuals remain detained in various centers, and 644 are incarcerated in different prisons across the country. Tragically, the report revealed the discovery of 261 missing persons' bodies during the same period.

The commission dismissed 1,477 cases as non-forced disappearances, including instances of kidnapping for ransom, personal disputes, or spontaneous disappearances. Pending cases in the commission involve 260 from Punjab, 163 from Sindh, 1,336 from KP, 468 from Balochistan, 55 from Islamabad, and 15 from Azad Kashmir.

A total of 35 officers and employees contribute to the Missing Persons Commission's efforts, according to the report. The Missing Persons Commission leadership draws significant salaries, with head Javed Iqbal receiving 674 thousand, member Zia Pervaiz 829 thousand, Amanullah Khan 1.139 million, and Sharif Work 263 thousand monthly. Their compensation raises questions about resource allocation within the commission, particularly given the stark financial disparities among members.

MQM, PML-N agree over seat-adjustment

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The MQM-Pakistan and the PML-N have agreed over seat adjustment on Karachi's seats for the general election next month. The sources sharing details of the meeting between the committees of two parties said that the PML-N will field its candidates on the national and provincial assemblies' seats of Karachi in NA-229 and NA-230. The MQM-P will field its candidates on NA-231 and its provincial constituencies.

Both parties decided that the PML-N will field its candidate in national assembly constituency of NA-239 in Karachi South district. The issue of seat adjustment on the NA-242 constituency of Keamari district is pending and it will be decided in next 48 hours, sources said. PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and MQM leader Mustafa Kamal are the candidates from NA-242.

People's Party has also fielded former MNA Qadir Khan Mandokhel in NA-242 constituency. According to sources, two allied parties have also agreed that the PML-N candidates will contest on the National Assembly seats of Mirpur Khas, Nawabshah and Sukkur districts, while the MQM will field its candidates on provincial assembly seats in these districts.



ISLAMABAD: UNICEF's Representative in Pakistan Abdullah Fadil called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

ECP has right to decide on delaying polls: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday warned that with a renewed determination and defence capability, Pakistan would befittingly respond if India resorted to any 2019-like aggression, ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

"Pakistan will exactly do the same as it did in 2019. We will hit their planes. We will respond in the same coin... Neither our bullets nor determination are old. Our bullets are new and our determination is quite renewed and fresh," the prime minister said in the podcast with a digital media channel.

He said that no one should be delusional about Pakistan's response as it had an entire defence mechanism in place to protect its people. He viewed that till the resolution of the Kashmir dispute, the potential for conflict would continue to exist and anything could trigger any sort of exchange.

Coming to the upcoming general elections in Pakistan, he said the threat of terrorism existed especially in the southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and certain areas of Balochistan, posing significant vulnerabilities to candidates and their campaigns. However, the situation had not reached a level to question the legitimacy of the entire electoral process.

He reiterated the government's resolve to respond to any threat, regardless of whether there were elections in the country or not. Asked about the Senate resolution passed recently calling for the postponement of the elections, the prime minister

said, "I do not see any legal implications as the Senate resolution is not mandatory."

He said the government had opposed the resolution in the House, though, as per requirement, it would submit a report on the matter. To a question, he said the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was the right forum to decide on delaying the polls in certain constituencies considering the security situation. Regarding grievances and concerns of some candidates and political parties, Prime Minister Kakar said the relevant forums of ECP and judiciary were there to address the situation.

"Our role is not to act as a judiciary or ROs (returning officers), obstructing or constructing opportunities for someone. If someone feels there is unfairness, the appropriate forums are available," he remarked. Discussing the situation in Balochistan, he mentioned the role of militant groups such as BLA, BRA, and BLF which were considered terrorists even outside Pakistan. He opposed some segments of the society attributing their actions to underdevelopment and lack of state investment.

Asked about the precondition for dialogue, the prime minister referred to the abandonment of violence by militant groups and reiterated that being a nation of 240 million, Pakistan could not surrender to a few thousand individuals. Discussing the terrorist activities of TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan) and the Afghan government's response to Pakistan's

reaction following the recent terrorist attack in D I Khan, he said communication with them was going on and some behavioral changes had been observed on the other side.

He reiterated that having sacrificed around 90,000 lives, Pakistan's resolve to fight terrorism was unwavering without seeking any foreign support. To a question about the repatriation of illegal foreign nationals, PM Kakar said the decision was widely supported by the majority of Pakistanis as non-documented aliens had no right to stay.

He said the factors such as terrorism, organized crime, non-contribution to the economy, and the impact on economic health prompted action from the government. Highlighting the government's achievements on the economic front, he mentioned the reforms in the Federal Board of Revenue, achieving remarkable tax receivable targets and reducing government expenditure.

He said under the Special Investment Facilitation Council, Pakistan was attracting foreign investments from multiple countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. He said the SIFC was focused on removing the bureaucratic hurdles for foreign investment, which also encouraged domestic investors to benefit from the opportunity and invest in key areas of agriculture, IT (information technology), mining, human resource training, energy and road

(Continued on Back Page)

PHC issues notice to Aimal over contempt petition

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan ordered Awami National Party (ANP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Aimal Wali Khan for appearance tomorrow (Thursday) in Contempt of Court (CoC) for using abusive rhetoric against judiciary during an interview, on Tuesday.

The contempt of court plea filed by Fazal Muhammad Khan against ANP provincial president interview while arguing that the rhetoric portraying to subdue independence of judiciary and requested for CoC proceedings.

Barrister Sarwar Muzaffar Shah argued that Aimal Wali Khan claimed in an interview that he (ANP provincial president) knows Chief Justice PHC (Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan) is co-vil-



lager of former Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser. He added that ANP president also claimed that CJ PHC also served Malgary Wakeelan as member.

In the meantime, Chief Justice PHC Justice Ibrahim Khan observed that what is Malgary Wakeelan? The counsel informed that it is ANP lawyers forum, however Chief Justice remarked that then they are threatening their workers if I had served his party? Mr. Advocate General What is this, CJ inquired.

Advocate General

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javed argued that You are serving as Judge from 31 years. Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan observe may he (ANP president Aimal Wali Khan) wasn't born at that time.

Barrister Muzaffar Shah argued that Aimal Wali also claimed that CJ PHC will start legal practice after retirement, however, Justice Ibrahim Khan observe it is making a fun against lawyers and added that he isn't joining politics after retirement.

PHC's Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan ordered ANP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Aimal Wali Khan for appearance before court and adjourned further hearing till 11th January. It is worthy to mention that the petitioner had also filed supplementary plea for hearing for initiation of CoC proceedings against ANP president Aimal Wali Khan.

Pakistan, KSA and Turkiye meeting held

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The second meeting of Pakistan, KSA and Turkiye Trilateral Defence Collaboration was held at GHQ, Rawalpindi on 8 January 2024. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss prospective collaboration in defence equipment technologies including research & development.

The three sides reaffirmed the importance of combining the intellectual, technical, financial and

human resource of the three friendly nations towards the achievement of shared objectives and attainment of self sufficiency in the defence domain.

Acknowledging the historical brotherly relations, the three sides reiterated the strategic intent to increase the scope of trilateral cooperation and the need to enhance the pace of collaboration in pursuit of common goals. Three sides agreed to convene next meeting on

Trilateral Defence Industrial Collaboration during World Defence Show at Riyadh, KSA during February 2024.

Meanwhile, the third meeting of Pakistan-KSA Defence Collaboration was held at GHQ, Rawalpindi on 8 January 2024. The forum underscored the significance of historical relations between the two brotherly states. Participants discussed issues of bilateral interest and evolving security environment.

Arrest warrants for Moonis

LAHORE (INP): A court on Tuesday issued non-bailable arrest warrants for Ch Moonis Elahi, a former federal minister and son of PTI President Ch Pervaiz Elahi, in a forgery case, reported. In his application filed in the court of judicial magistrate Imran Abid, the Anti-Corruption Establishment, Punjab, while seeking the suspect's warrants, said that a case had been registered against him under sections 420, 471, 467, 674, 109 and 468.



Police raid unveils fake honey production

KARACHI (APP): A fake honey factory in Naya Mohalla, Pak Colony, was raided by the Pak Colony police station of Keamari District. SSP Keamari Arif Aslam Rao confirmed the arrest of two suspects involved in the production of counterfeit honey, identified as Rafiullah and Javed Iqbal.

The operation led to the seizure of 74 kg of harmful fake honey, along with 9 kg of chemicals and various equipment used in its production. The arrested individuals have been charged, and ongoing investigations are being conducted.

PU awards 10 PhD degrees

LAHORE (APP): Punjab University (PU) has awarded PhD degrees to ten scholars in different subjects after approval of their thesis. According to a spokesperson for the university, Muhammad Farhan Khan S/o Ghulam Muhammad Khan was awarded degree in the subject of International Relations, Asma Ashraf D/o Muhammad Ashraf in the subject of Botany, Hafiz Arshid Iqbal S/o Chaudhry Khizar Hayat in the subject of Islamic Studies, Fatima Ishrat D/o Ata Ullah in the subject of Botany, Zahid Javed S/o Noker Hussain in the subject of Statistics, Maira Saleem D/o Muhammad Saleem Rana in the subject of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, Mobina Manzoor D/o Ch. Muhammad Manzoor in the subject of Pharmacy (Pharmaceutics), Muhammad Afzal S/o Muhammad Iqbal in the subject of Chemistry, Mudassar Hussain S/o Muhammad Afzal Hussain in the subject of Communication Studies and Shehar Bano D/o Akhtar Ali was awarded the PhD degree in the subject of Microbiology & Molecular Genetics.

SMIU VC visits university's plot at Hawks Bay

KARACHI (APP): The Vice Chancellor Sindh Madressatul Islam University (SMIU) Dr Mujeeb Sahrai on Tuesday said that SMIU's Hawks Bay campus will be established on the plot spread over ten acres of land, which was given to SMIU by the government of Sindh for education purpose.

He said this on Tuesday during the visit to the SMIU's Plot located in Hawks Bay near the Hawks Bay Scheme 42, Benazir Town and Sahafi Colony. The Vice Chancellor said SMIU wants to start construction work of its additional Hawks Bay campus soon but its development is related to the development of the nearby societies, as the proposed campus mostly would attract students of the nearby areas. During the visit Deans of SMIU Dr Aftab Ahmed Shaikh, Dr Jamsheed Adil Halepoto and Dr Zahid Ali Channar, Advisor to the Vice Chancellor Dr Abdul Hafeez Khan, Registrar Ghulam Mustafa Shaikh, Additional Director Planning & Development Uzma Batool, Additional Registrar Qasim Ali were accompanied the vice chancellor.

CM inaugurates desilting drive after 10 years gap

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the desilting campaign from the Lahore canal near Muslim Town Morr for removing silt from 17000 km long canals across the province. Provincial ministers SM Tanveer, Amir Mir, Azfar Ali Nasir, commissioner Lahore, secretary irrigation, CCPO and others were also present.

The CM removed silt through crane, stating that the first phase would continue till January 31, while embankments of 5000 km long canals would be repaired in the second phase, spanning over two months. Water would be available to 3 to 4 lakh acres of land after the desilting of canals; he added and further stated that the desilting drive has been launched after a long gap. Talking to the media, he said that the silt would be removed from 17000 km long canals in the first phase as services of LIMS (Laboratory Information Management System) have been acquired for round-the-clock monitoring. For this purpose, concerned staff, DCs and commissioners have also been trained through LIMS as this drive would be continuously monitored through satellite images and NESPAK would also monitor it as a third party, he added.

CM Naqvi mentioned that complaints have been received about the mixing of drainage water in the Lahore canal at some points, adding that a committee comprising MD WASA and DC would probe the matter, as it could not be allowed. He appealed to the citizens to avoid polluting the canal as the government could not do everything all alone. Meanwhile, the CM also mentioned that 26000 electric bikes and e-rickshaws have been given without interest and no building design was being approved without allocating parking space.

CM launches program to provide 26k electric bikes, rickshaws without interest: In a historic move, Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi launched a groundbreaking program, providing 26 thousand electric bikes and electric rickshaws on favorable terms without interest - a first in Pakistan's history.

Mohsin Naqvi extended a special invitation to Mr. Zhao Shiren, Consul General of China, and Ms. Kirstin K. Hawkins, Consul General of America, personally expressing gratitude for their attendance.

During the event, the chief minister took keen interest in the exhibition of electric bikes and rickshaws, commending their quality. He even rode in an electric rickshaw and experienced firsthand the showcased electric vehicles.

Describing the interest-free initiative as the "first drop of rain", Mohsin Naqvi emphasized the importance of transitioning towards electric vehicles to provide a clean environment for the new generation and extend lives by a decade. He applauded the Bank of Punjab for its support in facilitating the interest-free distribution of electric motorbikes and rickshaws.

The chief minister inspected the displayed electric motorbikes, rickshaws, and vehicles, inquiring about their cost and durability. Provincial Transport Minister Ibrahim Hasan Murad lauded Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi's unwavering commitment to public service, citing the exceptional dedication of the Chief Minister and his cabinet, who refrain from receiving benefits or salaries. Mohsin Naqvi personally covers the expenses of his office. Consul General of China Mr. Zhao Shiren and Consul General of America Kirstin K. Hawkins congratulated Mohsin Naqvi for initiating the environmentally friendly program of providing electric bikes and electric rickshaws.

Departmental action to be taken against those who show negligence, says CTO

F. P Report

PESHAWAR: City Traffic Police Peshawar organized a prize distribution ceremony at Traffic Headquarters Gulbahar in which Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Zahidullah, traffic officers and officials participated.

Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Zahidullah distributed certificates and cash to the officials for their good performance. During the ceremony, Chief Traffic Officer appreciated the performance of the traffic staff and said that the officers and personnel of City Traffic Police Peshawar performed their duties by following the policy of first salam then kalam and to ensure the implementation

of traffic rules.

He further said that all the officers and officials should play their role with full effort to raise awareness about traffic flow and road safety among the citizens.

In the same way, those who show better performance will be encouraged, while disciplinary action will be taken against those who are negligent.

He directed the traffic officials and officials to continue the uninterrupted operation against those who park vehicles in the nine parking zones in the city and encroachment mafia and that no one should be lenient. He said that departmental action will be taken against those who show negligence.

PHOTA organizes awareness seminar

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Prof. Dr. Javed Akram participated as special guest in the awareness seminar organized by Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority (PHOTA) at a local hotel on Tuesday.

Secretary Auqaf Syed Tahir Raza Bukhari, King Edward Medical University (KEMU) Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof. Dr. Mehmood Ayaz, Fatima Jinnah Medical University (FJMU) VC Prof. Dr. Khalid Masood Gondal, Amirud Din Medical College's Principal Prof. Dr. Sardar Al-Farid Zafar, PHOTA Director General Prof. Dr. Shehzad Anwar, Punjab Institute of Neuro Sciences (PINS) MS Prof. Dr. Jodai Saleem, Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI) Dean Professor Dr. Faisal Saud Dar and a number of other scholars attended the seminar.

Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Prof. Dr. Javed Akram said that Pakistan is facing many problems in the health sector. "We have to adopt a better lifestyle to lead a better life. We are currently paying a

heavy price for the habit of eating fast food." He added that PKLI is an exemplary institution. Recently, three human lives have been saved at the Institute. Indiscriminate action is being taken against the elements involved in the heinous business of illegal transplantation of human organs, he added. "I have already announced to donate all my organs. It is a great charity to save someone's life by donating my organs. According to SOPs, human organs are procured during brain death," he disclosed.

Caretaker Provincial Minister appealed to the scholars to spread awareness about human organ donation in the society. He congratulated the administration for organizing the awareness seminar. The FJMU VC Prof. Dr. Khalid Masood Gondal said that quacks are playing with human lives. "I am grateful to the management for inviting me to the seminar," he added. KEMU VC Prof. Dr. Mahmood Ayaz said that Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority is doing very well.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister KPK Justice (R) Arshad Hussain Shah called on by a delegation of the notables of Tehsil Khanpur.

Maritime security Exercise SEA GUARD-24 commences at Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Opening Brief of Exercise SEA GUARD-24 was held at Karachi. Commander Coast Vice Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

The exercise involves representation of various ministries, departments and organizations having linkages with maritime sector like Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Ministry of Livestock and Fishing Sindh, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Narcotics Control, private entities and NGOs to support multifaceted challenges of Maritime arena both from traditional and non-traditional threats.

Leadership of various organizations attended the session which includes Pakistan National Shipping Corporation, Anti-Narcotics Force, Pakistan Coast Guards, PMSA, KPT, Port QASIM, BYCO Petroleum, in addition to

other prominent figures from private sector and fishing community.

Exercise Sea Guard aims to synergize efforts of stakeholders while remaining within their legal framework through a common pedestal of Joint Maritime Information Coordination Centre (JMICC) to ensure security of Maritime Zones of Pakistan. During the opening brief participants were briefed about working methodology and contributions of

JMICC to ensure maritime safety and security along our Coastline. Commander Coast Vice Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz applauded the efforts of all stakeholders in their contribution for a safer Maritime environment. The exercise includes conduct of various practical scenario based exercises at sea along with Table Top Discussions to improve existing mechanism of security. Exercise will conclude with a debrief session on 18 Jan 24.



CM Baqar lays foundation stone of interchange to link M9- N5 roads

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (R) Maqbool Baqar speaking at the stone-laying ceremony of the M9-N5 Link Road interchange in Kathore said that the Link Road had been completed, but it needed to be integrated with the Motorway to make it fully operational for which he laid the foundation.

The ceremony of the M9—N5 Link Rod interchange was held at Kathore on Tuesday, a communique said. The ceremony was attended by Information Minister Muhammad Ahmed Shah, Secretary Works Muhammad Nawaz Sohoo, DG PPP Unit Asad Zamin, Director PPP Unit Sajjad Gilal, PD M9-N5 Link Road Mr Muhammad Ali Memon, SE Works Khurram Mughal. He said that he had laid the foundation of interchange on the M9. He added that the intersection to bridge the final

gap in the traffic flow originating from Karachi's industrial arteries through the M9-N5 Link Road Project, extending its reach upcountry.

The CM said that with the culmination of the project, traffic would seamlessly navigate to the M9, streamlining the transportation network. He said that the road leading to this interchange M9-N5 Link Road Project was constructed in record time, and the facility was ready. "With the integration of this missing link, the whole project will be fully operational, effectively realizing the project's objectives," he said. The M9-N5 link road stands as a milestone as the first Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in Pakistan, awarded solely based on traffic revenue, without any equity, Minimum Revenue Guarantee, or any form of financial support from the provincial government. The

Concessionaire for the M9-N5 Link Road Project not only financed the project independently but also committed to managing operations and maintenance for the next 23 years using its resources, additionally, the Sindh government would reap the benefits of traffic revenue throughout this period.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Mr. Zeeshan Nawaz s/o Rab Nawaz, resident of House No. 555, Sector No.E2, Phase I, Hayat Abad Peshawar, currently residing in Tehsil and District Hangu owner of the property in shape of residential Plot No.3594, (05 Maria) , Registration No.5419 located in Hangu Town Ship (P.H.A) District Hangu , Khyber Pakhtunkhwa do appoint Mr. Waqas Ali Khan S/o Muhammad Ali Khan , Resident of Garhi Allah yar Khan , Shekot, Tehsil and District Kohat as the general Authority / Attorney . If anyone has objection of the transfer of the said / above mentioned plot may submit his objection to the PHA office within 15 days of this advertisement.

Assistant Director / Manager (PHA,RFC) Housing Department ATI Campus , University Road Peshawar 091-9224289.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Mr. Afaque Ahmed Khan s/o Ashfaq Ahmed, currently residing in House No.4, Sector No.6, Phase I, K.D.A Kohat ,owner of the property in shape of residential Plot No.262, (03 Maria) , Registration No.5755 located in Hangu Town Ship (P.H.A) District Hangu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa do appoint Mr. Waqas Ali Khan S/o Muhammad Ali Khan , Resident of Garhi Allah yar Khan , Shekot, Tehsil and District Kohat as the general Authority / Attorney . If anyone has objection of the transfer of the said / above mentioned plot may submit his objection to the PHA office within 15 days of this advertisement.

Assistant Director Admin (RFC) Jarma Housing Scheme, PHA Kohat.

KU, Sindh Food Authority join hands to promote food safety, hygiene

KARACHI (APP): The University of Karachi and Sindh Food Authority join hands to create awareness of the importance of food safety and hygiene in the public. The SFA has established a four-tier ambassador program for the whole province during a special ceremony held at the Jinnah Auditorium of Dr A.Q. Khan Institute of Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering, University of Karachi, on Tuesday, said a statement.

On this occasion, the SFA appointed the founder chairperson of the KU Food Science and Technology Department Professor Dr Rashida Ali as the Chief Ambassador of Food Safety and Hygiene to acknowledge her over 50 years of service in the field of food science. Earlier, the Sindh Caretaker Information Minister Ahmed Shah said that when the United States was discovered, they built various universities in the states, and now they are ruling the entire world. We have witnessed the development of the West and one of the main reasons for their success is that they also invested in the education and research sectors.



LAHORE: Woman throwing food for pigeons as mercy at roadside in the Provincial Capital.

بل کو پروٹیکٹڈ بنانے کا راز جانیں!

NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28
29	30	31	

سردیوں کے 4 مہینے گیس کا مابانہ استعمال 0.9hm³ سے کم رکھیں

اور سال کے 12 مہینے گیس کا بل کم سے کم ادا کریں

گیس کا استعمال 0.9hm³ تک کیسے رکھا جاسکتا ہے

- گیس پیمز کا استعمال برقرار رکھیں
- رات بھر گیس کی لکڑی بند نہ کریں
- رات بھر گیس کی لکڑی بند نہ کریں
- رات بھر گیس کی لکڑی بند نہ کریں

PID/L2151-D



Senate meeting of University of Swabi: Governor highlight need of research based education

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali chairing a senate meeting of University of Swabi (UoS) here Tuesday directed universities of the province to maintain financial discipline keeping in resources of the province.

The senate meeting was also attended by Vice Chancellor UoS, Nasir Jamal and concerned officials of education, establishment, finance and high-

er education commission.

KP Governor said that provincial government is paying Rs. 56 billion annually in lieu of salaries stressing that universities should explore new ways to overcome financial difficulties. He desired that varsities devise new plans to improve administrative, educational and financial affairs.

Governor highlighted the need of research based education and said that it

would help improve capacity building of students and prepare them to meet challenges of emerging world.

On the occasion, meeting also discussed amendments in universities statutes 2016-17, financial resource development plan 2023 and annual performance report of the varsity while matter relating to age relaxation was referred to Standing Committee for Higher Education Department.

Afterwards, Governor also visited Iranian Consulate General in Peshawar and expressed grief over loss of lives in Kirman blasts.

He also expressed sympathies with Iran people and prayed for peace of departed souls and early recovery of injured.

The governor was accompanied by caretaker minister for information, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali visiting Phandu Road Nullah.

Polio vaccination campaign in KP 90 per cent coverage made during first day

PESHAWAR (APP): The health teams have made around 90 percent coverage on the first day of five days polio campaign launched in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday (January 8, 2024).

According to data shared by Emergency Operation Center (EOC), supervising the whole vaccination campaign, in some districts inoculation was made beyond the targeted numbers.

During the five-day polio drive, a target of inoculation of 7.4 million children has been set by the Health Department.

In Kohistan Lower, about 107 per cent of vaccination is achieved by surpassing the target of 9412 number of children to 10079.

Similarly, in Torgar district 106 percent vaccination is made by surpassing the target of 12857 children to 13635.

Lowest vaccination has been made in Kohistan (Palas) where 65 percent coverage is made by vaccinating 5295 children against the target of 8135.

In around five districts including Batagram, Kohis-

tan Lower, Kohistan Upper, Torgar and Shangla vaccination is made beyond the targeted numbers.

In Bajaur where a van carrying Police personnel for polio security duty was attacked by terrorists by planting IED, claiming around five lives, 69 per cent vaccination was made by covering 63737 children against the target of 92333 children.

In D.I.Khan and Lakki Marwat districts vaccination was postponed temporarily due to security concerns.

Power shutdown notified

PESHAWAR (APP): Pesco here on Tuesday notified power suspension in areas of provincial metropolis and Sarai Nourang due to maintenance work.

According to Pesco, power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar University Grid Station on 11and 16 January from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, resultantly consumers of University Campus, Canal Town, Malakandher, Engineering, Regi, Taj Abad, Taj Abad 2, Agriculture, Mera Achini, HMC, Ring Road, Danish Abad, Ghrib Abad, Rahatabad 1, CMB and Abdara feeders will face inconvenience.

Power supply will remain suspended from Rehman Baba Grid Station on 10 and 15 January from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, resultantly consumers of Kachori, Shalozai, Safdar Abad, Khanmust, New Hazar Khwani, Surizai, Phandu Baba, Umar 2, Hazar Khwani, Yakatooth, New Chairman Daftar, Jameel Colony, Ring Road, Beri Bagh, Rashid Ghari, Surizai, Akhon Abad, Ring Road 2, SIDB feeders will face inconvenience.

Similarly, power supply will remain suspended from Kohat Road Grid Station on 10 and 15 January from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, resultantly consumers of PAF Express, Kohat Road, Wazir Bagh, Sonehri

Masjid, Bana Mari, Civil Quarter, Nothia, Murshad Abad, Abasin, Old Deh Bahadar, Deh Bhadar, Wazir Abad, Ameen ColonyJ Bara, Nodhya Payan, Murshid Ababad, Dora Road, Nodiya Bahadar, Lundi Arbab 1,2,3, Sheikh Muhamadi, Pishthakhara, Swati Gate, Gulbarg, Schem Chowk, Chairman Daftar feeders will face inconvenience.

Power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar City Grid Station on 10 and 13 January from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, resultantly consumers of Sikhandar Pura, Lala, Hashnagri, Chughalpara, Chamkani, Jahgra, Radio Pak, Sethi Town, Gul Barg, Hassan Abad, Zaryab, Phandu Road, City Home, Bana Mari, Umar, Islamabad, Faqir Abad, Sheikh Abad, Molvi G, Nishtarabad, NHA feeders will face inconvenience.

Power Supply will remain suspended from Mardan Grid Station on 11th and 16th January from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, resultantly consumers of Shah Dandh, Rural, Zandai, Ghari Daudzai, Col Jawad Khan, Laksin Tobacco Factory, Tawas, Babinai, Ahmad Abad, Rural 1 feeders will face inconvenience.

Power supply will remain suspended from Saray Norang Grid Station on 11 January from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM, resultant-

ly consumers of FTM, Scarp, Mama Khel, Kakki, New Ghumbat, Malik Flour Mill feeders will face inconvenience.

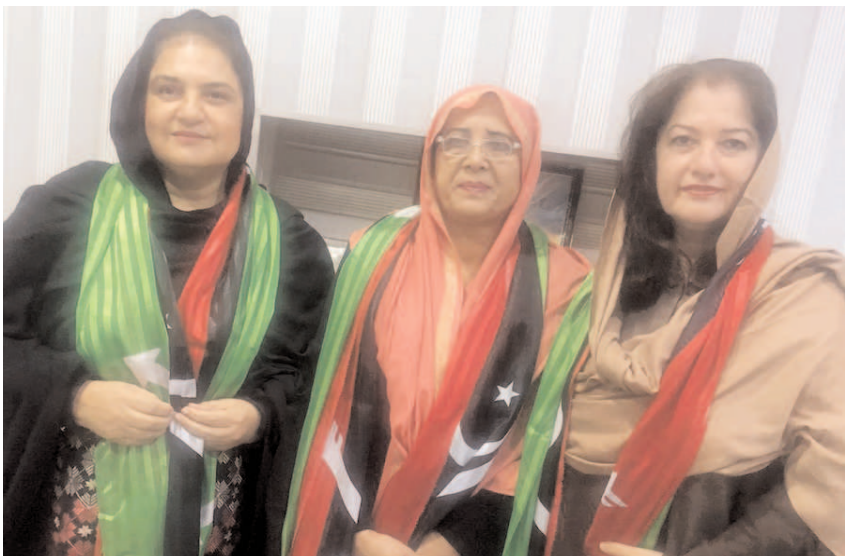
Cold weather predicted

PESHAWAR (INP): The Regional Meteorological Center Peshawar on Tuesday predicted cold and dry weather with foggy conditions in plain areas in most districts of the province.

It said that dense foggy conditions are likely to continue to prevail in Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi, Haripur, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, D.I.Khan and Tank districts as well as over Motorway (M1) / Highways. The public is advised to be cautious during travelling.

During the last 24 hours, very cold and dry weather prevailed over most districts of the province, while dense foggy conditions prevailed over plain areas.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of KP were Peshawar 12/02, Chitral 11/-02, Timergara 17/00, Dir 14/-03, Mirkhani 17/-01, Kalam 11/-06, Drosh 12/01, Saidu Sharif 16/-01, Pattan 21/04, Malam Jabba 08/00, Takht Bhai 13/01, Kakul 16/02, Balakot 17/01 and Parachinar 14/-01.



PESHAWAR: Newly joined PPP Minority Councilor in a group photo with provincial president of PPP Women Wing Senator Robina Khalid. — F.P. photo

Khattak says his party to contest polls

PESHAWAR (INP): Leader of PTI Parliamentarian, Pervaz Khattak has said that termed uniform curriculum in the seminaries, public schools, and private schools as need of the hour

In a statement issued here on Tuesday, he said that health and education facilities were the constitutional right of every individual.

Khattak while recalling the contributions made by his government said that during his tenure, reforms were brought in health and education sectors.

Lashing out at the incumbent government, he said that it was unfair that the incumbent government has disbanded the health card facility.

"We have made police and other state institutions apolitical," he asserted.

In a media chat a couple of days earlier, Pervaz Khattak had said that despite his party was relatively new but it was ready to contest the upcoming general elections.

Construction of nallah directed

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali has directed immediate construction of Phandu Road nallah and said that efforts are underway to address basic problems of people living in provincial metropolis.

Mayor Peshawar visited the site and directed construction of Phandu Road nallah after receiving complaints of people regarding drainage and traffic related problems.

He was also informed by people that sufferings of citizens have been increased manifold due to accumulation of drainage water on road and in their houses.

Mayor directed engineers to immediately start work on the nallah following a result oriented plan to address problems of people living in these areas.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, Chief Secretary Nadeel Aslam Choudhry and IGP Akhtar Hayat Khan inquire health of Bajour blast injured person at LRH.

SCCI demands uninterrupted power, gas supply to industries

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq said resolution of industrialists and traders' community amongst top-most priority of the chamber and urged federal and provincial governments to ensure uninterrupted electricity and gas supply to industries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He was speaking at a luncheon hosted in his honour by president of Industrialists Association Peshawar Ayub Zakori, held here at IAP office on Tuesday. The SCCI chief thanked IAP for hosting a lunch in his honour.

Those who attended the luncheon include SCCI senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, former FPCCI president Ghazanfar Bilour, former president SCCI Senator Mohsin Aziz, former presidents of the chamber Haji Muhammad Afzal, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Riaz Arshad, Adeel Rauf, Malik Niaz Ahmad, Sherbaz Bilour, former vice presidents SCCI Junaid Altaf, Haris Mufti, a executive member of the chamber Monawar Khurshid, Shakir Ishaq, Zarak Khan Khattak, Hakim Shinwari, Ahmad Mustafa, Shafiq Afridi, CEO KPEZDMC Javed Khattak, members of the IAP.

Fuad Ishaq said SCCI believes in selfless services to the business community, which has proactively raised voice for the community in every term.

He vowed no stone will be left unturned to resolve the issue of the business community and will continue the struggle for gaining constitutional rights on gas and electricity.

The chamber president told participants that it is our motto these days that any problem from a trader or industrialist will be resolved within a span of 24 hrs.

Furthermore, he said that the government is neglecting KP and our problems which is evident from recent events when we highlighted the gas price hike but the government was unfazed.

Fuad Ishaq said that KP is a net exporter of gas, as the province is producing 550 MMCFD, and are only consuming 200 MMCFD, in which 35 MMCFD is being consumed by KP industries and 40 MMCFD is being consumed by CNG sector.

Similarly, he said KP is producing 42% of Pakistan Oil (31,000)bbl/day out of 71,000 bbl/day.

He said the chamber has proposed to the federal government to rationalise income and sales tax and to streamline transit trade, the 224 band items and its duty

should be equal to that of Afghanistan.

Likewise, the SCCI chief said mark-up rates are increased to 24 - 25 %, which is extremely non-feasible for industries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Also, he told participants that the chamber has raised an effective voice for safeguarding rights of the business community and obliging US officials in Pakistan to provide funds and simple markup rate loans to youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, through IDPP.

Senator Mohsin Aziz, raised the issue of recent gas prices Hike and praised the role of SCCI in highlighting this injustice.

He further said that KP is grappling with many issues and the government has turned a blind eye to our province's issues, which is why we need to have such discussions to highlight our issues.

We are denied our right under Article 158 and no new connections are being offered to KP industrialists. RLNG is being imposed on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He asked the KPEZDMC to step up its efforts in facilitating the industries of KP.

It's a moment of satisfaction that FPCCI president is a familiar face so now we must avail this opportunity and raise voice against gas price hike, Senator Mohsin Aziz said.

Javed Khatak informed participants that recently our department has not taken a penny from KP govt in the midst of ADP.

We are self-sustaining and working hard to expand zones across KP, Khattak said.

Former FPCCI president Ghazanfar Bilour on the occasion highlighted the severe issues faced by industrialists of KP. Ghazi Khan told participants that 40% of industries have stopped working in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which is very unfortunate and we hope and pray that these issues resolve quickly.

Bar Council boycotts court proceedings

PESHAWAR (INP): On the call of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council, the lawyers in eleven districts of the province and on the principal seat of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) have boycotted the court proceedings in protest against the incident of shooting and killing within the judicial complex here the other day.

They expressed concern over an incident of shooting and killing in front of Anti Terrorism Court, within the premises of the judicial complex and termed it a highly regrettable incident, adding that despite security deployment the accused managed to enter the judicial complex with weapons.

The bar urged the government to ensure fool-proof and efficient security of all the courts of the province and warned that the strike would be extended in case security measures were not provided. The bar requested the lawyer's community to cooperate with the security personnel during the search at the entrance and exit points so that no one could take advantage of a lawyer's uniform.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Justice (R) Irshad Qaisar presiding over a meeting regarding ETA.

Veteran politicians try luck in political fertile Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PESHAWAR (APP): The heavyweight of different religio-political parties have eyed on the national and provincial seats of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for General Election 2024.

PMNL Quaid, Nawaz Sharif has filed nomination papers from Manshera, Qumi Watan Party Chief, Aftab Sherpao from Charsadda and PTI Parliamentarians Chairman, Pervaz Khattak from Nowshera constituencies.

Similarly, Jamat Islami Pakistan Ameer, Sirajul Haq from Dir, ANP Provincial President Aimal Wali Khan from Charsadda and former Federal Minister Haji Ghulam Ahmed Bilour, who defeated Benazir Bhutto Shaheed in 1990 election is contesting from NA-32 Peshawar.

JUIF leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman is trying his luck from hometown DI Khan while former Chief Ministers Haider Khan Hoti from Mardan and Mahmood Khan from Swat are also in elections race.

Professor Dr. A.H.Hilali, former Chairman, Political Science Department, University of Peshawar said that participation of the senior political leadership from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa magnified the political significance of the province.

Following May 9 riots, he said political vacuum existed in KP and all political parties were trying to secure maximum seats from here.

He said people of KP were eagerly awaiting of the political parties' manifestos for solution of their problems such as unemployment, poverty, price-hike and illiteracy.

Dr M.A Malik, former Chairman Political Science Department, University of Peshawar said political leaders were trying to exploit political vacuum in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa following split of PTI in different groups.

He said that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has recently visited different districts of KP where he announced key points of his party's election manifesto including construction of three million houses for poor, launching of welfare cards for labourers, patients and farmers besides increasing BISP assistance.

"Thousands of graduate voters wanted dignified jobs and any political party have a solid program for employment creation would take an edge over others on February 8, 2024."

Dr Hilali said that unfortunately, unemployment

has increased in last few decades in the country due to lackluster approach of the past governments.

He claimed that unemployment rate in Pakistan was 6.42% in 2022, a 0.08% increase from 2021 while in 2020 it was 6.55%, showing a 1.72% increase from 2019 besides 4.83% in 2018, a 0.75% increase from 2018.

He said over 21 million voters were added to the electoral rolls since 2018 elections in Pakistan where the number of women voters had swelled from 46.73 million in last polls to 58.47 million in 2023 due to population explosion that put extra burden on all resources besides increasing unemployment and illiteracy.

He said the number of male voters had jumped from 59.22 million in 2018 to 68.50 million till July 25, 2023. ECP statistics further revealed that approximately 127 million registered voters would exercise their right of franchise in the upcoming general election out of whom about 72.31 million (56.9pc) were registered in Punjab, 26.65 million in Sindh (21pc), 21.69 million voters (17.1pc) in KP while 5.28 million (4.2pc) in Balochistan.

In Pakistan, the total registered voters in 2018 was 106 million including 59.22million male and 46.73million female voters, showing a 12.49 million differences between both sexes while in July this year its number jumped to a record 127 million.

This significant difference of 12.49 million were further increased to an all time high of 12.72 million when 62.55 million men and 49.83 million women were found eligible to cast vote next year.

The ECP statistics has disclosed that there were around 57.1 million youth aged between 18 and 35, making up 45pc of those, who are eligible to vote.

The number of voters aged 36 to 45 years comes to 27.79 million ie 21.88pc and the two age groups if seen together comprise 84.81 million voters or two-third of the total 127 million voters in Pakistan.

Dr Hilali said that young voters, especially females representing nearly 50 percent of the population, would be a key factor in deciding fate of political parties on February 8 election. He said that about 22 million children aged 5-16 years were still out-of-schools (OSC) in the country including 4.7 million in

KP due to poverty and socioeconomic imbalances and bringing them under education net would be a big challenge for future political government.

Senior PMN leader, Wajid Ali Khan said that eradication of price hike, promoting industrialization for jobs creations for youth and improving economy would our priority areas if voted to power.

He claimed that a political party that came into power with tall claims of providing 10 million jobs and construct 5 million houses for poor before 2018 election were failed to honour its manifesto.

Young voters Basit Khan and Shahryar Khan besides millions others eagerly awaited to poll their first vote in February 8, 2024 General Election.

They said that political parties with solution of problems of unemployment, illiteracy and inflation would get a clear edge over others.

They expressed the hope that political parties would soon announce manifesto with workable programs for education of voters.

The experts urged political parties and people to get unite for election to take democracy to the safe shores.



In brief

Four die in road mishaps

OKARA (INP): At least four people including a woman died and 22 others injured in separate incidents here, police and rescue sources said on Tuesday. According to details, a Karachi bound passenger bus coming from Islamabad got out of control and plunged into canal near Nowshera jaded on National Highway in Bahawalpur. As a result of accident, three people died on spot while 17 others sustained serious injuries. A woman died while five others sustained injuries in collision between a carry van and a trailer in Okara. The bodies and injured were shifted to different hospitals of respective cities where condition of several wounded people was stated to be critical. The police registered separate cases at respective police stations and started investigations.

Kamran withdraw papers F.P. Report

BUNER: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan gained political benefits when his close relative district vice president Kamran Khan accepted grand Jirga and withdraw in his favour, on Monday. The grand Jirga was comprised PTI president ex aide Riaz Khan ex MPA chairman DDAC Syed Fakhar Jihan tehsel nazim Chaghorzai Haji Shafar Khan tehsel nazim Daggar Haji Rozi Khan the Barrister elders brother Haji Jowhar Ali Khan Azmat Khan Ahmed Khan party elders' workers in large. On the occasion Kamran Khan told actually Barrister was his Maternal uncle and it was quite difficult for him to select parliament at the cost of close family relations and accepted the Jirga with thanks to elders adding being a Pakhtun it was the better decision for him and his family and assured all out support in elections for NA and PA candidates and claimed all of these seats would be won to strengthen party and show love and respect for Imran Khan. On the occasion Riaz Khan expressed joy over major developments in the party and claimed hundred percent victory in the elections and announced electioneering. Barrister Gohar elder brother Haji Jowhar Ali Khan extended thanks to Jirga elders the Haji Sarzamin Khan and Kamran Khan family for withdrawal in support of Barrister Gohar who according to him was a proud for whole Pukhthon the Buner and PTI leadership and workers as well. He assured respect for Haji Sarzamin Khan and Kamran Khan family and the PTI leadership and workers and asked for gearing electioneering so as to secure all of seats from Buner.

10 fertilizers dealers arrested

MUZAFFARGARH (INP): The agriculture department got ten (10) fertilizer dealers arrested after registration of cases during the last seven days over violations of law including selling fertilizers at higher prices and imposed Rs 150,000 as a fine on the violators. In compliance with the orders of Deputy Commissioner Mian Usman Ali and Deputy Director of Agriculture Rana Habib Ur Rahman, the field teams of the agriculture department conducted 1665 inspections and imposed penalties on 124 fertilizer dealers during the last three months, according to an official release. The Deputy Commissioner said that FIRs were registered against 32 dealers during the three months and ordered officials to take legal action against all those who sell fertilizer bags to farmers at higher prices or refuse to sell them to farmers with the intent to create an artificial shortage.

Functionalization of Aviation Training School directed

F.P. Report

NOWSHERA: Caretaker Minister for Technical Education, Industries Commerce and Newly Merged Districts, Affairs Dr. Aamer Abdullah has directed the relevant authorities to functionalize the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa School of Aviation Training and Services Nowshera, for aviation training activities as soon as possible. He further directed that a feasible plan should be presented to him for starting the latest aviation courses here and introduction of this institution in the region.

The caretaker minister along with Managing Director Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority Aamir

Afaq and Managing Director Small Industries Development Board Ghazanfar Ali paid a surprise visit to Nowshera and inspected the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa School of Aviation Training and Services there.

It is to mention here that the said center had been handed over by TEVTA to Shaheen Technical Education Vocational Training Project for the provision of aviation services and training. During the visit, the center's staff told the minister that the school has received modern machinery for training purposes in 2019, but due to the license required for the said training courses from the Civil Aviation Authority and some other obstacles, admissions for aviation training services here, have

not been started yet.

On this occasion, the caretaker minister expressed his regret and concern that the modern training center equipped with equipment but were lying idle and not being used. He said that despite the passage of many years, the training center is still lying nonfunctional, which is equipped with modern machinery for aviation training.

The caretaker minister directed that this national asset should be made active as soon as possible for achieving training objectives and a suitable plan should be presented to them in this regard. During the visit, he inspected various parts of the training center and reviewed the machinery for aviation training there.

Removal of obstacles in provision of power directed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: City Mayor Mardan Himayatullah Mayar has instructed the concerned authorities to remove all obstacles in the supply of gas and electricity to the locals and the complaints of the citizens in this regard should be resolved immediately.

He was addressing a meeting held here on Tuesday in his office regarding electricity and gas issues and load shedding. Besides the elected chairmen, Executive Engineer PESCO Ikramullah Khan, Sub Divisional Officers of PESCO and Senior Officer of Sui Northern Gas Khalid Ali participated in the meeting.

The elected representatives of different areas described the problems of improper load shedding of electricity and daily breakdown of transformers and their repair in their areas. Mayor said that despite declaring 17 urban feeders of Mardan as load-shedding-free, long load-shedding has started again on them, which is spreading anxiety among the citizens. He said that load shedding is going on in other areas as well. PESCO officials said that the problem is due to technical problems due to shortfall and fog in the system. Load shedding on 17 feeders will be removed as soon as the situation improves. He added that electricity theft and kunda culture are the main reasons for disruption in electricity supply. Mayor Mardan said that the elected representatives will cooperate with the Pesco authorities in solving electricity theft issue.

The elected members drew attention to the load shedding of gas in the city and rural areas. Khalid Ali of SNGPL said that the installation of large gauge pipelines has been completed in Mardan under the Network Upgradation Project where area segmentation continues.

At various points, the system has been

connected to the new pipeline while work on the rest is in full swing. He said that SNGPL is ensuring gas supply to citizens during peak hours and whoever has complaints in this regard should file complaints on the company's complaint number 1199 for immediate redressal.

Mayor Mardan said that by laying a new 53 km new gas pipeline in Mardan, the problem of pressure will be solved to a large extent. He directed the gas authorities to pay immediate attention to the problems of gas shortage in Mardan Khas and some other areas and speed up the process of transferring the old system to the new large gauge pipeline.

PTI to announce candidates expectedly on 11thn: The mystery of PTI PK60 Takhtbhai tickets hangs more. The final decision is likely to be made on January 11. According to reports, the dispute between the Deputy General Secretary PTI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and former member of the provincial assembly Ifikhar Ali Mashwani and the President of Insaf Lawyers Forum Mardan Division, Nadeem Shah Khan Advocate a well-known lawyer, got more intense. Former Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Ali Amin Gandapur and others are trying hard for Ifikhar Ali Mashwani, while Senior Lawyers from Insaf Lawyers Forum are pushing hard for advocate Nadeem Shah Khan. However, both the PTI candidates are not satisfied. According to informed sources, senior lawyer belonging to Insaf Lawyers Forum, Qazi Muhammad Anwar Advocate and other lawyers will meet PTI leader Imran Khan in jail on January 11 to discuss tickets and candidates belonging to Insaf Lawyers Forum and will present the position. Senior lawyers have stuck to their stand, after which a final decision on ticket distribution will be taken on January 11.



QUETTA: Head of Balochistan Grand Alliance Lashkari Raisani addressing a press conference.

Navigating the bumpy road to recovery for entrepreneurs in 2024

Kapeel Kumar

AS the sun rises in 2024, Pakistan's economic horizon paints a picture of mixed signals and a slow, bumpy climb towards recovery. For entrepreneurs, both corporate veterans and aspiring startups, this presents a landscape brimming with both potential and pitfalls. Understanding the current economic terrain and its nuances is crucial to navigating this path and seizing the opportunities that lie ahead.

Navigating the Mixed Signals:

Pakistan's GDP contracted by 0.6% in FY2023, leaving scars on the economy. However, there are early signs of a rebound, with Q1 of FY2024 witnessing a 2.1% growth. While forecasts remain cautious, with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank expecting 1.7% and 1.9% growth for the entire year, this glimmer of recovery offers hope.

Inflation, the ever-present dragon, remains high but shows signs of easing. From a peak of over 31% earlier in 2023, it

dipped to 29.2% in November, thanks to past monetary tightening measures. However, recent gas price hikes pose a potential counter-pressure, demanding vigilant monitoring by entrepreneurs.

While Pakistan's journey back to economic prosperity may be gradual, the future holds promising growth and opportunity. 2024 offers a glimmer of hope with an anticipated GDP climb of 3.5%, bringing with it a larger customer base and increased demand for businesses to capitalize on. The government's focus on fiscal consolidation creates a more stable investment environment, opening doors for easier funding, particularly for budding startups. Pakistan's burgeoning digital landscape, fueled by soaring smartphone penetration and internet access, presents fertile ground for tech-savvy entrepreneurs to explore e-commerce, fintech, and digital marketing. International confidence is on the rise with increasing foreign direct investment, paving the way for collaboration, joint ventures, and access to global markets. Additionally, enhanced

regional trade agreements, like the CPEC, open new avenues for cross-border partnerships and expand export opportunities. Despite ongoing challenges, Pakistan's entrepreneurial spirit has fueled ground to blossom in 2024, fortified by these promising opportunities for growth and diversification.

External Accounts: A

Balancing Act: Securing a crucial \$6.5 billion IMF bailout in July 2023 averted a balance of payments crisis and stabilized Pakistan's external accounts. However, the reserves remain low, necessitating import controls that act as a brake on economic recovery. Entrepreneurs need to stay informed about these import restrictions and adapt their sourcing strategies accordingly.

Key Challenges: The Thorns on the Path:

The road to recovery isn't paved with roses. A global economic slowdown looms large, dampening external demand and impacting exports. Pakistan's upcoming elections add a layer of uncertainty, potentially affecting investor confidence. The high public debt burden, exceed-

ing 70% of GDP, raises concerns about fiscal sustainability and demands prudent financial management from businesses. Climate change, further exacerbated by recent devastating floods, throws another wrench in the works, damaging agriculture and infrastructure and impacting growth and poverty levels.

Positive Developments: Beacons of Hope Amidst the Bumps:

Despite the challenges, Pakistan shows promising signs in key sectors. The Large-Scale Manufacturing (LSM) sector, a bedrock of the economy, has posted positive growth in recent months, indicating a manufacturing revival. Agriculture, the lifeblood of many Pakistanis, also expects improved harvests of cotton and rice in FY2024, boosting productivity and livelihoods. Additionally, the government's commitment to implementing IMF-backed reforms could improve macro-economic stability and attract foreign investment, creating a more fertile ground for business growth.

Entrepreneurs, Take Heed: For entrepreneurs, traversing this dynamic landscape requires

agility and strategic foresight. Conduct thorough market research to understand the evolving needs and trends in your target market. Embrace innovation, experiment with new technologies and business models, and stay adaptable to changing circumstances. Building strong partnerships, both local and international, can leverage resources and expertise, opening doors to new markets and opportunities. Investing in human capital – attracting and retaining skilled talent – is paramount for any venture's success. Lastly, staying informed about economic and political developments, both domestic and global, allows you to make informed decisions and adjust your strategies on the fly.

Pakistan's road to recovery in 2024 may be bumpy, but the entrepreneurial spirit can navigate its curves. By understanding the challenges and seizing the opportunities, corporate and startup founders can play a crucial role in propelling the nation toward a brighter future. Remember, the sun may rise slowly, but its warmth eventually reaches all corners. So, buck-

le up, entrepreneurs, and prepare for an exciting, bumpy, and ultimately rewarding journey on Pakistan's road to economic renaissance.

In conclusion, The World Economic Situation and Prospects report paints a stark picture for Pakistan: a future teetering between modest growth and insurmountable challenges. Inflation, currency depreciation, and a crippling debt burden cast a long shadow on the path ahead. Ignoring these warnings is no longer an option. Pakistan must act decisively, implementing bold reforms and tackling these issues head-on, or risk economic stagnation and deeper hardship.

The author is an ICT expert with over 12 years of experience in the field. He is deeply passionate about empowering young people in Pakistan and contributing to the development of the country, helping youth develop the necessary skills to thrive in the digital age. Through his expertise and commitment, Kapeel strives to contribute to the country's technological advancement and economic growth.



CHARSADDA: Adviser to KP CM on Transport Zafarullah Khan Khan interacting with people during his visit to Umerzai Bazaar.

Public servant paralyzes LG institutions, says Mayor Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Tehsil Jahangira Mayor Kamran Razzaq rejected allegations of corruption and malpractices as provincial government didn't devolved powers to local governments after the election held more than two years ago, on Tuesday.

This he claimed while addressing Tehsil Council members during the session and argued that he is present before the elected body to answer the allegations placed against him. He added that provincial government neither empowered local governments institution nor granted funds for developmental projects.

Mayor Jahangira Kamran Razzaq claimed that Tehsil Municipal Officer (TMO) had violated rules and regulations by calling session for polling on the slot of Convener of the Council. He argued that a public servant had violated legal jurisdiction which is a cognizable offense.

He argued elected chairmen and councilors to join hands for joint efforts to ensure devolution of powers to Local Governments as well as for good governance at gross root level. He added that local governments immediately needs jurisdiction over accountability of public servant for good governance and sustainability of democratic institutions.

Security official dies in mishap F.P. Report

TANK: A security personnel died while six others injured when a vehicle carrying them skidded off the road and met with an accident in Manji khel area of Tank district on Tuesday.

Local police informed a vehicle carrying security personnel was on way to Dera Ismail Khan from Asman Manza area of South Waziristan when it met with an accident in Manji Khel. As a result, police said one security official embraced martyrdom while six others were injured. The injured were shifted to CMH Dera Ismail Khan.

All eyes on Nowshera's two NA seats

NOWSHERA (APP): All eyes on the two national assembly's constituencies of Nowshera district for general election 2024 where tough electoral battle is expected among political stalwarts. The candidates of all mainstream political parties blew up horns after their nomination papers were accepted for two national and five provincial assemblies seats in the politically fertile Nowshera district.

Pakistan Tahirik e Insaf Parliamentarian (PTI) Chairman and former Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pervaz Khan Khattak, Pakistan Muslim League-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Secretary and former member provincial assembly, Ikhtair Wali Khan, Awami National Party's Khan Pervaz, Barrister Sarwar and Mustafa Anwar of Pakistan Tahirik e Insaf and Ijazul Haq of Jamiat Ulema Islam-F are eying for NA-33 Nowshera-I.

A unique phenomena of 2024 General Election is participation of all family members of PTIP Chief, Pervaz Khattak including his son-in-law Dr Imran Khattak and his sons whose nomination papers were accepted for all the national and provincial assemblies' seats. Nowshera is the home district of Pervaz Khattak who filed nomination papers for NA-33, PK-87 and PK-88 while nomination papers of his nephew and son-in-law Dr Imran Khattak were accepted for NA-34 and PK-89 respectively.

Pervaz Khattak's sons Ibrahim Khattak and Ismail Khattak submitted nomination papers for PK-85 and PK-86, respectively. Former KP Information Minister and Awami National Party leader, Mian Ifikhar Hussain are eying on PK-89 while PMLN's Ikhtiyar Wali filed nomination papers for NA-33 and PK-88. Awami National Party's Khan Pervaz, Barrister Sarwar Khan and Mustafa Anwar of PTI, Fayyazur Rahman of PMLN, Mufti Shakatullah and Ijazul Haq of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl and independents nomination papers for NA-33 Nowshera-I were accepted.

Major-Gen (r) Saad Khattak of Aam Admi Party, Mian Babar Shah of ANP, Mian Khaliqur Rahman, Haji Akbar, Daud Khattak of

PTI, Shaiq Amin of Tehreek-e-Labbaik, Hamza Pervaz of PMLN, Alhaj Pervaz Khan of JUIF, Idrees Khattak of PPP and others filed papers for NA-34 Nowshera-II and others provincial constituencies. NA-33 Nowshera-I was previously won by PTI's Siraj Muhammad Khan in 2013 general election after securing 54,266 votes against Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah of PMLN's with 34,537 votes while in 2018 general election this constituency was clinched by Pervaz Khattak who contested on PTI ticket with 82,118 votes against Khan Pervaz of PPP with 35,658 votes.

Pervaz Khattak was also elected from NA-34 Nowshera-II on the ticket of PTI in 2013 general election after securing 70,053 votes against runnerup Daud Khan Khattak of ANP with 21,493 votes. Later, Pervaz Khattak resigned from NA-34 and retained NA-33 Nowshera-I. Later, his son-in-law Dr Imran Khattak won NA-34 in by-election after securing 48,043 votes against Daud Khattak of ANP's with 27,569 votes.

In the 2018 General Election, this constituency was again won by Dr. Imran Khattak who contested on PTI's ticket after securing 90,256 votes against Jamal Khattak of ANP's with 47,132 votes. The total registered voters in NA-34-Nowshera-II are 377,306. "All political parties enjoy equal opportunities to win in the 2024 general election in Nowshera. However, political parties' manifestos, voters especially young and female voters' turnout and strong baradaris would play a crucial role in deciding the fate of these candidates," said former Professor Dr. Muhammad Ali Malik of Political Science Department, Govt College Nowshera while talking to APP.

"The main problem of the area's people here are unemployment, flood vulnerability being located directly on River Kabul, lack of clean drinking water and adequate housing facilities," he said, adding any party with a solid program for resolution of these issues would get an edge over others on D-Day. NA-33-Nowshera-I constituencies comprises of Akora Khattak, Jaghangira, Pirsabaq, Risalpur, Nowshera Kalan, Nizampur,

Manki Sharif, Misri Banda, Mera Akora Khattak, Adamzai and Inzari where literacy ratio is relatively higher compared to NA-34 Nowshera-II with key areas of Pabbi, Akbarpura, Charat, Amankot, Mohib Banda, Khesgi Payan, Saleh Khana and Shah Kot.

"I eagerly await the February 8, 2024 general election. I will vote for that political party having sold a program for the resolution of Nowshera's core issues," said Riazul Haq, a former PST teacher and resident of Mohib Banda while talking to APP. "The 2022 floods in River Kabul have badly affected the ground water table of my village and most of the residents were bringing water from tehsil Pabbi after covering five kilometers distance every day," he said, adding 'we need clean drinking water and technical education institute in our area for our children and families.'

"Most of the youth after visiting abroad spend months to get driving licenses and their parents suffer financially for a long time," he said, adding the lack of schools and college in his village despite over one lakh population added to our difficulties. He said the five kilometers long Mohib Banda-Amankot road was in shambles and hours were being wasted due to dozens of speed breakers. "I would demand all the political parties to construct an alternative road for their village if voted to power."

Martyred laid to rest F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: Martyr Havildar Muhammad Zahir of Pakistan Army was laid to rest with full military honors at Singa Lundkhwar, on Tuesday.

A large number of Pak-Army and civil officers, scholars, political and social personalities and local dignitaries participated in the funeral prayer. He was martyred in an encounter with terrorists in North Waziristan on Monday. Martyr Havildar Muhammad Zahir left a widow, two sons and two daughters among the mourners.



Russian missile attacks pounds areas across Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine (AP): Russia launched its latest barrage of hypersonic and cruise missiles against Ukrainian targets, striking near the front lines of fighting in the east as well as in central and western parts of the country, officials said. At least four civilians were reported killed and at least 30 injured. Western officials and analysts had previously warned that Russia was stockpiling its cruise missiles in preparation for a strategy of winter bombardment, as bad weather keeps the 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line largely static after 22 months of war. Unlike last winter, when the Kremlin's forces targeted Ukraine's power grid, Russia is now aiming at Kyiv's defense industry, they say. But the almost daily barrages have repeatedly hit civilian areas. Attacks struck a string of urban areas, including housing and a shopping mall, across Ukraine. Russia fired 51 missiles of various types, as well as eight Shahed drones, at Ukraine, Ukrainian commander-in-chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi said. The Ukrainian Air Force intercepted 18 of the cruise missiles and all the drones, he said. Russia's Defense Ministry said its forces used precision sea-launched and air-launched long-range missiles, including Kinzhal hypersonic missiles, to strike what it called "facilities of Ukraine's military-industrial complex." In the south-

eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, a woman died in a missile attack outside the city of Kryvyi Rih and 24 people were injured in a strike on the town of Novomoskovsk. In Kryvyi Rih itself, which is Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's home town, more than 20 houses and a shopping mall were damaged in the attack, said regional governor Serhii Lysak. At least four missiles hit Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, injuring one person, said mayor Ihor Terekhov. A woman rescued from the rubble of a building later died, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. More people may be trapped, he said. Authorities in the Khmelnytskyi region of western Ukraine said two people died as at least six explosions were heard during the morning missile attack. In Zaporizhzhia, a major southern city along the Dnipro River, two people were injured in a missile strike on a residential district, said regional governor Yuriy Malashko. Two people injured in a Jan. 2 attack died, officials said. Meanwhile, Russian troops conducted 131 artillery attacks on the Kherson region, killing two people and injuring five, according to governor Oleksandr Prokudin. Kherson and the surrounding region have been consistently targeted since Russian forces withdrew from the city to the eastern side of the Dnipro

in the autumn of 2022. Separately, the Ukrainian military said Russian forces have made unsuccessful efforts to advance during the past day in several areas along the front line, including around Lyman in the Kharkiv region and in the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions. The governor of the Belgorod region in western Russia which borders Ukraine said the city of the same name came under attack. Russia's Defense Ministry said ten rockets fired by Ukraine were shot down while three people were injured by shrapnel, regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov wrote on his Telegram channel, adding that some apartment windows were blown out and cars and trucks damaged. Meanwhile in the Russia-occupied Luhansk region in Ukraine's east, a Russian warplane accidentally released a bomb on the town of Rubizhne, said Leonid Pasechnik, the head of the region's Moscow-appointed government. The bomb, an FAB-250 that carries a high-explosive warhead, did not cause injuries, Pasechnik said. The incident comes six days after Russia accidentally dropped munitions over the village of Petropavlovka in the Belgorod region, which has come under repeated Ukrainian attack. Last April, another bomb accidentally dropped by one of Russia's warplanes caused a powerful blast in the city of Belgorod, injuring two and scaring local residents.

Thousands homeless by earthquake in Japan

WAJIMA, Japan (AP): Thousands of people made homeless by a powerful earthquake on the western coast of Japan were coping with weariness and uncertainty a week after the tremor left at least 180 dead and dozens missing. The rescue effort since the magnitude 7.6 New Year's Day quake has drawn thousands of troops, firefighters and police, who picked through collapsed buildings hoping to find survivors. Authorities warned of the danger of landslides, exacerbated by a heavy snowfall, around the quake's epicenter on the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa prefecture. The landscape blanketed in fluffy white, covering burned and crumbled houses, ashen blocks of a city, highways with gaping holes and cracks. As of Tuesday, the deaths included 81 people in Wajima, 71 in Suzu, 18 in Anamizu and the rest were spread among four other towns. At least 120 people were still unaccounted for, declining from a jump to some 300 as rescuers pore over a list of the region's population. Another 565 people were injured, and 1,414 homes were destroyed or seriously damaged. A tsunami of several meters (feet) followed the initial major quake, adding to the damage. Aftershocks have continued daily. Japanese meteorological officials warned strong quakes could persist for another month. Their frequency, while gradually diminishing, remained high compared to past quakes, totaling more than 1,000. For the residents, recovery work has barely started. Shuji Yoshiura, a fisherman, said his boats were damaged and he could not go out on the sea. Before the quake, Wajima was a tourist town with a shopping street offering seafood and traditional crafts. Much of it was destroyed in the fires that broke out after the Jan. 1 disaster. Kentaro Mitsumori, who runs a corner grocery shop, slept in his car with his wife to guard against looting. Their store still stands but has no lock, electricity or running water. Everything sold out in three days. But he plans to close his business. "Even if I manage to fix up the place, there just aren't going to be enough customers. I don't know how Wajima can survive," he said. Nearly 30,000 people staying in schools, auditoriums and other evacuation centers worried about infections as cases of COVID-19 and other illnesses popped up. In the shelters, people were still sleeping on cold floors. After initial help of a piece of bread and a cup of water for each person a day, more aid is allowing some facilities to begin serving hot food cooked in huge pots. People were delighted by the temporary bathing facilities set up by soldiers, sitting in the hot water they had missed for days. Still, exhaustion and stress are wearing them down. Many are in mourning. The main quake struck on New Year's Day, a time for families to gather in Japan. Some survivors said they were all alone because they lost their loved ones. Mizue Kaba, 79, was lucky she survived, as did her daughter, son-in-law and grandson, who were visiting on New Year's from Osaka in central Japan. Kaba is sleeping at a school, and no one is sure what might happen when schools open in a week after the New Year's break. Three stoves were not enough to heat the school's big hall, and more heaters arrived. "It's so cold," Kaba said. — Aljazeera

Three ministers and four governors disqualified

DR CONGO (BBC): Three ministers and four governors have been disqualified from last month's election in the Democratic Republic of Congo, because of fraud and violence. They are among 82 candidates excluded from the legislative, provincial and local elections by the electoral body. But its announcement did not address the presidential election that saw President Félix Tshisekedi re-elected by a landslide. The opposition has called the entire election a "sham" and demanded a rerun. Eight of the 18 opposition candidates have responded to the electoral commission's statement by saying it had now "confessed to the fraud". Martin Fayulu, who came third in the presidential race, asked "by what magic... only the legislative elections were corrupted and not the presidential one"? Only one candidate has gone to court to challenge the poll. The main ones say they have no faith in the courts and have instead called for the population to "resist electoral fraud" without giving any details. The 20 December election was marred by widespread logistical problems. It had to be extended to an unplanned second day in some parts of the vast country. About two-thirds of polling stations opened late, while 30% of voting machines did not work on the first day, according to an observer group. Millions of people waited for hours before they were able to vote. Many gave up and went home. In its statement disqualifying the 82 candidates, the electoral commission said they had committed fraud, corruption, acts of violence against election workers and voters, and vandalism of equipment. Supporters of Mr Ngabila have taken to the streets to protest at what they term the politically motivated disqualification. The ministers have not yet commented but the party of President Tshisekedi says it disassociates itself from the 12 of its members who were banned. All votes cast for the 82 candidates have been annulled. The results of the elections they were contest-

ing have not yet been declared - only the result of the presidential race has been announced so far. There were about 100,000 candidates across all the elections held on 20 December. The commission also said elections would be cancelled in two of the country's 182 constituencies. It was not possible to vote at all in a further two areas in the east, because of the presence of armed groups in the mineral-rich region, as well as one part of the west. Despite the problems, election chief Denis Kadima has previously insisted that the presidential result reflected the will of the Congolese people. Mr Tshisekedi, 60, was elected for a second term with 73% of the vote, with his nearest challenger, mining magnate and former provincial governor Moise Katumbi, on 18%. Mr Fayulu, a former oil executive, got 5%. Official turnout was just 43%. If the results are confirmed by the Constitutional Court, President Tshisekedi will be sworn in for a second term on 20 January.

WHO axes medical aid delivery to north Gaza

GENEVA (Reuters): The World Health Organization (WHO) said it had been compelled to cancel a mission to bring medical supplies to northern Gaza after failing to receive security guarantees. It was the fourth time WHO had had to call off a planned mission to bring urgently needed medical supplies to Al-Awda Hospital and the central drug store in northern Gaza since Dec. 26, it said. "It has now been 12 days since we were last able to reach northern Gaza," the WHO office in the occupied Palestinian territories wrote on the X social media platform. "Heavy bombardment, movement restrictions, and interrupted communications are making it nearly impossible to deliver medical supplies regularly and safely across Gaza, particularly in the north." The delivery planned, WHO said, had been designed to sustain the operations of five hospitals in the northern part of the enclave. Israeli government spokesperson Eylon Levy said he did not have information on WHO's assertion, referring questions to the Israel Defence Forces. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he was "shocked by the scale of health needs and devastation in northern Gaza". "Further delays will lead to more death and suffering for far too many people," he wrote on X. In separate comments, the International Rescue Committee aid group said its emergency medical team and the Medical Aid for Palestinians charity had been forced to withdraw and cease its activities at the Al-Aqsa Hospital in Gaza's Middle Area due to increasing Israel military activity in the area. The Israeli offensive launched in the wake of a deadly rampage by Hamas in southern Israel on Oct. 7 has displaced most of Gaza's 2.3 million population, left many homes and civilian infrastructure in ruins, and caused acute shortages of food, water and medicine.

Flights resume on repaired Tokyo runway

TOKYO (AP): Flights resumed on a repaired runway at Tokyo's Haneda airport a week after a collision between a Japan Airlines plane and a coast guard aircraft believed to have been caused by human error. The coastal runway is one of four at Haneda and its reopening means the airport is near returning to normal operations. The collision occurred Tuesday evening when JAL Flight 516 carrying 379 passengers and crew landed right behind the coast guard aircraft preparing to take off on the same seaside runway, engulfing both aircraft in flames. All occupants of the JAL's Airbus A350-900 airliner safely evacuated in 18 minutes. The captain of the coast guard's much smaller Bombardier Dash-8 escaped with burns but his five crew members died. At the coast guard's Haneda base, colleagues of the five flight crew lined up and saluted to mourn for their deaths as black vehicles carrying their bodies drove past them. The victims' bodies were to return to their families after police autopsies were conducted as part of a separate investigation into possible professional negligence. Haneda reopened three of its four runways the night of the crash, but the last runway had remained closed for the investigation, cleanup of the debris and repairs. The collision caused more than 1,200 flights to be cancelled, affecting about 200,000 passengers during the New Year holiday period.

The airport was crowded with passengers. All scheduled flights have resumed except for 22 JAL flights cancelled through Tuesday. The investigation focuses on what caused the coast guard flight crew to believe they had a go-ahead for their takeoff while the traffic control transcript showed no clear confirmation between them and the traffic control.

French PM resigns ahead of expected reshuffle

PARIS (BBC): France's Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne is to leave office after less than two years in the job. Her resignation comes with President Emmanuel Macron widely expected to reshuffle his top team ahead of European elections due later this year. In a statement, Mr Macron said Ms Borne had shown "courage, commitment and determination" during her time in office. It is not yet known who will be appointed as her successor. Ms Borne will remain in post until a new prime minister takes over, a statement from the Elysée Palace said. She was France's second female prime minister and longest serving, outlasting Édith Cresson who served in the role under François Mitterrand from 1991-92. Reports of an overhaul of the government have been rife in recent weeks as Mr Macron looks to boost his political fortunes ahead of June's election and in a year when France will be centre stage when it hosts the Olympic Games. With three years left of his presidency, commentators have said an overhaul is necessary to revive his government's political impetus after a series of protests over controversial policies and legislative defeats. His government suffered a significant defeat on a key piece of immigration legislation in December, which was widely seen as a moment of crisis. The law eventually passed after concessions were made to right-wing opposition groups but Mr Macron's party is still expected to face a strong challenge in the European poll.



Ms Borne's departure will be seen as the beginning of that overhaul, with several key figures in government tipped to replace her. The 34-year-old education minister Gabriel Attal is considered the frontrunner for the job. He would become France's youngest and first openly gay prime minister. Armed forces minister Sebastien Lecornu - who at 37, would also be the youngest person to hold the post - and ex-agriculture minister Julien Denormandie have been tipped as potential alternatives. An announce-

ment on a new prime minister is not expected until Tuesday, a spokesperson for the Elysée Palace told the BBC. France's prime minister is expected to manage the day-to-day business of the government and heads the Council of Ministers. Mr Macron's party lost its parliamentary majority in 2022, meaning the new prime minister will face an uphill struggle to turn the President's policies into law. When appointed, the new prime minister will become the fourth to hold office since Mr Macron was first elected as President in 2017.

Bhutan goes to the polls in election focused on economic woes

THIMPHU: Voting has begun in the final round of Bhutan's fourth national election since the establishment of democracy 15 years ago. Voters headed to the polls on Tuesday as they opened at 8am (02:00 GMT), in an election focused on economic growth and opportunity, despite the country's use of a "Gross National Happiness" index in place of gross domestic product (GDP). Approximately half a million voters can select 47 members of parliament from a pool of 94 candidates presented by the Bhutan Tendrel Party (BTP) and People's Democratic Party (PDP). The latter secured victory in a primary round in November. Polls will close at 5pm (11:00 GMT), with results expected on Wednesday. "The most important thing the Bhutanese people need is economic growth and the growth of their own," Karma, 49, a voter from Punakha, near Thimphu, told Reuters news agency. "Many people are unemployed and even those who

have jobs get salary that is not enough to support the growth of their family." Young citizens searching for better financial and educational opportunities have left in record numbers since the last election, with Australia as their top destination. About 15,000 Bhutanese were issued visas there in the 12 months before July 2022, according to a local news report - more than the preceding six years combined, and equal to almost 2 percent of the kingdom's population. Nestled between China and India, the majority-Buddhist nation ushered in democracy with its first free vote in 2008, two years after former king, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, abdicated in favour of his Oxford-educated son Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. Both parties contesting Tuesday's vote are committed to a constitutionally enshrined philosophy of a government that measures its success by the "happiness and wellbeing of the people". But the economy and the need to stem emigration are playing a major

role in a country roughly the size of Switzerland but with a population of less than 800,000. Career civil servant Pema Chewang, 56, leader of the BTP, has warned that the country is losing the "cream of the nation". His opponent, former prime minister and PDP chief, Tshering Tobgay, 58, has sounded the alarm over Bhutan's "unprecedented economic challenges and mass exodus". The PDP manifesto cited government statistics showing that one in every eight people were "struggling to meet their basic needs for food" and other necessities. Both political parties have comparable election platforms, committing to enhancing the \$3bn economy. Despite lifting pandemic restrictions in September 2022, the nation, heavily dependent on aid and tourism, has struggled to revive these sectors. The two parties seemed aligned on exploring the country's hydroelectric power potential, fostering agricultural growth, and mitigating climate change risks in the world's first car-

bon-negative country. Both parties promise to encourage investment and bolster foreign exchange reserves. As of the end of October, the central bank reported reserves at \$464.66m, a sharp decline from \$759.16m a year earlier. Analysts said their promises should be taken with a pinch of salt, and few believed the parties would deliver on their promises if elected. "People now tend to be sceptical about promises the political parties make, as they have seen that many (past) promises remained unfulfilled," political analyst Sonam Tshering told Reuters. In the three elections since 2008, no party has headed the government twice. Political parties are "also aware that Bhutanese voters are much matured and discreet about whom they vote so that their votes remain secret", Tshering said. BTP was formed in 2022 and is led by a former bureaucrat. PDP was founded in 2007 by Tshering Tobgay, who led the government after the elections in 2013. — Aljazeera

Ecuador declares state of emergency, curfew

ECUADOR: Ecuador has declared a state of emergency after an "extremely dangerous" drug lord escaped from maximum-security detention and unrest broke out at several prisons in the violence-plagued country. President Daniel Noboa, in office since November, announced a 60-day mobilisation of soldiers in Ecuador's streets and prisons as authorities searched for Jose Adolfo Macias, alias Fito. There would also be a curfew from 11pm (04:00 GMT) to 5am (10:00 GMT) daily, the president said. The state of emergency, Noboa said in a video on Instagram, would give members of the armed forces "all the political and legal support" they need to carry out their duties in a battle against what he described as "narcoterrorists". "We will not negotiate with terrorists nor rest until we return peace to all Ecuadorans," Noboa said. Fito, the leader of the powerful Los Choneros gang, was found missing by police conducting an inspection of a prison in the

port city of Guayaquil. The 44-year-old, who is said to have instilled terror in his fellow inmates, is believed to have escaped just hours before police arrived, according to presidency spokesperson Roberto Izurieta. He was apparently tipped off. "The full force of the state is being deployed to find this extremely dangerous individual," Izurieta told domestic television. He said the prison system had failed and bemoaned "the level of infiltration" by criminal groups. The prosecutor's office, meanwhile, said it had opened an investigation and filed charges against two prison officials "allegedly involved in the escape" of Fito. Fito had been serving a 34-year sentence for organised crime, drug trafficking and murder since 2011. This is his second prison escape - the last was in 2013 when he was recaptured after three months. In an operation involving thousands of security forces, Fito was transferred to a maximum-security prison last August following the assassination of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio. A

week before his death, anticartel candidate Villavicencio said he had received threats from Fito. Long a peaceful haven between top cocaine exporters Colombia and Peru, Ecuador has seen violence explode in recent years as rival gangs with links to Mexican and Colombian cartels vie for control. Gang wars largely played out in the country's prisons, where criminal leaders such as Fito wielded immense control. Some 460 inmates have been killed in these battles since 2021, and their bodies are often found dismembered, decapitated or incinerated. Izurieta said Fito, who studied law in prison, was a "criminal with extremely dangerous characteristics, whose activities have characteristics of terrorism". "The search continues ... He will be found, he must be found," said the spokesperson. After Fito's escape, unrest broke out at penitentiaries in six of Ecuador's 24 provinces, according to the SNAI prison authority, with guards taken hostage at some of the facilities.

Heavily armed police and soldiers entered the prisons of El Oro, Loja, Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, Azuay and Pichincha, after which the military distributed images of half-naked inmates rounded up in courtyards. The SNAI said there had been no injuries due to the "incidents". Other videos on social media, not verified by the authorities, purported to show hooded inmates threatening officials with knives as they pleaded for their lives. Noboa came to power with promises to clamp down on gangs and insecurity. On the campaign trail, he proposed creating a separate judicial system for the most serious crimes, militarising the borders with Colombia and Peru, and jailing the most violent offenders on barges offshore. Last week, he announced the construction of two new maximum-security prisons similar to those built by El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele, who has led a controversial crackdown on gangs credited with drastically reducing his country's murder rate. — Aljazeera

Sierra Leone charges 27 soldiers over foiled coup attempt

FREE TOWN (BBC): A court in Sierra Leone has charged 27 soldiers with multiple offences over an alleged coup attempt. "The charges include mutiny, failure to suppress mutiny, murder, aiding the enemy, communicating with the enemy and other relevant offences," the defence ministry said in a statement. Last November, gunmen broke into a military armoury and several prisons in Freetown, freeing almost 2,000 inmates. The authorities described this

as an attempt to "overthrow" the government. Last week, in connection with the same incident, former President Ernest Bai Koroma was charged with treason. He denied any involvement in the events during which about 20 people were killed. The authorities are also prosecuting one of Mr Koroma's former presidential bodyguards alongside 11 former police and correctional officers. They have been accused of treason, concealing treason and "harbour-

ing, aiding and abetting the enemy". Pre-trial proceedings against the 27 soldiers began in a court in the capital, Freetown. The trial was adjourned to Wednesday. The violence in November came five months after an election which saw current President Julius Maada Bio re-elected for a second term. The results were rejected by the opposition and criticised by international observers for a lack of transparency.

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Political use of human rights

PAKISTAN has categorically rejected its designation as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) by the US government. Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch expressed deep dismay over the designation which is an altogether biased, and arbitrary assessment, detached from ground realities in the country. According to the Spokesperson, India is the biggest and serial violator of religious freedom in the South Asian region and has once again been excluded from the US State Department's designation list despite repeated recommendations by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) over the past multiple years along with huge outcry by the international human rights organisations about India's blatant maltreatment of religious minorities in recent years.

Recently, the US Secretary of State has designated several countries including Pakistan, Cuba, China, North Korea, Eritrea, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Nicaragua, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for allegedly having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedoms in their nations. Interestingly, weeks ago, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the governmental body tasked with monitoring human rights and religious freedoms across the globe and offering recommendations for suitable measures to the government against alleged violators specifically recommended the Biden Administration to designate India as Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for the current year because of persistent poor record in religious freedoms and human rights in its country. Yet, Biden's aides did not move against their strategic ally, instead, Washington used an arm-twisting technique against Pakistan to get Islamabad's cooperation to protect its political and security interests in the region.

Historically, the United States has always used civil liberties, human and religious rights as well as democracy for the protection and enhancement of its strategic interests in all parts of the world, whilst these same values had been used against dictatorial regimes and publicly elected government as pressure tactics to achieve its political and military objectives in different countries. Pakistan is an all-time victim of the US policies, as the decades-long dictatorial rules in the South Asian country had been subjected to Washington's coercion in the name of democracy while the political governments ever been harassed by the use of opposition and religious freedom issues in the country which equally exist in Europe and America. Previously, Pakistan had been designated by the United States as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) concerning international religious freedoms in 2018, 2021, and 2022.

Historically, the bilateral relations between Pakistan and the US have always been transactional, while Islamabad faced sanctions/ restrictions on economic and military aid from Washington at frequent intervals throughout the past. US Diplomats commonly term this strategy as the Carrot and Stick policy which is often used by US administrations against its allies that have some kind of dependence on the United States. Although, this designation is political several other countries including India have not been designated by the Biden administration because of strategic interests attached to those nations. Pakistan is a pluralistic country, with a rich tradition of interfaith harmony. The constitution of Pakistan categorically protects minorities' rights and stresses wide-ranging measures to promote religious freedom. Yet, the government must review those events that often caused embarrassment for the country at the international level.

Individual incidents of hate crimes and religious bigotry against minorities including the burning of churches in Gujranwala and Sikh killings in FATA and Peshawar are surely condemnable and need preemptive measures in the future. The government of Pakistan is actively working with the global community to counter the contemporary challenge of religious intolerance, hate crimes, and Islamophobia, those contacts and collaboration need to be expanded to counter such unpleasant situations in the future.

A new version of Sadiq and Ameen

THE Supreme Court of Pakistan finally ended the lifetime disqualification of lawmakers, undoing its previous order of barring politicians from running for public office ever, which energizes hopes for several political bigwigs who are eyeing to contest polls on February 8. A seven-member larger bench of the Ape Court declared with a 6-1 majority that no person can be barred for a lifetime from running in elections if they are disqualified under Article 62 (1)(f), setting aside its landmark judgment in the multiple cases including Samiullah Baloch, Mian Nawaz Sharif, Jahangir Tareen, and others.

The months-long quandary and political haphazard ended with the Apex court decision regarding lifelong disqualification of the lawmakers, if someone was convicted under Article 62 (1) (f) after the larger bench comprising of seven judges, annulled the previous judgment of the Supreme Court that awarded a permanent disqualification to Samiullah Baloch in 2018. Interestingly, a five-member bench of the apex court disqualified the PML-N Supremo Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for not fulfilling the conditions of Sadiq and Ameen under article 62 (1) (f) in the Panama case. Meanwhile, another bench of the apex court also stamped the Istikhdam-e-Pakistan party co-founder Jahangir Tareen with disqualification for public offices on similar charges in December 2017.

Historically, the adjudicators are bound by their oath to issue verdicts according to the constitution and the legislation passed by the parliament. No self-assumption, good belief, and religious code ever influence the decisions of the top adjudicators. The restriction imposed by Article 62 (1)(f) of the Constitution for the eligibility of candidates for public representatives serves the country's need and public interest for honest, upright, truthful, and trustworthy political leadership that deals in sensitive, national security and economic affairs and steers the nation through the crucial periods. Unfortunately, the modern-age adjudicators give more preferences to accused rights instead of moral values, the country's needs, and public interests otherwise no abluion could ever wash the stains of dishonesty and recline of any individual including a high-caliber leader and a layman. The incumbent judges have given the nation the idea of getting whitewashed experienced leadership to run the affairs of the country. Hopefully, no political party will challenge the court's decision because this laundry would also work for the shower of the PTI leaders, the Chaudharies, and several other saviours of the nation in the days to come.

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Everybody loses in an impending regional conflagration

Baria Alamuddin

THE situation on Lebanon's southern border already feels like a hot war, with a rapid escalation in two-way missile barrages. These clashes have caused the deaths of dozens of Lebanese civilians and well over 140 Hezbollah personnel. Lebanese Army positions have been repeatedly hit.

About 75,000 people have been displaced, schools have been closed and much of the south increasingly resembles a closed military zone. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said the latest exchanges were about "reinforcing the equilibrium of dissuasion," but there can be no equilibrium in open conflict - only countless victims and escalatory cycles of vengeance.

More than at any previous juncture since this conflict erupted, Nasrallah's latest sermon was defined by bellicose fighting talk. He bellowed about a "historic opportunity" to liberate lands occupied by Israel. "The war today," he said, "is not only for Palestine but also for Lebanon and its south, in particular the region south of the Litani River."

Some within Israel's leadership have been advocating a decisive confrontation with Hezbollah since the Hamas attack on Oct. 7 - to the horror of the US administration, which exerted all its diplomatic leverage to head off such an eventuality in the knowledge that America and its allies would be dragged into a widened conflict against Iran's plethora of regionwide paramilitary assets. Hundreds of thousands of Syrian and Iraqi militants would be expected to join the battle, with Bashar Al-Assad having little say over a fierce new front opening up throughout Syria. According to The Washington Post, the latest assessment by the US Defense Intelligence Agency is that Israel would struggle to prevail in a widened conflict with its forces heavily committed in Gaza. Israel's latest partial withdrawal of forces from Gaza is to some degree calculated with the eventuality of a northern eruption in mind.

As tensions further soared in recent days, the US deployed a new fusillade of diplomatic activity, including another regional

trip by Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The State Department said it was "in no one's interest - not Israel's, not the region's, not the world's - for this conflict to spread beyond Gaza." King Abdullah of Jordan warned Blinken of the "catastrophic repercussions" of the conflict. Visiting Lebanon, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell echoed the senti-

Sayed Razi Mousavi, a senior Quds Force commander, and a US strike killed a commander of the Nujaba faction of the Hashd Al-Shaabi. While Nasrallah and his acolytes have a reputation for issuing empty threats in response to such assassinations, matters are rapidly accelerating beyond anybody's ability to control them.

Hezbollah described subsequent rocket barrages as an "initial response" to Arouri's death, which Nasrallah said was "a major, dangerous crime about which we cannot be silent, adding that Lebanon in its entirety could fall victim to Israeli aggression if the assassination went unpunished. Only a few days before, an Israeli airstrike in Syria killed Sayyed Razi Mousavi, a senior Quds Force commander, and a US strike killed a commander of the Nujaba faction of the Hashd Al-Shaabi. While Nasrallah and his acolytes have a reputation for issuing empty threats in response to such assassinations, matters are rapidly accelerating beyond anybody's ability to control them.

ment that "nobody will win from a regional conflict." French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna told her Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian that "the risk of regional conflagration has never been so significant. Iran and its associates must immediately stop their destabilizing actions."

Last week's killing of Saleh Al-Arouri, Hamas's main emissary to Hezbollah and Iran, in an Israeli drone strike in Beirut may in retrospect be regarded as the moment when provocation passed the point of no return. Hezbollah described subsequent rocket barrages as an "initial response" to Arouri's death, which Nasrallah said was "a major, dangerous crime about which we cannot be silent, adding that Lebanon in its entirety could fall victim to Israeli aggression if the assassination went unpunished. Only a few days before, an Israeli airstrike in Syria killed

which commits both sides to a UN-monitored buffer zone and requires Hezbollah to withdraw beyond the Litani River. Nasrallah in his latest speech hinted that after the cessation of hostilities he could be open to border demarcation negotiations. This appears to be a focus of behind-the-scenes brinkmanship by Western interlocutors.

There is a comparable inflammatory situation of reciprocal retaliatory skirmishes between the US and Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria. Iraqi militias have already staged about 140 attacks against US targets since Oct. 7, drawing increasingly aggressive American retaliation. Western leaders are similarly bemused about how to halt Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping without further raising the temperature. More than 20 states have joined a coalition which, according to the Pentagon, will be a "high-way patrol" assisting commercial vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. As the missiles fly, hopes are fading that we can weather this conflict without a major regional conflagration, which would be a catastrophic failure of global diplomacy and mediocre leadership in allowing developments to advance to such a dire stage. But Nasrallah, Benjamin Netanyahu, Joe Biden and Ali Khamenei pay scant attention to the apocalyptic consequences of this scenario, despite long-visible glaring strategic threats posed by vast transnational paramilitary hordes and the stalled Middle East peace process.

We should take Netanyahu literally when he threatens to turn Lebanon and other states into Gaza, and do the math concerning the astronomical resulting death toll. The Middle East Institute estimated that Lebanese casualties could be in the range of 300,000 to 500,000, along with a massive evacuation of northern Israel. Maybe Israel and its Western allies can ultimately degrade the capabilities of Hezbollah, Hamas and their Iranian overlords - but not necessarily before they destroy sizable parts of Israel and the wider region. Pity the millions of lives set to be torn apart by these oncoming horrors.

Arab News

Israel in the dock as Gaza genocide case begins

Chris Doyle

THE term "genocide" has been widely debated regarding the Israeli onslaught on Gaza. Those to have made this grave accusation have included prominent legal figures, genocide experts and UN officials. Few charges could be more serious.

The merits of the accusation will this week be tested at public hearings at the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the UN. South Africa initiated proceedings against Israel on Dec. 29. It argues that there is an obligation on all states in Article 1 of the 1948 Genocide Convention "to prevent and punish the crime of genocide." South Africa is seeking to fulfill this obligation. How many other states will back its case? Turkey and Jordan have officially supported South Africa, as has the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

It is a damning 84-page application prepared by distinguished lawyers. Even if it turns out that it does not quite cross the court's line for genocide, it is a savage indictment of Israeli actions in Gaza that should shame the world for its inaction. Israel, as is its wont, responded in fury, a spokesman referring to South Africa's case as an "absurd blood libel." The threshold for the charge of genocide is high. It is a much tougher charge to make stick than war crimes, which are dealt with by the International Criminal Court.

This is the initial stage. The court has responded rapidly because it has the power to order preliminary measures to stop or prevent a genocide taking place if it determines that this is "plausible." This is a much lower threshold than will be adopted when the court makes its final determination on whether Israel has committed genocide - a process that typically takes about four years. In the case of Bosnia, the court took from 1993 to 2007, so it is understandable why it feels the need to make this initial finding. Are there precedents? The case Gambia brought against Myanmar is one. In 2022, the court accepted that Gambia had standing and ordered Myanmar to prevent the commission of genocidal acts against the Rohingya. That decision was revolutionary. It meant that a state party to a treaty that protects common legal rights can enforce those rights even if it is not directly affected by the violation. In March 2022, the International Court of Justice ordered Russia to halt its offensive in Ukraine - an order that was supposed to be legally binding. Moscow ignored it.

Both Israel and South Africa have ratified the Genocide Convention. There should not be any questions over jurisdiction, even though Tel Aviv may argue the point. One Israeli argument may be that the Palestinians in Gaza do not qualify as a national, ethnic, racial or religious group for the purposes of the convention. It cannot argue justification, as there is no legal, let alone moral, argument for genocide. All these arguments would be a slippery way to bypass the genocide charge - hardly an endorsement of Israeli actions. Has South Africa presented a sound case? No application can be 100 percent watertight. The argument is that Israel is

guilty by both intent and conduct. The issue of intent to commit genocide is typically a stumbling block. Those regimes that have done it in the past were rarely crazy enough to advertise their intent publicly. But South Africa argues that Israel has violated the Genocide Convention by failing to suppress "direct and public incitement to commit genocide."

Israeli leaders, including the president, prime minister and defense minister, have been surprisingly bold in their genocidal statements, as I have covered before. Members of the Knesset routinely refer to the need for Gaza to be "wiped out," "flattened," "erased" and "crushed." The court will not determine individual responsibility, but these figures were crucial in determining Israeli policy. As for Israel's conduct, the South African charge sheet is detailed with 574 footnotes. The application notes not just what Israel has done to Gaza since Oct. 7, but also its previous policies, including the 16-year-old blockade of the Strip and the 56-year-old occupation that has left the Palestinian population extremely vulnerable. It presents a pattern of Israeli behavior geared toward rendering Gaza uninhabitable.

The submission also highlights how Israel has, since Oct. 7, tried to deny the civilian population objects indispensable to their survival through a "total siege" and the targeting of key civilian infrastructure. It points to how Israel has destroyed in excess of 355,000 Palestinian homes. It cites the forced displacement of 85 percent of the population. The widespread Israeli attack on Gazan healthcare is another key element. What happens if the court determines that there are "plausible grounds" that a genocide is in progress. It can order preventive measures that are, in theory, binding. South Africa proposes nine very specific actions, including the cessation of all Israeli military actions in Gaza.

Those states that have been arming Israel or facilitating its arming will reject the charge that Tel Aviv is committing genocide, but will be shaken by any such finding. Leaders and officials could land up in legal difficulties on the grounds of complicity. This is why the US was quickly out of the blocks to condemn the document. A US spokesman described the charges as "meritless, counterproductive and completely without any basis in fact whatsoever." Would states like the UK be content to continue to trade in arms with Israel?

This may just be the opening round in a long series of legal battles for Israel. The International Court of Justice may set the tone for others to follow. If it rejects the South African application, Israel will claim victory and act as the victim of a grand antisemitic conspiracy. If the court accepts the arguments, the International Criminal Court may feel under greater pressure to deliver its own verdicts on alleged war crimes perpetrated by both Israel and Hamas. Many will feel that the whole international justice system is in the dock. Given what Israel has done, can these judicial organs do what the major international powers have failed to do for so long and hold Israel to account? It may be a long journey.

Petty corruption not trivial in anti-graft war

ANTI-CORRUPTION supervisory bodies at all levels intensified the campaign against corruption in 2023, achieving new success and advancing the comprehensive and strict governance of the Communist Party of China. A prominent feature of the anti-corruption campaign in 2023 was the drive to eradicate corruption in specific industries, systems and regions.

Strict measures were taken to uproot corruption in sectors such as financing, State-owned enterprises, healthcare, sports, grain procurement and sales, rural revitalization, tobacco and falsification of statistics. This shift from individual cases to eradication of corruption and improving governance in specific sectors marked a significant advancement in the fight against corruption.

Another distinctive aspect of the 2023 anti-corruption drive was the resolute crackdown on new and

covert forms of corruption. The anti-corruption campaign's focus on more complex issues revealed some new forms of corruption such as "false transactions", "shadow companies", and profiteering through "shadow shareholders". Supervisory bodies closely studied these new forms of corruption, and intensified efforts to eradicate them. The rigorous scrutiny of "petty corruption" was a notable feature of the 2023 anti-corruption campaign. Petty corruption refers to corruption that directly affects the general public. Focusing on areas such as employment and entrepreneurship, education, healthcare, eldercare, social security, environmental protection, workplace safety, and food and drug safety, the authorities investigated corruption-related activities like embezzlement, misappropriation of funds, false reporting and extortion. They made special efforts to address petty cor-

ruption affecting people's livelihoods, and launched a targeted campaign to uproot corruption in fields such as rural revitalization, by scrutinizing funds intended for agricultural development. Special emphasis was placed on simultaneously investigating bribe takers and givers in 2023, and more efforts were made to punish bribery, focusing especially on recurrent, large-scale and politically damaging cases. Probing into the "blacklist" system for bribe givers, supervisory bodies handled 12,000 bribery cases in the first three quarters of 2023. 2,365 individuals were referred to the procuratorial authorities. While global collaboration in the fight against corruption was deepened, in order to pursue fugitives, 1,278 individuals were repatriated to China, including 140 Party members and State officials, and 48 individuals with "red notices"

Wu Ge

from January to November 2023. Also, about 2.91 billion yuan (\$405 million) was recovered.

Besides, the Belt and Road Initiative was leveraged to promote clean business operations, exemplified by hosting the thematic forum on Clean Silk Road during the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. Adhering to the eight-point agenda to improve Party and government conduct, the Party acted on its commitment to rectify the "four undesirable work styles": formalities for formalities' sake, bureaucratism, hedonism and extravagance. In particular, efforts were made to address the problems of formalism and bureaucratism, rectifying the mechanical implementations of policies and the arbitrary use of power. And while investigating and addressing the root causes of corrup-

tion, the authorities focused on regional, sectoral and phase-specific characteristics, so as to solve the recurring problems.

The revised Regulations of the CPC Disciplinary Action was issued in December 2023 to ensure the Party's disciplinary measures are implemented to strengthen internal supervision and use accountability tools to ensure Party committees at all levels shoulder their responsibilities.

The scope and depth of inspections, too, were expanded in 2023, with increased focus on younger cadres, and early interventions to prevent corruption and strengthen governance, with the measures promoting a clean culture in the new era and especially emphasizing on family values, prompting people to reject corruption and help foster a wholesome ethical environment. Throughout 2023, supervisory bodies promoted clean governance

while cracking down on corruption. In the first three quarters, they handled 1.28 million leads, initiated 470,000 cases and disciplined 405,000 individuals - these figures were noticeably higher than those for 2022.

This year, too, supervisory bodies at all levels will adopt a strict stance against corruption, taking stringent measures to build an ethical atmosphere, and intensifying the anti-corruption campaign in key areas to eradicate petty corruption. In 2024, while comprehensively enforcing the eight-point decision remains an ongoing and essential task, greater efforts will be made to strengthen the Party's disciplinary structure. And by intensifying political inspections to eradicate corruption, the authorities will intensify the anti-corruption campaign, ensuring victory in the fight against corruption.

The China Daily

How Palestinians have become the victims of Zionist history

THOUSANDS of miles separate Uganda and the Congo from the Gaza Strip, but these places are connected to Palestine in ways that traditional geopolitical analyses fail to explain. It was last week revealed that the far-right Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu is actively discussing proposals to expel millions of Palestinians to African countries in exchange for a fixed price.

The discussion on expelling millions of Gazans has supposedly entered mainstream thinking in Israel since Oct. 7. But the fact that this discussion remains active more than three months after the start of the Israeli war on Gaza indicates that the proposals are not an outcome of a specific historical moment, such as the Al-Aqsa Flood operation. Even a quick glance at historical Israeli records point to the fact that the mass expulsion of Palestinians - known in Israel as "transfer" - was, and remains, a major strategy that aims at fixing the country's so-called demographic problem.

Long before fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian movements stormed the fence separating besieged Gaza from Israel on Oct. 7, Israeli politicians discussed on many occasions how to reduce the overall Palestinian population to maintain the demographic Jewish majority in historic Palestine. This idea is not confined to Israel's extremists, as it has also been discussed by the likes of former Defense Minister Avidgor Lieberman, who in 2014 suggested a population exchange plan. Even supposedly liberal intellectuals and historians have supported this idea, both

in principle and practice.

Top Israeli historian Benny Morris regretted, during an interview with the liberal Israeli newspaper Haaretz in 2004, that Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, failed to expel all Palestinians during the Nakba - the catastrophic event of murder and ethnic cleansing that led to the creation of the state of Israel on top of Palestinian towns and villages. Further proof that the idea of transfer was not concocted on the spur of the moment is the fact that comprehensive plans were immediately produced after Oct. 7. They included a position paper published on Oct. 17 by Israeli think tank the Misgav Institute for National Security and Zionist Strategy that described the war on Gaza as "a unique and rare opportunity to evacuate the entire Gaza Strip." A document uncovered a few days later by the Israeli news outlet Calcalist proposed the same strategy.

The fact that Egypt, Jordan and other Arab countries openly and immediately declared their total rejection of the expulsion of Palestinians indicates the degree of seriousness of those official Israeli proposals. "Our problem is (finding) countries that are willing to absorb Gazans, and we are working on it," Netanyahu said last week. These comments were followed by others, including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich saying: "What needs to be done in the Gaza Strip is to encourage emigration."

It was then that the official Israeli discourse adopted the term "voluntary migration." But there is nothing voluntary about the starvation of 2.3

million Palestinians, who continue to face an ongoing genocide and are being pushed systematically toward the border region between Gaza and Egypt. In its legal case at the International Court of Justice, the government of South Africa included Israel's planned ethnic cleansing of Gaza as one of its main points, accusing Israel of genocide.

Due to a lack of enthusiasm on the part of pro-Israel countries in the West, Israeli diplomats are traveling the globe looking for governments that are willing to accept ethnically cleansed Palestinians. Imagine if this behavior stemmed from any other country in the world; a country that murders people en masse, yet shops around looking for other states to accept the expelled survivors in exchange for cash. Not only has Israel made a mockery of international law, but it has also set new standards of despicable behavior by any state, anywhere in the world and at any time in history, ancient or modern.

And yet, the world continues to watch and support - as in the case of the US - or gently or vehemently protest, but without taking a single meaningful action to stop the bloodbath in Gaza or to block the terrifying scenarios that could follow if the war does not end. But there is one thing that many people might not know: The Zionist movement, the ideological institution that established Israel, had attempted to move the world's Jewry to Africa to establish a state prior to historic Palestine becoming the "Jewish homeland." This was the "Uganda Program" of 1903. It was

raised by Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, at the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. The Uganda Program eventually fell through and the Zionists refocused their attention on Palestine - much to the misfortune of the Palestinians.

If one were to compare the genocidal language of the Israeli leaders of today and study their racist references to Palestinians, there would be a major overlap between their collective perception and the way that Jewish communities were perceived by Europeans for hundreds of years. The sudden Zionist interest in the Congo as a potential "homeland" for Palestinians further illustrates the point that the movement continues to live in the shadow of its own history, projecting the discrimination practiced against Jews in Israel's own racism against innocent Palestinians. Minister of Heritage Amichai Eliyahu on Friday proposed that Israelis "must find ways for Gazans that are more painful than death."

One does not need to struggle to find historical references that used similar language, such as Germany's Nazis in their depiction of Jews.

If history does repeat itself, then it has an odd and unkind way of doing so. We have been told that the world has learned from the mass killings of previous wars, including the Holocaust and other Second World War atrocities. Yet, it seems that the lessons have largely gone unlearned. Not only is Israel now assuming the role of the mass killer, but the rest of the Western world continues to play the role assigned to them in this historical tragedy. They are either cheering, politely protesting or doing nothing at all.

Putin is starting 2024 from a position of strength

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin entered 2024 with the confidence of a man who is sensing that he might be gaining the upper hand in a wrestling match against a far superior rival. Just a few weeks earlier, he had announced his intention to run for re-election during a ceremony awarding medals to Russian veterans of the war in Ukraine. The conflict has featured prominently in his election campaign, reflecting his apparent belief that its outcome will be in his favour.

The far superior rival Putin is confronting, of course, is not Ukraine. From the Kremlin's perspective, Russia is engaged in an epic battle against the entire Western military machine, to which Ukraine has recklessly offered itself as a battlefield and a source of gun fodder. This narrative is what the Russian leadership genuinely believes in and what it is successfully peddling to the Russian public. Conveniently, it also serves as an excuse for Russia's own military setbacks during 2022 - the failure to crush Ukrainian resistance expertly as well as the subsequent loss of occupied territory later that year.

In 2023, Russia did not make any spectacular gains on the battlefield, but neither did it lose ground. The highly anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive failed miserably to achieve any major and strategic progress - to the Kremlin's delight. The collapse of the Russian economy that many had hoped would precipitate the demise of Putin's regime also did not materialise. The economy is, in fact, in overdrive due to the unprecedented military spending, with the national gross domestic product (GDP) growing faster than the world's average, wages rising at a record rate and the percentage of people living in poverty falling back to levels not seen since the collapse of the USSR. This overdrive may backfire, but not too soon and likely not catastrophically.

The political regime is also more stable than it has ever been. The war allowed Putin to cleanse the political field of any type of opposition. The armed rebellion staged by the Wagner Group generated a lot of excitement in hawkish circles in the West, but it turned out to be an

Leonid Ragozin

entirely inconsequential event, as this author warned soon after it happened. That the war has not weakened Putin and is unlikely to do so if it continues appears to be an idea Western political elites find difficult to digest. Western war cheerleaders continue to push for a military solution and stir fears of an expansion of the conflict.

Last month, Belgian army chief Michel Hofman said Russia would likely target Moldova and the Baltic states. Echoing him, former US ambassador to the United Nations and current presidential candidate, Nikki Haley, suggested in a January 5 tweet that Russia also intends to attack Poland, which has one of the largest armies in NATO. But a series of revelations by one Ukrainian negotiator and a number of foreign officials about the peace talks, which were held in Istanbul in March 2022, exposed some uncomfortable truths: namely, that Russia's real appetite at the beginning of the war was far more modest and largely confined to keeping Ukraine out of NATO. The Kremlin's initial plan of full-out invasion appears to have been a scaled-up version of its war on Georgia in 2008 - a punitive and terrorising act designed to "Finlandise" rather than fully subjugate Ukraine.

"Finlandisation" refers to the idea that Ukraine could build its relations with Russia following Finland's template during the Cold War. This would entail military non-alignment but also near-full political independence from Russia and a de facto political alliance with the West. The term became a dirty word in the Western "securitocratic" circles that were nudging Ukraine towards making no compromises with Russia. As it stands now, this war is likely to end with a very similar kind of arrangement, with Ukraine paying a steep price: losing more of its territory, enduring the consequences of destroyed infrastructure and large swaths of land covered with mines and cluster bombs, and suffering immense human losses which the Ukrainian government prefers not to disclose.

There are many unanswered questions that will be the subject of controversy for decades to come. Was the war avoidable?

What pushed Putin to order a full-out invasion after a year of brinkmanship? Who encouraged Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to stand firm rather than succumb to Russian pressure? Was Ukraine's very existence really at stake, as Ukrainian war cheerleaders claim? Or did it pay this enormous price for an illusory NATO membership prospect as well as the right to pursue questionable nation-building goals, such as squeezing the Russian language out of public space and knocking down monuments of Russian poets and communist heroes?

Spin doctors will certainly try to frame any future peace arrangement as Ukraine's victory by claiming it would have failed much worse had it dared to put up a fight. As we near the end of the second year since the full-scale invasion, both the United States and the European Union are struggling to secure funding for Ukraine's war effort due to internal opposition.

Over the New Year, Russia launched massive missile and drone attacks, trying to exhaust the Ukrainian air defence and hoping that in the absence of funding, it would eventually run out of expensive missiles for anti-aircraft systems. If it succeeds, it will proceed to methodically destroy Ukrainian military infrastructure by bomber planes, precipitating Ukraine's military collapse faster than many would have imagined. These days, Ukraine looks like it has been thrown under the proverbial bus more than ever since the start of the full-out invasion. And so does the Russian pro-Western opposition as well as much of what the West achieved by bringing the Cold War to a peaceful end whereby its totalitarian rival, the USSR, disbanded itself of its own volition.

The West and Russia are in many ways back to square one, with a new version of the Cold War likely setting in after the hot phase of the war in Ukraine ends. This will be tragic for the people of Ukraine, Russia and the whole of Europe. But not for the military-industrial complexes and "securitocratic" elites on both sides of the newly-formed geopolitical rift, and not least for their most notorious embodiment - Vladimir Putin.

Aljazeera

Why SC will probably put Trump back on ballot in Colorado and nationwide

MORE than any US Supreme Court case in decades, former President Trump's appeal of the Colorado decision disqualifying him from the state's primary ballot combines huge political moment with a scarcity of guiding law. For the court, which announced last week that it would hear the case on a warp-speed schedule, that is a precarious combination that exposes it to accusations of political bias.

So how will the court rule? I think it will be loath to permit a patchwork result in which Trump appears on the ballot in some states but not in others. To avoid such a patchwork, a majority of the justices is likely to reverse the Colorado Supreme Court's ruling that Trump engaged in insurrection and is therefore ineligible for office under the 14th Amendment. And the court will probably do so in a way that also prevents other states from removing the former president from the ballot.

As the court arguably has in other landmark decisions, it may well act politically in the sense that it will be most concerned about the practical result. That's different from saying that the decision will break down along party lines. A nakedly partisan outcome akin to the Bush vs. Gore opinion would be a disaster for the court's already diminished reputation. The majority could well consist of those most likely to share Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr.'s concern for the court's standing and hesitation to intrude on the election. Such a majority would be more likely to include justices open to institutionalist arguments, such as Elena Kagan and Brett M.

Harry Litman

Kavanaugh, than far-right rebels Samuel J. Alito Jr. and Clarence Thomas. That kind of coalition might favor a rationale that is less than pristine but serves broader social and political goals.

An early sign of such a consensus is the court's unanimous order accepting the case and setting an expedited timetable, with oral argument scheduled in a month. The later the court acts, the more intrusive and controversial its role will be. The court also preserved maximum flexibility in taking the case. Instead of considering the limited legal questions presented by the Colorado Republican Party or the challengers to Trump's qualification for the ballot, the justices accepted Trump's broader question. That means that any of the seven or so bases for reversal set out in Trump's petition are fair game.

It's difficult at this point to imagine the court upholding the Colorado opinion and thereby also allowing each state to make its own determination as to whether the Republican front-runner appears on the ballot. I don't think such an arrangement would be unconstitutional, but it would be an ugly outcome that would be laid directly at the court's feet.

The Constitution does accord a significant role to the states in electing the president, so much so that the winner of the national popular vote has lost two of the last six elections. I don't think the framers would have been bothered by the prospect of different states having different candidates on their presidential ballots. But they didn't anticipate a national two-party system either.

In 2024, the social, cul-

tural and political fact is that the presidential election is a fully national contest that will play out according to quaint and obscure state rules. For one of the two major-party candidates to be missing from some state ballots and not others could encourage even more Americans to refuse to recognize the election's legitimacy. I think the court would regard that as abhorrent. Moreover, it would be virtually impossible for the court to devise a one-size-fits-all solution that bans Trump from the ballot in every state. The court is not a fact-finding body, and this case doesn't begin to present the sort of record from which it could conclude that Trump "engaged in insurrection" under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment. The justices could find that Colorado's determination was not in error under federal law, but that's a far cry from ensuring the same result in every other state.

That's why a majority of the justices is more likely to reverse the Colorado Supreme Court under a principle of federal law that also shuts down parallel efforts to remove Trump from the ballot in Maine, Massachusetts, Illinois and other states. Trump's petition provides the justices with several means of doing so, from finding fault with the Colorado court's definition of "insurrection" to determining that the president is not an "officer" of the United States. All these means of reversing the Colorado decision have significant flaws. But given the political, legal and practical considerations before the court, I believe it will settle on one of them to avoid even messier consequences.

The Los Angeles Times

To stop NHS doctors from going to Australia, bring Australian healthcare here

If the NHS is so wonderful, why do its staff keep threatening to emigrate? There is a bizarre contradiction in what junior doctors' leaders tell us. On the one hand, they point to figures showing that thousands of clinicians are going overseas, where working conditions are less stressful. On the other, they hit the roof at any suggestion that NHS structures might be brought into line with these other systems.

Obviously, doctors want to be paid more. Who doesn't? And it is true that, in common with the rest of us, NHS staff have seen their pay fall as a result of the lockdown - a lockdown, by the way, which the BMA wanted to be even longer.

British medics are at the upper end of global salary leagues, but not at the very top. Although it is difficult to make like-with-like comparisons, surveys place them behind their counterparts in other wealthy states such as Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Australia. Yet it remains taboo to point out that all these countries have mixed healthcare systems, in which public and private hospitals coexist. The NHS is unique in being able to exploit its position as a monopoly employer. The world's best-paid doctors are to be found in the US and Switzerland. I'm going to leave the US aside for a moment. One of the odder aspects of our debate is the widespread belief that the only alternative to the NHS is the American model, which is hugely expensive and which offers a raw deal to the poor. (Funnily enough, the reverse is also true: American defenders of their status quo have done a terrific job of convincing voters that the only alternative is Britain's NHS, with its long waiting times and poor cancer survival rates.)

No, let's instead take Switzerland, which devotes as much a share of GDP as us in healthcare expenditure - 11.3 per cent in 2022, according to the OECD, putting our two countries in joint sixth place, above Australia and New Zealand. I happen to be typing these words in Switzerland. Indeed, at the risk of irritating my readers, I am typing them in a ski resort, where I come every year as part of a British parliamentary team to be humiliated in a series of races against Swiss MPs.

A few years ago, while attempting an over-ambitious jump, I knocked myself out and, when I came round, found that I was being stretched to the local hospital. That evening, a polite man in a suit came to my bedside and introduced himself as the chairman of the governing body. "May I ask how long it took for you to see a doctor after being admitted?"

"Well, it was right away. I mean, probably less than five minutes." "This is good. We have a target that everyone should be seen by a doctor within 15 minutes, and I am happy to say that we have a 100 per cent record of meeting it".

"No, really? In my country, the target is four hours, and we only meet that something like 70 per cent of the time." He looked at me sympathetically. "Ah. So you are from Great Britain?"

Unless you have lived overseas, it is hard to convey the extent to which our healthcare system is an object of global pity. When I was in Brussels, a friend who had recently had a baby told me that her obstetrician assumed she had moved to Belgium for the sole purpose of not having to give birth in a British hospital. As an MEP, I was struck by the fact that no main-

stream socialist party in Europe wanted to adopt the British model - although one or two Marxist parties liked the idea. Indeed, no healthcare model on the Continent has remotely resembled ours since the early 1990s, when former Warsaw Pact states dismantled their NHS-style monoliths. Yet these truths, uncontroversial in Brussels, could not be voiced in Britain. The NHS was treated as something that should be above politics: unsullied, immaculate, eternal. As David Prior, then chairman of the Care Quality Commission, put it, "When things were going wrong, people didn't say anything. If you criticised the NHS, the attitude was 'how dare you?'"

I experienced that attitude when I suggested on an American TV programme that the US should not copy the British model. I had, I soon learned, committed the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. I may have been only a backbench MEP, but my comments led BBC bulletins, prompted outraged questions in Parliament and led angry protesters to harass my elderly mother in her flat. All because I did not think the rest of the world should copy our system. Far worse was to talk openly about poor provision. When a brave nurse exposed failings at Mid Staffs, she claims to have been threatened. An inquiry found serious failings at the hospital, in part because the first reaction was not to address the problems identified by whistleblowers, but to protect producer interests.

I'm afraid the same motive appears to animate today's strikers. For all their cant about protecting the NHS, they are making unreasonable demands because they think that, in any dispute between doctors and

ministers, the public will back the doctors regardless of the merits of their case. Never mind that, in their first year of training, junior doctors' median earnings are already above the national average. Never mind that they have just been awarded an 8.8 per cent pay uplift. They are appealing to faith, not reason.

Yet satisfaction with the NHS has halved over three years, according to British Social Attitudes, falling to just 29 per cent. People are asking whether being told yet again to "protect the NHS" is getting things back to front. A study by the King's Fund last year ranked the NHS ranked second-to-last for saving patients with treatable illnesses. In order to "protect the NHS", people were staying away too long and being seen too late. And while a vague sense remains that the problem is with underfunding, this is chiefly a perception lag - like thinking that British food is terrible, or that Germany is militaristic. To repeat, Britain and Switzerland are joint sixth in the world when it comes to healthcare spending as a share of GDP, and we are outperformed by many countries that spend far less than we do.

No, the problem is not with funding, but with a structure that gives consumers no power over producers. In any other field of life, this would be obvious. If supermarkets were replaced by a National Food Service, funded out of general taxation and free at the point of use, we'd be poorer and hungrier. But faith, by definition, is unattached to evidence. So we refuse to point out the obvious, namely that clinicians would be better paid, and patients better served, if we ended our state monopoly. Instead of sending doctors to Australia, we should bring Australia's model here.

The Telegraph

The Lloyd Austin incident sheds harsh light on Biden's team

IN the midst of an international crisis involving the US military, the top civilian leader of the Pentagon was hospitalized for days without the commander in chief knowing his whereabouts. The absence of Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin is a surprising development that puts a harsh light on President Joe Biden's national security team. And the odd thing is that there may be very little Biden can do about it, practically speaking.

For the past week, Austin has been at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center outside of Washington DC, where he was admitted on Monday, January 1, after he experienced "severe pain" following an elective surgery on December 22. For at least part of his time in the hospital, Austin was in the intensive care unit. The White House wasn't informed until Thursday of Austin's condition, nor were senior Pentagon officials like Austin's number two at the Pentagon, Kathleen Hicks. Typically, the US Secretary of Defense is a savvy politician like former Sen. William Cohen, who served under former President Bill Clinton or former Rep. Leon Panetta, who served under former President Barack Obama, or a longtime Washington player like Robert Gates, who was appointed by former President George W. Bush but also served under Obama.

Despite his decades of military experience, Austin is neither a politician nor a longtime DC insider, and instead is known to be an introvert who only gives public speeches and interviews relatively

infrequently. Austin's introversion and seeming lack of Washington savvy may help explain why he and his team didn't give senior US national security officials a heads-up about his condition. The Pentagon has also offered up the rationale that Austin's chief of staff, Kelly Magsamen, was out with flu when the Secretary of Defense was first hospitalized, but the Pentagon is the world's largest employer with 2.86 million employees, so the notion that relaying Austin's condition hinged on only one of them is confounding.

Everyone is entitled to keep their own medical information to themselves or to select people, but that doesn't preclude telling others that you are out of commission for a few days, especially when you are the US secretary of defense. That role, among other things, puts you in the room for decisions involving nuclear weapons, although the president has the sole authority to order the launch of those weapons. Biden tapped Austin to be secretary of defense in part because of their previous experience together. When Biden was vice president and was running the Iraq portfolio for the Obama administration, Austin was the top general who presided over the US withdrawal of troops from Iraq in 2011. Austin also served as Central Command (CENTCOM) commander, where he helped lead the fight against ISIS in Iraq from 2014 during the Obama administration.

Yet, Austin does not seem to be part of Biden's true national security inner circle, which includes US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, both of whom have worked with Biden very closely for many years. This may help explain why no one at the White House noticed that Austin was gone, or why, perhaps, they simply may have assumed he was on vacation. Austin was hospitalized on January 1 - a federal holiday. But that is not much of a defense, since the Situation Room at the White House operates 24/7, and a simple call or email to the Situation Room staff from anyone on Austin's team should have been enough to inform the rest of the cabinet and their key deputies what was going on with Austin.

There has rarely been a more fraught time during the Biden administration for the US secretary of defense to be out of commission than now. Consider that on Thursday, a US drone strike killed the leader of an Iranian-based militia in Baghdad, the Iraqi capital. The Baghdad strike was authorized before Austin was admitted to hospital. Iranian-backed militias have launched more than 100 attacks against US troops in Syria and Iraq since Hamas attacked Israel three months ago. The strike in Baghdad was a calculated risk by the Biden administration, especially since there are growing calls in Iraq, including from the Iraqi prime minister on Friday, to expel the 2,500 US troops that remain in the

country on a mission to counter ISIS.

On Wednesday the US and a dozen other allied nations warned the Houthi, an Iranian-backed militia that controls much of Yemen, that they must stop their attacks on commercial shipping in the strategic shipping lanes of the Red Sea or face unspecified consequences, which presumably would involve US military action against Houthi targets. Meanwhile, Hezbollah and Israel seem to be inching ever closer to an all-out war.

The Middle East is on fire, and one of America's chief firefighters was AWOL. Over the weekend, Austin released a statement saying he "could have done a better job ensuring the public was appropriately informed." That hardly seems the point since Austin and his team did a terrible job keeping the president and other senior national security officials informed of his condition, which went unmentioned in Austin's apology. So, what, if anything, can Biden do? Probably not much. A public reprimand of Austin by Biden would also only serve to reinforce the view held by Republican critics that the Biden team isn't especially competent.

If Biden fired Austin, he would only bring more attention to the issue, and in this political environment, finding another candidate for the position and getting them confirmed by the US Senate would be a very heavy lift. So, it's likely that the best Biden can do is to make sure it doesn't happen again.

CNN



Pakistan, Egypt to focus economic sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Egypt on Tuesday agreed to focus on fostering collaboration in key economic sectors, including agriculture, textiles, engineering, and services.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz, Federal Minister for Commerce, Industries and Investments, engaged in discussions with Ahmed Samir, the Minister of Commerce of Egypt and Chief Guest of the 4th Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference (PATDC) and Single Country Exhibition (SCE), said a press release issued here on Tuesday.

Both parties recognized

the mutual benefits that can arise from expanding economic and trade ties between Pakistan and Egypt.

The meeting, held in the presence of policymakers and business leaders from various countries, facilitated a convergence of diverse ideas and opinions, creating an enriching environment for meaningful discussions.

This event serves as a crucial platform aimed at fostering economic ties and exploring investment opportunities between Pakistan and Egypt.

The discussions underscored the commitment of

both nations to deepening economic cooperation and leveraging each other's strengths in key sectors.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz reiterated Pakistan's commitment to making Pakistani markets accessible to the MENA region.

The focus is on achieving this goal by strengthening economic ties with MENA economies, with discussions centred around the potential for collaboration in agriculture, textiles, engineering, and services.

This commitment aligns seamlessly with the Look Africa policy, emphasizing

Pakistan's objective to unlock its economic and trade potential.

The focus is on facilitating investments and making markets more accessible, contributing to the broader goals of economic growth and cooperation.

The 4th PATDC and SCE not only serve as a platform for bilateral discussions but also as a catalyst for the exchange of ideas and strategies to enhance economic ties.

The event sets the stage for further collaboration, paving the way for increased cooperation and mutual prosperity.

EFU Life partners with Mindshare to drive digital transformation



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Mindshare has partnered with EFU Life, a leading life insurance and family takaful provider, to drive the brand's digital marketing strategy. This collaboration aims to introduce a data-driven media

approach that communicates the benefits and importance of life insurance and financial well-being.

Mohammed Ali Ahmed, CEO & MD EFU Life, expressing his thoughts on the partnership said, 'Leveraging on all digital

channels for engaging with potential and existing customers, and tapping into new segments is a key part of EFU Life's strategy.

With this partnership, our goal is to leverage the media expertise of Mindshare to curate effective communication and

use data to enhance the impact of our outreach.'

Amna Khatib Paracha, CDO of GroupM & MD of Mindshare, added, 'At GroupM, we believe in bringing data upfront into our strategies and tailoring the communication based on the needs of businesses and audiences. With EFU's market approach and Mindshare's media expertise, we aim to elevate the online presence of the insurance industry.'

Mindshare operates as an agency under the umbrella of GroupM Pakistan, renowned for its digital and media services provided to businesses across Pakistan. GroupM Pakistan serves as a regional entity of GroupM Global, operational in regions including Asia, Australia, the Middle East, and Europe.



CAIRO: Federal Minister for Commerce Industries and Investments Dr. Gohar Ejaz meeting with Minister of Public Enterprises of Egypt Mahmoud Mostafa Kamal Esmat at 4th Pakistan Africa Trade Development conference and single country exhibition.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships namely, MSC Jemima, MSC Antigua, Yihai, Flex Volunteer and Curacao carrying Containers, Palm Kernel, LNG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Gas Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Blue Bird and Al-Sadd are also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on same day to unload Petroleum Product and LNG respectively.

A total of ten ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, MSC Jemima, MSC Antigua, Oriental Jasmine and Maersk Tacoma are left the port on today morning and another ship 'Sibulk Tradition' is expected to sail on same day.

A cargo volume of 123,382 tonnes, comprising 86,268 tonnes imports cargo and 37,114 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,695 Containers (628 TEUs Imports and 2,067 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 05 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Blue Bird, Al-Sadd and MSC Desire & another ship, Maersk Detroit carrying Gas oil, LNG and Containers are expected to take berths at FOTCO, EETL and QICIT respectively on Tuesday, while two more container ships, Kyparissia and X-Press Bardsey are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Wednesday.

Interbank rate falls Tuesday

BEIJING (APP): The overnight Shanghai Interbank Offered Rate (Shibor), which measures the borrowing cost of China's interbank market, lost 0.3 basis points to 1.582 percent Tuesday.

The seven-day rate gained 1.8 basis points to 1.79 percent, the one-month rate went down 0.8 basis points to 2.304 percent, and the one-year rate dropped 0.5 basis points to 2.48 percent.

Shibor is a simple, no-guarantee, wholesale interest rate calculated by arithmetically averaging all the interbank RMB lending rates offered by the price quotation group of 18 commercial banks with a high credit rating, with the four highest and four lowest quotations excluded.

Aramco's move, which fanned concerns that supply was far outstripping demand, particularly with China's economy still struggling. The commodity in 2023 suffered its first annual loss since Covid-ravaged 2020 as non-OPEC+ producers filled in for output lost through cuts by Riyadh and other members of the cartel.

Analysts said prices could be even lower if it was not for geopolitical tensions in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Bitcoin was sitting around \$46,500, having broken \$47,000 on Monday for the first time since April 2022 on bets US regulators will approve exchange-traded funds that invest directly in the cryptocurrency.

Stock Exchange loses 66 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a nominal negative change of 0.10 percent on Tuesday by losing 66.45 points, closing at 64,170.58 points against 64,237.03 points the previous trading day.

A total of 448,990,545 shares valuing Rs.12.281 billion were traded during the day as compared to 484,012,978 shares valuing Rs. 12.744 billion the last day.

Some 352 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 141 of them recorded gains and 187 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 24 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric with 113,954,346 shares at Rs.5.75 per share, Hascol Petrol with 36,113,000 shares at Rs.8.00 per share and PIAC(A) with 19,810,500 shares at Rs.8.99 per share.

Sapphire Fibres Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.119.00 per share price, closing at Rs.1,784.00, whereas the runner-up was Pak Suzuki

Motor Company with a Rs.54.25 rise in its per share price to Rs.777.56.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.50.00 per share closing at Rs.8,200.00, followed by Bata Pakistan Limited with Rs.40.98 decline to close at Rs.1,678.01.

Rupee gains 06 paise against Dollar

The Pakistani Rupee on Tuesday witnessed an appreciation of 06 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs281.22 against the previous day's closing of Rs281.28.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.9 and Rs283.4 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 55 paise to close at Rs308.10 against the last day's closing of Rs307.55, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.95, whereas an increase of Rs1.11 was wit-

nessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs358.36 compared to the last closing of Rs357.25.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 02 each to close at Rs76.56 and Rs74.98 respectively.

Gold rates increase by Rs.300 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.300 and was sold at Rs.216,400 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs. 216,100 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 257 to Rs.185,528 from Rs.185,271 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.170,067 from Rs. 169,832 the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs.2,660 and 2,280.52 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$3 to \$2,050 from \$2,047, the Association reported.

China sees robust expansion in new entities

BEIJING (APP): China recorded a surge in the number of new taxpaying business entities in the first 11 months of 2023, official data showed Tuesday. The data indicates the country's economic vitality.

The country saw 15.15 million newly-registered business entities handling tax-related businesses during the January-November period of 2023, up 25.4 percent year on year,

according to the State Taxation Administration.

A breakdown of the data showed that over 4.55 million such business entities, or 30.1 percent of the total, engaged in new industries, new business forms and new models, with the proportion up 2.5 percentage points compared with the same period in 2022, the administration said.

By sectors, the number of new taxpaying business entities in the internet and

information technology service sector registered a fast expansion, up 32 percent year on year during the period.

The administration will continue to work to ensure better implementation of the tax and fee reduction policies, amid efforts to support the development of technological innovation and manufacturing industry, said Shen Xinguo, an official with the administration.

Tokyo's Nikkei hits 33 year-high

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher on Tuesday on the back of gains in US tech stocks, pushing the Nikkei index to a 33-year high.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index climbed 1.16 percent, or 385.76 points, to end at 33,763.18, while the broader Topix index added 0.82 percent, or 19.55 points, to 2,413.09.

"Buying dominated a wide range of stocks in Tokyo as a series of economic indicators, including the jobs report, raised

expectations of a soft landing for the US economy and high-tech shares gained" in New York, Iwai Cosmo Securities said.

The Nikkei climbed to its highest level since March 1990.

Overnight, the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite index surged 2.2 percent.

The dollar fetched 143.97 yen in Asian trade, against 144.19 yen in New York late Monday.

In Tokyo trading, chip-linked shares were higher with Advantest surging

6.04 percent to 4,945 yen and Tokyo Electron jumping 3.27 percent to 24,910 yen.

Sony Group gained 1.29 percent to 13,340 yen while Nintendo soared 4.36 percent to 6,538 yen.

Japan's household spending dropped 2.9 percent year-on-year in November, the 13th consecutive monthly decline, according to data released by the internal affairs ministry before the opening bell.

The data did not prompt a strong market reaction.

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan increase by 9.10% in five months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to Afghanistan witnessed an increase of 9.10 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

The overall exports to Afghanistan were recorded at US \$232.697 million during July-November (2023-24) against exports of US \$213.282 million during July-November (2022-23), SBP data

revealed.

On a year-to-year basis, the exports to Afghanistan also surged by 39.30 per cent from \$37.263 million in November 2022, against the exports of \$51.911 million in November 2023.

Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to Afghanistan however witnessed a nominal decline of 0.50 per cent during November 2023 as compared to the exports of \$52.177 million in October 2023, the SBP data revealed.

Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries

witnessed an increase of 4.99 per cent in the first five months, from US \$11.915 billion to US \$12.510 billion, the SBP data revealed.

On the other hand, the imports from Afghanistan into the country during the months under review were recorded at US \$3.187 million against US \$11.523 million last year, showing a decline of 72.34 per cent in July-November (2023-24).

On a year-on-year basis, the imports for Afghanistan witnessed a decrease of 6.11 per cent from US

\$1.373 million in November 2022, against the imports of US \$1.289 million in November 2023.

On a month-on-month basis, the imports from Afghanistan into the country increased by 52.72 per cent during November 2023, as compared to the imports of US \$0.844 million during October 2023, according to the data.

The overall imports into the country witnessed a decrease of 16.02 per cent, from \$25.341 billion to US \$21.281 billion, according to the data.

Asian markets track Wall Street rally

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets enjoyed a much-needed bounce Tuesday after a dour start to the year, with Tokyo notching a three-decade high as traders tracked a rally on Wall Street. The advances came as traders try to ascertain the Federal Reserve's plans for interest rates this year, with focus firmly on the release this week of key inflation data.

The outlook was given a boost by Monday's plunge in oil prices -- a key driver of inflation -- after Saudi Arabian giant Aramco announced a cut of \$2 a barrel as it looks to regain lost market share.

Equities have stumbled into the new year as a rally at the end of 2023 came to an end on worries that

investors may have been too optimistic that the Fed will slash interest rates as soon as March.

Confidence was given a jolt last week when minutes from the bank's December policy meeting showed decision-makers were happy to keep rates at two-decade highs for some time to make sure they defeat inflation.

That was followed by a forecast-busting jobs report that showed the labour market remained in rude health, reinforcing the Fed view that there was still much work to do before officials could call mission accomplished.

Still, Fed governor Michelle Bowman said rates were at the level needed to bring inflation down

to the bank's two percent target.

"Should inflation continue to fall closer to our two percent goal over time, it will eventually become appropriate to begin the process of lowering our policy rate to prevent policy from becoming overly restrictive," she said in prepared remarks at the South Carolina Bankers Association.

With eyes on the upcoming consumer price index figures, SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes said: "If current cooling estimates hold, the month-on-month increase is anticipated to be 0.3 percent, marking the slowest pace of annual core price growth since May 2021.

"This is expected to be perceived positively for

risk markets, reinforcing the optimism for market-based rate cuts."

On Wall Street, all three main indexes powered higher, with the Nasdaq up more than two percent.

And Asia picked up the baton, helped by hints from the People's Bank of China that it was considering fresh easing measures including a cut in how much banks must keep in reserve in order to boost lending.

Tokyo hit its highest level since 1990, while there were also gains in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore, Mumbai, Manila, Bangkok and Wellington.

Oil prices edged down to extend Monday's steep losses that came after



FAISALABAD: A vendor displaying fishes at his shop to attract customers.



In brief

Man United into FA Cup 4th round

WIGAN (Reuters): Manchester United's Diogo Dalot and Bruno Fernandes scored in each half to secure a 2-0 win at Wigan Athletic in the FA Cup fourth round on a bitterly cold night at DW Stadium on Monday. The victory over the third-tier side was a welcome relief for the 12-time FA Cup winners, who are out of Europe and the League Cup and languishing eighth in the Premier League. Erik ten Hag's team avoided an eighth defeat in 14 away matches in all competitions since last season's FA Cup final. Dalot scored in the 22nd minute when Marcus Rashford had a shot blocked before laying the ball off to the Portuguese, who took a touch before finding the bottom corner from 20 metres. Fernandes doubled United's lead in the 74th with a penalty after Liam Shaw caught the captain's foot in the box. United also wasted a bucket load of chances. Rashford briefly celebrated what he thought was a goal but keeper Sam Tickle dived to gather the ball on the line.

PCB shares training session clicks

LAHORE (Web Desk): Pakistan cricket team held a training session at Auckland stadium as the three-match T20I series against New Zealand (set to begin on Friday (Jan 12). The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) shared clicks from the training session on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, with coaches making efforts to further polish the skills of players. "Practice time as we gear up for the New Zealand T20Is," the board captioned the post. A day earlier, the Team Green reached Auckland from Sydney after Test series against Australia. Meanwhile, the PCB has named Mohammad Rizwan as the vice-captain of Pakistan Men's T20I team. Rizwan's first assignment as deputy to Shaheen Shah Afridi will be the five-match T20I series against New Zealand, scheduled to take place in New Zealand from 12 January. Full squad: Shaheen Shah Afridi (captain), Mohammad Rizwan (vice-captain and wicket-keeper), Amir Jamal, Abbas Afridi, Azam Khan (wicket-keeper), Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah (wicket-keeper), Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Usama Mir and Zaman Khan.

Boniface ruled out as Nigeria

ABUJA (BBC): Bayer Leverkusen striker Victor Boniface has been ruled out of the Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) through injury, in another blow to Nigeria's preparations. The 23-year-old is the latest member of the Super Eagles squad to suffer an injury ahead of the tournament, which kicks off on 13 January in Abidjan. Nice striker Terem Moffi has been called up to replace Boniface, pending the approval of the Confederation of African Football (Caf) and agreement with the player's French Ligue 1 club. Boniface now joins a growing list of Nigeria players who have been forced to miss Afcon 2023 through injury, including Nottingham Forest striker Taiwo Awoniyi and Leicester City midfielder Wilfred Ndidi. Ndidi's Leicester team-mate Kelechi Iheanacho, who missed the Super Eagles training camp, is expected to join up with the rest of the squad in Ivory Coast.

We've got a good idea as to how Pakistan approach things: Devon Conway

AUCKLAND (Agencies): New Zealand batter, Devon Conway, has expressed his views on confronting Pakistan in white-ball cricket, ahead of the upcoming five-match T20I series scheduled to start on January 12 in Auckland.

In a recent video released by New Zealand Cricket on the social media platform 'X,' Conway highlighted Pakistan's formidable skills with both bat and ball, emphasizing the quality of their fast bowling and top-order batters.

"We have played a lot of cricket against Pakistan, particularly in white ball cricket. They're a very skillful unit with bat and ball," Conway said.

"You know, they've got some really quality fast bowling and some quality batters up front. So, you



know, for us, we've got a good idea as to how they approach things. And, you know, it's always a good challenge playing against Pakistan, specifically in white ball cricket," he added.

The upcoming five-match T20I series between both the teams, holds additional significance as Shaheen Afridi takes on his first leadership assignment.

The young pace sensation will be at the helm, looking to guide his side to success against a seasoned New Zealand squad.

Full squad: Shaheen Shah Afridi (captain), Mohammad

Rizwan (vice-captain and wicket-keeper) Amir Jamal, Abbas Afridi, Azam Khan (wicket-keeper), Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah (wicket-keeper), Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Usama Mir and Zaman Khan

Full schedule:

1st T20 – 12 January 2024 at Eden Park, Auckland

2nd T20 – 14 January 2024 at Seddon Park, Hamilton

3rd T20 – 17 January 2024 at University Oval, Dunedin

4th T20 – 19 January 2024 at Hagley Oval, Christchurch

5th T20 – 21 January 2024 at Hagley Oval, Christchurch

23 probables announced for Pakistan Women's U19 Camp

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Women's National Selection Committee headed by Saleem Jaffar has named 23 probables for the upcoming T20 tri-series in Cox's Bazar, which involves Sri Lanka and hosts Bangladesh.

The T20 tournament will be played on a double round-robin basis with the participating teams playing four matches each, before the top two sides playing the final on 2 February.

Among the 23 probables, six players – Anosha Nasir, Eyman Fatima, Laiba Nasir, Mahnoor Aftab, Rida Aslam and

Zaib-un-Nisa – have already played for Pakistan in the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup in South Africa last year.

The selectors will announce the 15-player squad during the camp, which will run from 10 to 18 January at the Hanif Mohammad High Performance Centre in Karachi. During the nine-day camp, the players will feature in training sessions and practice T20 matches.

Probables: Aleesa Mukhtiar, Anosha Nasir, Areesha Ansari, Eyman Fatima, Haleema Dua, Zafar, Haniah Ahmer, Kainat

Eiman, Komal Khan, Laiba Nasir, Maham Anees, Mahnoor Aftab, Memoona Khalid, Mubeen Ahmed, Muqadas Bukhari, Muskan Abid, Ravail Farhan, Rida Aslam, Samiya Afsar, Sana Talib, Syeda Taskyn Fatima, Taryaba Imdad, Zaib-un-Nisa and Zoofishan Ayyaz

Team Management: Wasim Yousafi (Head Coach), Aisha Jalil (Manager), Shakir Qayyum (Assistant Coach), Zulfiqar Babar (Spin Bowling Coach), Muhammad Ramzan (Strength and Conditioning Coach), Muhammad Usman Shahid (Analyst) and Rabia Siddiqi (Physio).

Qatar under pressure in Asian Cup defence

DOHA (Agencies): Qatar go into the Asian Cup starting on Friday as hosts and holders but the shock axing of Carlos Queiroz as coach last month has thrown their title defence into serious question.

Prior to that, the talk was about how Qatar would right the wrongs of a disappointing early exit from their home World Cup just over a year ago.

Qatar's three straight defeats was the worst performance of any World Cup host in history.

Former Real Madrid and Portugal coach Queiroz took over following the departure of Felix Sanchez, but in early December the Portuguese was sacked and replaced by Tintin Marquez.

Marquez is a familiar face to Qatari fans because he coached Al Wakrah in the domestic league and has a long relationship with football in the Gulf state.

"In football all the time there is pressure," the 62-year-old Spaniard told AFP soon after his sudden appointment.

"More important for the players is enjoying the match," he said, downplaying the idea that his side was under pressure to make up for their World Cup flop.

Qatar open the Asian Cup on Friday when they face Lebanon at the 88,000-capacity Lusail Stadium, which staged the

World Cup final.

Queiroz, who coached Iran at the World Cup and was assistant to Alex Ferguson at Manchester United, had a four-year contract with Qatar. He won five, lost five and drew two during his aborted tenure.

Qatar's football association gave no reason for the decision to get rid of him and the move, and its timing, baffled many.

Former national team player Raed Yaqoub said Queiroz had started the "positive" work of refreshing Qatar's starting line-up to "give other names a chance". Interfering with that, said the player-turned-pundit, was "a big mistake". Yaqoub said that although Marquez is popular and well known in Qatar, "I think that holding him responsible only a month before the tournament is a mistake".

Mohamed Mubarak al-Mohannadi, another former national player, said the switch so close to the Asian Cup left the team "facing the gun" given the difficulty "for any coach to make the required transformation within a month's period".

Marquez's first game in charge, at the end of December, was a 3-0 win over a Cambodia team which failed to qualify for the regional championship.

The Spaniard, who

played for Espanyol, said it was "important" that he knew Qatari football.

"I know the players, I know my mentality and I know... my idea for playing," he said, explaining he was not "arriving new".

Publicly at least the players have welcomed his appointment.

Defender Tarek Salman told AFP the change meant the team would need to adapt to a Spanish style, but added: "I think it's going to fit us and we hope to achieve good things with the coach."

He insisted that the expectations on the team were not the same as they had been going into the first World Cup in the Middle East.

"Normally you have pressure," he added, saying that being the current Asian champions would affect the team "in a positive way, not in a negative way".

Yaqoub said that despite the upheaval Qatar should easily get out of a group that also contains China and Tajikistan, and that the semi-finals should be possible. But he sees Japan, beaten in the final by Qatar in 2019, as the strongest team, while also fancying Roberto Mancini's Saudi Arabia. Mohannadi warned that Qatar will have a target on their backs as holders, particularly in the eyes of Japan, who he said would be "looking for revenge".



ADELAIDE: Caroline Garcia of France in action against Taylah Preston of Australia in the first round on Day 2 of the 2024 Adelaide International at Memorial Drive.

Sufiyan undergoes surgery on left knee

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Left-arm wrist-spinner Sufiyan Muqem underwent an operation on his left knee on Monday evening at a private hospital in Lahore.

24-year-old Sufiyan has represented Pakistan in three T20Is – all in the Asian Games last year in Hangzhou, China.

Sufiyan was discharged from the hospital after the operation and was examined by the PCB medical panel, headed by Dr Sohail Saleem, earlier today at the National Cricket Academy.

The surgeon will re-examine him after three days, and the PCB medical team will work on the already planned rehab accordingly.

The PCB has covered all expenses of Sufiyan Muqem's treatment and will continue supporting him in the future.

Dr Sohail Saleem – Director Medical and Sports Sciences: "Sufiyan is in good spirits after successfully undergoing the operation. Before the surgery, Sufiyan had participated enthusiastically in three weeks of pre-rehab at the National Cricket Academy under the trainers and medical panel.

"The PCB medical team will continue to monitor Sufiyan's road to recovery and provide him with support to make him fit to resume cricket."

Notably, Sufiyan Muqem was also a part of Pakistan Shaheens' squad that won the ACC Men's Emerging Asia Cup 2023 title by thwarting arch-rivals India in the final.

He spun the web around the Indian batters and returned with splendid figures of 3/66 in the high-scoring final, playing a pivotal role in barring the opposition by amassing the target.

India were set to chase 353 after Pakistan Shaheens racked up a mammoth total of 352/8 in the allotted 50 overs at the back of a magnificent century knock by Tayyab Tahir. Tahir top-scored for Pakistan with 108 off 71 balls, which included 12 fours and four towering sixes.

Bradburn joins Welsh county Glamorgan, quits PCB

LONDON (Agencies): Grant Bradburn has left his role with the Pakistan Cricket Board to become head coach of Welsh county side Glamorgan.

Bradburn has held senior roles with the PCB since 2018 and was appointed Pakistan's head coach last year, but the cricket board overhauled the national team's coaching setup following the 50-over World Cup in India.

Team Director Mickey Arthur and Bradburn were both asked to work at the National Cricket Academy in Lahore instead of accompanying the team for the test series

in Australia, with Mohammad Hafeez being appointed as the team director.

"Time to close the amazing chapter that has been Pakistan cricket," Bradburn wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, on Monday. "Three roles over five years, I am proud of what's been achieved and grateful to have worked with so many outstanding players, coaches and staff."

Bradburn had replaced Saqlain Mushtaq as the head coach but had come under scrutiny following Pakistan's performance in white-ball cricket under the New Zealander.

Pakistan failed to qualify for the final of the Asia Cup and didn't reach the semi-finals of the World Cup.

Glamorgan said Bradburn will join the Welsh county team next month as head coach on a three-year contract.

"To have the opportunity to coach Glamorgan is a huge honor and a privilege," Bradburn said. "I'm not taking this role expecting just to compete in the County Championship. I will bring a desire for Glamorgan to be contenders in all formats and am looking forward to meeting everyone at the club soon."

Africa the next frontier for trophy hunter Salah

ABIDJAN (AFP): Serial goal scorer Mohamed Salah has conquered the world, Europe and England with Liverpool. Now he dreams of leading Egypt to African glory.

He has come agonisingly close twice with his country, being part of the teams that lost the 2017 and 2022 Africa Cup of Nations finals to Cameroon and Senegal respectively.

In between reaching those title deciders, hosts Egypt suffered a humiliating last-16 loss to outsiders South Africa that left a 70,000 Cairo crowd speechless.

Egypt are among the favourites for the 2024 title in the Ivory Coast as they seek a record-extending eighth title in the premier African sporting event.

Drawn with Ghana, Cape Verde and Mozambique in Group B, it is widely expected that Egypt will finish first and qualify for the round of 16.

But captain Salah and his Pharaohs teammates want more. Much more. They want to play in the February 11 final at the 60,000-seat Alassane Ouattara Stadium in Abidjan and win it.

"I want to win this competition," said the prolific scorer in Cairo as he showed off a new haircut following social media criticism of his scraggly locks. "Having come so close

twice, I would love to help Egypt win the final and lift the Cup of Nations trophy.

"I am so happy to play in this wonderful African football tournament and my teammates and I are desperate to succeed.

"It means a lot to play for the Egyptian national team. It is a great feeling to put on the red jersey, which has been worn by some many greats in the past.

"Representing millions' "Every time I step on the pitch I am conscious of my role -- I am representing millions of Egyptians.

"We know the streets of Cairo, Alexandria and other cities, towns and villages will be empty when we play in the Ivory Coast.

"People will either be at home or in cafes, cheering our every move, willing us to score and wishing us success." Salah, who arrived at Liverpool in 2017 after spells with Al Mokawloon in his homeland, Basel, Chelsea, Fiorentina and Roma, is no stranger to success.

He helped Liverpool win the Club World Cup and UEFA Champions League in 2019 and the Premier League one year later.

In his last match for the Reds before flying to Egypt, the 31-year-old whose full name is Mohamed Salah Hamed

Mahrous Ghalay netted twice in a 4-2 league win over Newcastle United.

Ghana boast the third most successful Cup of Nations record with four titles, behind Egypt (seven) and Cameroon (five), but it is 42 years since they last triumphed. Otto Addo, who quit as Black Stars coach after an early 2022 World Cup exit in Qatar, turned heads when he said the fixture against Egypt will be the easiest in the group for his country.

"Egypt are going to be overwhelming favourites to beat Ghana so all the pressure will be on them. The Black Stars will be motivated by the fact that no one gives them a chance.

"I believe it is easier to face Mohamed Salah and the other Egyptian stars than trying to break down the well-organised defences of Cape Verde and Mozambique." Ghana are pinning their hopes of a good run on Mohammed Kudus, an attacking midfielder who has been outstanding for West Ham United this season.

They can also call on the long-serving Ayew brothers – attackers Andre and Jordan -- as they attempt to banish memories of a disastrous 2022 campaign that ended in first-round elimination.



MUMBAI: Annabel Sutherland of Australia celebrates the wicket of Harmanpreet Kaur (C) of India during Women's T20I match between India and Australia.

Ostapenko, Garcia progress in Adelaide but Vondrousova out injured

ADELAIDE (AFP): Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova pulled out of the Adelaide International with a hip injury Tuesday just days before the Australian Open, as Jelena Ostapenko set up a clash against Caroline Garcia.

Czech world number seven Vondrousova began her season at the United Cup, beating Serbia's Olga Danilovic and losing to China's Zheng Qinwen.

She was seeded three in Adelaide and due to play her first-round match on Tuesday evening. But the WTA said she had withdrawn, citing a hip injury. It was not clear how seri-

ously the problem was.

Former French Open winner Ostapenko, the Latvian sixth seed and world number 12, needed three sets to get past Romanian opponent Sorana Cirstea 2-6, 6-2, 6-4.

She lost serve twice in the first set before waking up. "I was sleeping in the first set, I'm not really a morning person," she said after a morning start at Memorial Drive. "It took me time to wake up and get into the match. I'm glad I managed to win it."

Ostapenko recovered to win six games out of seven and reach 3-1 in the final set. "I like to play in Australia," the 2023

Australian Open quarter-finalist said. "Conditions are good for me. Sometimes I get too worked up but then I calm down and play better."

She will next play former world number four Garcia, now ranked 20th, who also avoided an upset, coming from a break down in the final set to defeat Australian wildcard Taylah Preston 6-4, 1-6, 6-3. Germany's Laura Siegemund, part of the country's winning United Cup team, dismissed seventh seed Liudmila Samsonova 6-7 (1/7), 6-4, 6-4.

Eighth seed Veronika Kudermetova also pro-

gressed, but former world number one Karolina Pliskova lost 6-2, 6-1 to qualifier Katerina Siniakova in an all-Czech match-up.

In men's action, a trio of Australians advanced, with Jordan Thompson, Chris O'Connell and Alex Bolt all posting straight-set wins.

At the WTA Hobart International, 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin swept past Belgium's Greet Minnen 6-3, 6-3. But former US Open winner Sloane Stephens crashed out at the first hurdle to China's Yuan Yue 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/5).



In brief

Last day of registration

ISLAMABAD (APP): The convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) is scheduled to take place on January 31, 2024, and today (Wednesday 10th January) is the last day for registration. Meanwhile, according to AIU, the eligibility criteria for registration has also been amended and the condition of at least 70 percent marks has been removed. Now all the graduates from Semester Autumn 2004 to Spring 2022 can register on <http://convocation.aiu.edu.pk>. The convocation is of great importance in the life of a student, Vice Chancellor, AIU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has advised students to take advantage of this opportunity, register themselves and make this convocation a memorable moment of life. AIU Convocation 2024 will be held on January 31, 2024, at the Jinnah Convention Center, Islamabad. The President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi, who is also the Chancellor of the University, will be the chief guest at the event. Students from Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK and Rawalpindi Division (Attack, Chaklala, Jhelum, and Rawalpindi) will participate in the convocation at Jinnah Convention Center in Islamabad.

CDA automation of property record

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to go ahead with the automation of residential and commercial property records in the federal capital. The civic management had been pondering over the project for the last nine years for automation of property records in Islamabad to avoid bogus and fraudulent cases. In this connection, the CDA Chairman Captain (R) Anwar ul Haq chaired the meeting of the CDA Development Working Party, in which an amount of Rs170 million PC-1, for the automation project, was approved for achieving the objectives. The meeting was attended by officials from the ministries of finance, planning and interior. According to the details, the contract for the automation of property records would be given to a government firm. The firm would be responsible for computerizing a record of 45 million papers in two years. The firm would also be responsible for maintaining and running the automation working of the property record.

Development work of G-14 in final stage: DG

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Director General (DG) of Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) on Tuesday visited the sector G-14 Markaz and reviewed the development work in the sector. Project Director briefed the Director General on the project and informed the management that the work of G-14 Center is in the final stages. The Director General Federal Government Employees Housing Authority advised that the work of horticulture and street lights should be completed as soon as possible and on this subject the Director General Housing Authority highlighted the importance of the project, said a press release issued here. Later, the Director General visited Sector F15 and urged for speedy completion of the work. Director General Federal Government Employees Housing Authority appreciated the work of Project Director, Director Land, Director Revenue, Director Planning, Director Security and Director Finance.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT & Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif Launch Pakistan Startup Fund during ceremony organized by Ignite and Ministry of IT & Telecommunication.

Saudi Arabia records historic 58% surge in Umrah pilgrims

ISLAMABAD (APP): Saudi Arabia's Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr Tawfiq Al-Rabiah announced that the number of pilgrims who have performed Umrah during the year 2023 reached a record number of 13.55 million. The increase in the number of Umrah pilgrims is estimated at five million or 58 percent while compared to the year 2019, he said.

The minister made the remarks while addressing the 3rd annual Hajj and Umrah Services Conference and Exhibition at Jeddah Superdome. The four-day conference is being held under the patronage of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman, Saudi Gazette reported. "Previously, the largest number of Umrah pilgrims from outside the Kingdom was in 2019, estimated at 8.55 million and this year the number surged to 13.55 million, thanks to the elaborate

facilities and arrangements made by the Saudi government. This figure is the largest in the history of foreign Umrah pilgrims," he said.

Al-Rabiah said the current edition of the conference witnesses the participation of ministers and leaders from more than 80 countries. The conference will also see the signing of Hajj agreements with each of the participating countries. "More than 35 companies will provide their services during the Hajj this year, compared to 20 companies last year," he said.

The minister noted that Saudi Arabia launched projects worth more than SR5 billion to develop the infrastructure at the holy sites. "Last year, we worked to train more than 40,000 workers in the Hajj and Umrah system, and this year we are working to train more than 120,000 people to serve the pilgrims. We also work to raise the level of awareness among pilgrims and

have worked on an initiative to establish an awareness center in cooperation with the General Authority of Endowments." "We visited 13 countries and held exhibitions there with our partners from the public and private sectors, which had a significant impact on improving procedures and understanding the challenges.

We worked with our partners to develop more than 200 procedures that facilitate the arrival of pilgrims," he said adding that expatriates of all Gulf countries were also allowed to issue electronic visas to visit the Kingdom and perform Umrah.

Al-Rabiah said that partners in the transport sector were working to increase direct flights from 164 destinations to 216 destinations, an increase of 32 percent. "We also worked to develop historical sites to enrich the pilgrims' experience," he added.

Govt decides to return over 21,000 Hajj quota to Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Government has decided to return over 21,000 Hajj quota allocations back to Saudi Arabia under the official Haj scheme.

According to media reports, this decision comes as a major disappointment for the 5,633 unsuccessful applicants who were hoping to perform the pilgrimage this year through the government-sponsored program. The quota for government-sponsored Hajj pilgrims stood at 25,000, but only 4,000 applications were received, falling significantly short of the allocated slots. This under-subscription prompted the government to return the unfilled seats to Saudi Arabia, rather than accommodating the waitlisted applicants from the regular Hajj scheme draw.

While the official reason for under-subscription in the government scheme is unclear, some speculate that it might be due to increased costs associated with the pilgrimage, including travel and accommodation expenses. Additionally, the ongoing economic situation in Pakistan might have discouraged potential applicants from committing to the financial burden of Hajj. The regular Hajj scheme, however, saw a high number of applications. With 69,438 applications received and only 63,805 pilgrims selected through the lottery, nearly 6,000 applicants remain waitlisted. These individuals stand a chance of performing Hajj if any allocated seats become available from other categories or through cancellations.

ANF seizes 425 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in its crackdown against drug traffickers managed to recover over 425 kg of drugs and arrested eight accused including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday.

He informed that 240 kg hashish and 120 kg heroin were recovered from Galimain Ghandi Lakpas, Quetta. Thirty kilograms of hashish was recovered from Chenab Toll Plaza Gujarat while two accused were arrested. Eighteen kilograms of opium and 5 kg of hashish were recovered from a vehicle in Othal Lasbela while two accused were netted during the operation.

‘Global Health Security Summit to explore opportunities for sharing expertise, knowledge’

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Global Health Security Summit will serve as a great opportunity to bring together, international and national experts in the concerned field of health and learning by sharing expertise and knowledge for a safer world.

In a media briefing, Caretaker Federal Minister for Health, Dr. Nadeem Jan said that the two-day Global Health Security Summit will start from January 10 here in the federal capital.

He said that the strategic objectives of the conference are to collaborate with global leaders to ensure equity-based pandemic preparedness financing for low and middle-income countries and mutual exchange of knowledge and rich experience with member states and experts around summit thematic areas which focuses on vaccine equity, patent deregulation and transfer of technology.

The minister said that the conference will secure global and regional partnerships with international organizations for aligning its health security priorities with those of global and regional priorities, to strengthen its core capacities through technical assistance. He said that the event will explore opportunities of joint working and pool funding for health security, across the region and globe in addition to the sustainable domestic funding for its five-year health security plan 2024-28.

Dr. Nadeem Jan said that the Global Health Security Summit will be attended by top health experts from around the world. He added an integrated strategy to deal with epidemics will be formed at the global conference. The minister said that by holding the international conference, the positive image of Pakistan will be presented. He said that holding the summit is proof that Pakistan can play a key role in the health sector. He said that the purpose of the summit is to make Pakistan and the world safe from diseases. Dr. Nadeem Jan said that at the summit, an action plan will be decided to strengthen the health systems of poor countries.

He said that at the conference, work will be done to strengthen the health system before the sudden epidemic. He said that effective measures are being taken to protect people from global epidemics.

He said that at the end of two days' deliberations, a future global health security charter will be signed to build up a narrative for an equity-based pandemic treaty based on an equity-based global financing facility on the mutually agreed upon "Islamabad declaration" for making health systems resilient enough to showcase health security by putting up a coordinated "One Health response" to any threat and becoming advocates and champions of the conference in participating member states.

15 flights cancelled as fog disrupts flights' operation again

ISLAMABAD (INP): Dense fog that again engulfed large swathes of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Islamabad badly disrupted the flights' operation at the country's airports on Tuesday. As many as 15 flights were cancelled while three were diverted to other airports after fog considerably reduced visibility in and around Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar and Multan airports. A private airline's flight from Jeddah to Multan PA-871 had to be diverted to Karachi airport due to fog.

Similarly, Pakistan International Airlines' (PIA) flights from Abu Dhabi to Peshawar, PK-218, and Dubai to Peshawar, PK-284, were made to land at 9143 were cancelled. As

Islamabad airport. Likewise, ER-407, a private airline's flight from Sharjah to Islamabad and Manchester to Islamabad flight were cancelled. Lahore to Dubai flight ER-724 and a flight to China, YG-9147, could not take off either. Similarly, PA-811, Multan to Dubai flight of a private airline, was also cancelled.

Likewise, the national flag carrier's two flights from Karachi to Quetta PK-310 and PK-311 were also cancelled. Another PIA flight from Karachi to Lahore PK-304 and a private airline's flight ER-520 were also cancelled. ER-503, from Karachi to Islamabad, and a flight from China to Karachi YG-9143 were cancelled. As

many as 300 national and international flights have so far been cancelled in the first nine days of the New Year, 2024.

Dense fog in and around Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport has again disrupted the flights' operation. SereneAir's flight from Jeddah ER-1822 will reach Lahore after a delay by 14 hours. Similarly, ER-522, the airline's flight from Karachi, will land at the airport after a five-hour delay. ER-1821, from Lahore to Jeddah, is also delayed by 14 hours.

Likewise, Airblue's Dubai-bound flight PA-410 will take off after a delay by one-and-a-half-hour. SereneAir's flight ER-523, from Lahore to Karachi, will take off after a delay by five hours.

Int'l workshop on curriculum development through project based learning held at IIUI

ISLAMABAD (APP): National and International speakers of an International workshop at International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) deliberated upon the ways of curriculum development through project based learning and CDIO. The international workshop on "Curriculum Development through Outcome Based Education and CDIO" was organized by Faculty of Engineering and Technology of IIUI at the Faisal Masjid Campus on Tuesday.

Project-based learning is an instructional approach designed to allow students to develop knowledge and skills through engaging projects set around challenges and problems they may face in the real world. The CDIO Initiative is an educational framework that stresses engineering fundamentals set in the context of conceiving, designing, implementing and operating real-world systems and products. The workshop was sponsored by Higher Education Commission and British Council Pakistan under PAK-UK Education Gateway Mobility Grant.

Prof. Dr. Abdul Raheman, Acting President IIUI, while addressing to the participants, appreciated the efforts of the

Faculty for organizing such an informative and innovative workshop.

The workshop also received accolades from Dean Faculty of Engineering and Technology, Dr. Nadeem Ahmed Sheikh, who expressed appreciation for the initiative, emphasizing its significance in fostering professional development among future educators.

This collaborative effort aimed to equip participants with a deep understanding of the curriculum development for faculty, emphasizing their importance in shaping the future of teacher education.

The event not only provided a platform for practical insights but also highlighted the commitment of the universities to enhance the quality of education through outcome-based education and CDIO.

Dr. Taqi Ahmed Cheema (Dean Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, GIKI), Dr. Tabbi Wilberforce Awotwe from King's College London, Dr. Gareth Thomson, Dr. Sarah Junaid from Aston University, Dr. Fareeha Azmat, University of Warwick also shared their insights during the workshop. In the end, CDIO and Lego activity was also performed by Dr. Sarah, Dr. Tabbi, Dr. Muftooh, Dr. Umar Mansoor.

Dr Saif launches Startup Fund to catalyze investments for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology Dr Umar Saif on Tuesday launched the Pakistan Startup Fund, aimed at catalyzing investments in Pakistani startups.

The launching ceremony was attended by local and international venture capitalists, diplomats, and renowned technology companies. Dr Saif, while addressing the event, said that the government had allocated Rs 2 billion for the Pakistan Startup Fund to accelerate venture capital investment in the country.

He said the Fund would provide financial assistance to the startups, with each receiving 30% support, while venture capitalists would contribute the remaining 70% of the capital.

The minister expressed the confi-

dence that the Startup Fund would play a key role in Pakistan's economic development and expressed the commitment of the Ministry of Information Technology to providing facilities and support to the startups.

He expressed optimism about the Fund's potential impact on the startup ecosystem, expecting it to pave the way for increased technological advancements and economic opportunities.

He said that currently, the country had more than 4,000 active startups, supported by eight National Innovation Centers.

Over the last four years, the startups had attracted nearly \$800 million in foreign investment, he said, adding the Fund would create value of at least Rs 50 billion per year in the startup ecosystem.

Mushahid Hussain for UN Secretary more proactive role to end humanity crime in Kashmir, Palestine

ISLAMABAD (APP): Veteran politician and Senior leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed Tuesday appealed to U.N Secretary-General to play a more proactive role to end "crime against humanity" in Kashmir and Palestine.

Talking to a Private

news channel, he said that the Kashmir dispute and Palestinian issue are so similar that both nations have been promised the right to self-determination, which has yet not been fulfilled.

"The two nations are facing an existential humanity threat and if the international community does not act

immediately, these entities, their cultures, and populations will be wiped out," he added. Replying to a question about the Kashmir issue "Kashmir is the Jugular vein of Pakistan and no nation or country would tolerate that its Jugular vein remains under the sword of the enemy", he added.

DG PHA visits city parks to review beautification work

RAWALPINDI (APP): Director General (DG), Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi, Ahmad Hassan Ranjha here on Tuesday visited different city parks and reviewed the ongoing beautification work.

The DG directed the authorities concerned to complete the beautification work as soon as possible. Ahmed Hassan Ranjha also inspected cleanliness arrangements and instructed the officials concerned to provide all basic facilities in the parks.

He informed that the authority was utilizing all available resources to make the city clean and green and uplift the parks.

The authorities concerned had been

directed to complete ongoing renovation and beautification work of all the parks within the shortest possible time frame, he said adding, that efforts were also being made to repair faulty lights, swings and walking tracks besides improving the security of the parks.

The PHA officers had also been instructed to utilize all available resources to ensure the provision of the best recreational facilities to the public in all the parks of the town, he added.

The PHA was planting maximum saplings and enhancing greenery, particularly in parks and green belts of the city, he added. During the visit, the officers concerned of PHA were also present.



ISLAMABAD: Worker busy paint on wall of 7th Avenue Underpass in the Federal Capital.

Iranian and UN envoys met

KABUL (Pajhwok): Top UN and Iranian diplomats have conferred on continued cooperation in Afghanistan. Iran's Special Representative and Ambassador Hassan Kazemi Qomi met UN Secretary General's special envoy and UNAMA chief Roza Otunbayeva. In a post on X, the Iranian embassy in Kabul said the two sides conferred on cooperation on mine clearance, alternatives to poppy cultivation and distance education in Afghanistan.

Passport distribution process

KABUL (Pajhwok): The passport distribution process across the country will resume via offline forms on Wednesday, an official of the department has announced. Abdul Karim Haseeb, director of the General Directorate of Passport, said in a video on X: "The distribution would restart on Wednesday, and we have a plan for offline forms." He said the offline form registration was aimed to facilitate the people in urgent need of passports but their turn would not come soon.

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

IEA's Minister meets with Head of UNAMA



KABUL (Ariana News): The Acting Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Attaullah Omari, met with Roza Otunbayeva, United Nations representative in Afghanistan, and Richard Trenchard, the Food and Agriculture Organization's Representative in Kabul on Tuesday to discuss issues relating to agriculture and livestock.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation said the two sides talked

about the importance of agriculture, raising the economic level of farmers and ranchers, providing healthy and high-quality food, and increasing the distribution of seed and livestock products.

The representative of the United Nations in Afghanistan announced the readiness of various countries and organizations to cooperate with the farmers of Afghanistan and said:

"The United Nations appreciates the extremely effective action of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in order to prevent drug cultivation. We have brought this message to tell you the proposal and alternative plans for drug cultivation to be worked on."

According to Otunbayeva, several countries are ready to cooperate and take practical action in this sector, adding that "we need to work on this joint issue."

"In the coming year, sufficient funds will be allocated for you by the United Nations and donor countries. We also consider it our duty to work and convey this message to the world," said Otunbayeva.

On the other hand, the Acting Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock voiced his appreciation for the activities of the UN offices and institutions and assured them of joint cooperation especially in the agriculture sector.

Lack of bridge over river creates challenges

TARINKO (TOLONews): Residents of Sarkhum and Abradi areas in Tarinkot, the center of Uruzgan, ask for the construction of a bridge over the Tarinkot river.

A number of them, who have gathered near the provincial governor's office for the purpose of protest, say that they face serious challenges due to the lack of a bridge over the Tarinkot river.

"Elders in this area due to no bridge face serious challenges," said Mohammad Nabi, a resident of Uruzgan.

"They make small devices out of wood and with such devices women, children and elders are lifted onto the other side of the river," said Del Agha, another resident of Uruzgan.

"We want a bridge to be made for us to remove the challenges we face," said Mohammad.

The regional authorities gave assurances that the problem will be shared with the central government.

"We conveyed the challenges of them to the higher officials and we wait until the providing of the budget," said Sefatullah Qurishi, program officer for the Directorate of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

According to the regional authorities and residents, around 8 thousand families currently live in the Sarkhum and Abradi regions.

Lecturers demand salaries

KHOST (Khaama Press): Some of the lecturers at Sheikh Zahid State University in Khost province of Afghanistan have stated that their salaries have not been paid by the Taliban government in the past three months.

According to them, the Minister of Higher Education for the Taliban has requested a reduction in the monthly salaries of the lecturers at this university.

According to these lecturers on Monday, the Sheikh Zahid Foundation transferred their salaries to the Ministry of Higher Education, however, the Taliban's minister of higher education has told the university officials that the current salaries of the professors are higher and need to be reduced, as reported by Afghanistan International.

"The United Arab Emirates sent the salaries of the lecturers to the Ministry of Higher Education for the Taliban based on the amount determined during the republic, but according to one of the professors at Sheikh Zahid University in Khost, Nida Mohammad Nadim, the Minister of Higher Education, said that the teachers do not deserve such high salaries."

These professors criticize that the Taliban's Ministry of Higher Education has pressured them to accept lower monthly salaries and has made them concerned about their economic situation.

They say that in the past three months, the Taliban has not paid them the desired salary of the Minister of Higher Education, nor the previously determined salary.

Due to the deteriorating economic situation under the Taliban's rule, the United Arab Emirates has been paying the salaries of professors and staff at Sheikh Zahid University in Khost through the Sheikh Zahid Foundation.

The building of Sheikh Zahid University in Khost was constructed by the United Arab Emirates in Khost, and their financial cooperation with this university continues.

So far, the Taliban's Ministry of Higher Education has not commented on the salaries of lecturers and other administrative staff at Sheikh Zahid University. Approximately 300 instructors/lecturers and administrative staff work at Sheikh Zahid University in Khost.

'IEA wants positive relations with world'



KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, said that the Islamic Emirate pursues a policy of engagement and positive relations with all world countries.

Muttaqi also said that the Islamic Emirate has good intentions towards its neighbors.

"If we want something good for ourselves, we want the same for others as well. We want to have good relations with our neighbors and other world countries," he said.

He once again stated that security has improved, and a united government has been ensured after the Islamic Emirate came to power.

"There is a united government in Afghanistan now and nationwide security has been ensured. We

want Afghanistan to become a regional economic hub," Muttaqi said.

The political analysts also stressed strengthening relations between Kabul and Islamabad.

"We should talk with our neighbors and the world countries in many areas, so that these countries are convinced that there is no threat from Afghan soil,"

said Amanullah Hotaki, political analyst.

"It is necessary to have good relations with our neighbors and all countries and open a way for engagement," said Sayed Akbar Agha, a political analyst.

It has been more than two years since the Islamic Emirate came to power but no world countries have yet recognized it.

Regional officials must cooperate with reporters

KABUL (TOLONews): The Deputy of the Ministry of Information and Culture asked the regional authorities to cooperate with reporters.

Addressing a seminar held to increase the capacity of the Interior Ministry's spokespeople, Atiqullah Azizi said that regional authorities must inform reporters about their activities on time.

"We should treat the media kindly. Because if you provide better information and treat them better, it makes reporters colleagues with you," he added.

On the other hand, some media officers asked the Islamic Emirate to support the media community and reporters.

"You are spokespeople and reporters need your comprehensive cooperation, and you showcase your activities and achievements to people by the help of the reporters and address people's inquiries," said Zabihullah Sadat, the head of TOLONews.

"This is the formation of the different groups and relations with the reporters, this meeting should cause cooperation and form relations with the reporters," said Hujatullah Mujadidi, head of the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA).

At the same time, a number of reporters ask the Islamic Emirate to confirm the Media Law as soon as possible.



els and I haven't seen the last level, as the details are completed, it will be confirmed and will reach anyone, and I am hopeful that it will be beneficial for the media and our society," he added.

Before this, the press Deputy of the Ministry of Information and Culture had said to TOLONews that access to information is the right of reporters and all the spokespeople of the Islamic Emirate are obliged to give information about their activities to the media.

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120 addicts get treatment at Paktia Hospital

GARDEZ (Pajhwok): After the Pajhwok Afghan News earlier report about the closure of Drug Addicts' Hospital in southeastern Paktia province, the facility was reopened and so far 120 addicts had received treatment, an official said on Monday.

Pajhwok Afghan News last year in December published a report about the closure of drug addicts' hospital in the province.

Mawlawi Khair Mohammad Mansour, head of the Paktia Public Health Department, said this hospital was closed in 2022 due to some problems and was reopened early this solar year.

He said so far 120 drug addicts received treatment in this hospital.

Mawlawi Khair Mohammad said: "In 2022, the hospital was closed due to some problems but due to the efforts of the Public Health Department in 2023 the hospital was made operational and is opened until now."

Drug addicts receiving treatment in the hospital were happy over the free of cost treatment.

Rafiullah, one of the drug addicts getting treatment in the hospital, said he became drug addict due to unemployment. "Due to poverty I addicted to drugs, now I am fine, I am happy from all the doctors and staff here, now I have decided to be return to addiction and will work when I get an opportunity."

According to the local officials with the support of the Norwegian Refugee Council, some facilities had been arranged for the hospital and some rehabilitation work was also conducted. On the direction of the acting government a nationwide campaign of rounding up drug addicts had been launched.

Trade with Uzbekistan increased in 2023, says MoIC

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC) said that trade has increased with Uzbekistan in 2023.

The spokesman of MoIC said that Afghanistan had \$266 million worth of trade with Uzbekistan in 2023, while it was \$44 million in 2022.

Afghanistan's exports to Uzbekistan have been worth \$27 million in the past year.

"We have bilateral trade with Uzbekistan, in 2023, we had \$27 million worth of exports and \$239 million worth of imports from

Uzbekistan, and most of our exported items to Uzbekistan are dried fruit, fruit juice, apricots, sesame, carpets, and most of our imported items are electricity, flour, beans, chemical fertilizers, oil and gas," said Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad the spokesman of MoIC.

On the other hand, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that for the strengthening of Afghanistan's relations with the regional countries, a plan is underway to connect with China through Uzbekistan.

"We want to connect with Russia and also Europe and this matter should be taken care of and besides, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry is working on a plan on how to connect with China through this way," said Mirwais Hotak, head of the ACCI.

At the same time, a number of businessmen want the Islamic Emirate to address their banking problems and issuance of business visas.

"A coordination committee should be formed on the leadership of the Ministry

of Commerce and Industry with the sectorial chambers to address the problems on time and provide more facilities for the exports of the country," said Omid Haidari, a businessman.

"Afghan businessmen can't travel to other countries to have business trips, we face visa issues and the Islamic Emirate must solve it," said Zalmai Azimi, another businessman.

Before this, the Minister of Industry and Commerce (MoIC), Nooruddin Azizi, said that efforts to increase trade to \$3 billion per year continue.

Kandahar local officials call economic sanctions 'cruel'

KANDAHAR (Ariana News): Kandahar local officials said during the opening ceremony of a project in this province that the economic sanctions against Afghanistan are "cruel".

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the graveling project of Kandahar Customs Directorate's premises, Hayatullah Mubarak, Kandahar deputy governor, said that human rights organizations always criticize the Islamic Emirate, but they have remained silent against the economic sanctions against Afghanistan.

A number of businessmen in Kandahar also asked the international community to lift financial and banking sanctions.



The work of this project is being carried out by the National Development Company and will cost more than 25 million afghanis.

"The area of this project is 30 acres. It is hoped that

this project will be finished soon," said Abdul Wali Adel, deputy head of NDC.

Meanwhile, Kandahar Chamber of Commerce and Investment officials also asked the IEA to provide

more facilities for businessmen. In recent years, because the roads in this area were not asphalted, drivers faced many problems, especially when it rained.

Five hurt in clash on land

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Five people from two families have been injured as a result of firefighting on a piece of land in the Pachir Agam district of eastern Nangarhar province, an official said on Monday.

Police Spokesperson Abdul Basir Zabuli told Pajhwok Afghan News the fighting took place between Kamran and Monawar, the residents of Landakhel locality. He Pachir Agam district police chief had reached the site of the fighting and efforts were underway to resolve the dispute.

The injured had been shifted to the Nangarhar Zonal hospital for better treatment. Their health condition was stable.

It is pertinent to mention, that earlier four daughters of the Hesarak District's education department deputy head were killed in a hand grenade attack on his house.

'Passport distribution process will start soon'

KABUL (Khaama Press): Officials in Kabul have announced that in-person passport distribution in Kabul will commence on January 10.

Abdul Karim Hasib, the head of the Passport Department, recently stated that the passport distribution process will begin soon.

According to him, this process will start in Kabul on January 10 and, if there is no excessive crowding, it will also begin in the provinces.

He has urged applicants to visit the Passport Department on Thursdays to register their applications so that the officials at the department can specify the starting date for each applicant.

Abdul Karim Hasib further emphasized that despite the distribution of

hundreds of thousands of passports, many needy individuals still do not receive them due to excessive crowding.

He explained, "Over the past year, we have distributed hundreds of thousands of passports, but there are still individuals in urgent need of passports who have not received them.

The reason is that some families have obtained 20 passports online and collect them according to their appointment dates, while others in immediate need of passports are unable to get them because their turn has not come."

Since the Taliban assumed control of Afghanistan, there has been a significant surge in the demand for passports. This uptick is primarily driven by people seeking

better opportunities and access to medical treatment abroad, given the dire humanitarian crisis gripping the country.

Among the factors fueling this increased demand is the Taliban's ban on girls' education beyond the sixth grade and their prohibition on Afghan women and girls from attending universities.

These restrictive measures have compelled numerous families to consider leaving Afghanistan in pursuit of educational opportunities and a more inclusive environment for women and girls.

The restrictions on education have underscored the challenges faced by Afghan families who aspire to provide a better future for their children, including access to higher education.

Israeli army says more soldiers injured in Gaza

GAZA: Another 27 Israeli soldiers have been wounded during battles in the Gaza Strip in the past 24 hours, the military said on Tuesday. Figures released by the army showed that 519 soldiers had been killed and 2,465 others injured since the outbreak of the war on Gaza.

Earlier on Tuesday, the army had announced the killing of nine soldiers in Gaza. The army and the ministry have said in a joint statement that they've also begun giving out equipment containers to the local militias in northern communities. Each community will receive weapons, ceramic vests and helmets. In addition, medical and logistical equipment will also be distributed, the statement said.

This is similar to the initiative by Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir who in October distributed assault rifles to civilian militias. That distribution was focused on areas near the besieged Gaza Strip, settlements in the occupied West Bank and "mixed cities" in Israel inhabited by Palestinians and Jews. In the last few hours, the Israeli military attacks have intensified in Khan Younis city, with 11 Palestinians reported killed since the early hours of this morning.

And in the last hour, Israeli drones have opened fire at Palestinian residents and evacuees at Nasser hospital in the western part of Khan Younis. Also during the last hour, attacks continued on the middle governorates, where Israeli forces are using excessive power to destroy residential houses. The UN's humanitarian agency OCHA reports that tents and self-built makeshift shelters are overcrowded in Gaza, with more than 15 people living on average in one tent, making the space available per person less than the minimum Sphere Standards.

The Sphere standards are a set of principles and minimum humanitarian standards in four areas of humanitarian response: Water, sanitation and hygiene, food, shelter and health. "This exposes IDPs [internally displaced people] to unhygienic conditions and communicable diseases," the agency said. It also said, "The self-built makeshift shelters are constructed from salvaged materials inadequate to withstand current weather conditions."

In the south, OCHA said, rental apartments cost more than 800 percent the normal price due to lack of availability of units in the south, according to a survey it conducted. The Health Ministry in Gaza says Israeli forces have committed "12 massacres" throughout the Gaza Strip on the 95th day of the war that

resulted in 126 Palestinians being killed and 241 others wounded.

The ministry indicated that a number of victims are still under the rubble and on the roads, while ambulance and civil defence crews are unable to reach them. Two Israeli non-profit organisations say Israel's authorities are poised to advance a settlement plan along the southern perimeter of occupied East Jerusalem, joining a series of new settlements promoted over the past year.

According to Ir Amim and Bimkom, the plan calls for the construction of 650 housing units on 29 dunams (29,000 square metres) of land situated along the southern slopes of the Palestinian neighbourhood of Sur Baher-Umm Tuba, whose boundaries extend up against existing Palestinian homes. "This is yet another new settlement plan not only being advanced within a Palestinian neighbourhood, but also in lockstep with official registration of land rights [settlement of land title] within the plan's borders," the two groups said.

"As documented by Bimkom and Ir Amim, settlement of land title is being exploited to expand and finalise state/settler appropriation of land across East Jerusalem, while increasing the threat of Palestinian dispossession." We saw the assassination of senior Hamas leader Saleh al-Arouri last week. We've seen the killing of Wissam al-Tawil just 24 hours ago and now a strike during his funeral – we're hearing one person has died – and another strike where three other people have died.

This is now becoming a very dangerous situation. The international community is incredibly worried about escalation on the border, but now it's got another problem. These strikes that took place against Hezbollah field commanders have taken place within Lebanese territory. Hezbollah has responded with a strike 40km (25 miles) inside Israeli territory.

That is something the international community and diplomatic efforts are trying to avoid. The idea was to try to keep everything contained along this 120km (75 miles) border. If it spills over; it's only going to take a mistake or a miscalculation by either side that will be seen as a red line by either side for this to actually spill over.

Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank have shot dead a Palestinian youth accused of attempting a stabbing attack against them, the Palestinian news agency Wafa reports, citing local sources. The shooting took place near the Ein

Sinya checkpoint, north of Ramallah. The report said the checkpoint is now closed.

Mohamad Elmasry, from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, says it is unclear what comes next as Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon continue deadly cross-border attacks. "I think right now there's significant disagreement inside Israel's military establishment to what extent they want to go into an all-out war. What we know is Benjamin Netanyahu would like to see something more expansive. That would be more advantageous to his own political ambitions," Elmasry told Al Jazeera.

"Israel right now is going to continue and try and provoke Hezbollah, and the ball is really in Hezbollah's court as to what they do next. It's got to be a very difficult calculation. Hezbollah won't look good, like it has much deterrence, if it doesn't respond forcefully." At least 25 Palestinians have been detained in the occupied West Bank overnight and today, the Palestinian Prisoners Society said.

This brings the total number of Palestinians arrested by Israeli forces from the occupied territory since October 7 to 5,755, including 190 women and 335 children. Israel has also detained 50 journalists, including 20 who are under administrative detention, meaning that they are held without any charges or trial. The al-Qassam Brigades says its fighters destroyed an Israeli Merkava tank with an Al-Yassin 105 shell, south of the city of Khan Younis.

Merkava tanks are classified as among the most fortified in the world and the most powerful on the battlefield. East of the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, fighters from the al-Qassam Brigades killed four Israeli soldiers with a locally manufactured rifle called "Ghoul". The health situation is dire in Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's population is now squeezed into.

Here in Rafah, there are no large hospitals, only mid-sized hospitals or smaller centres and clinics. Outside the Kuwaiti hospital, we can see the wounded being brought in. However, they are only staying in the hospital for around 30 minutes – long enough for their information to be taken – because the facility is running out of space. Then, they are sent to either the Abu Youssef Najjar Hospital, which is a mid-sized facility and has relatively better equipment, or the European Gaza Hospital. Most of the injured are in Najjar Hospital because the road leading to the European Gaza Hospital is very dangerous, with possible artillery shelling during the day. —Aljazeera



GAZA STRIP: A view of destroyed buildings after Israeli airstrikes on Ba'it-ul-Laiha area.

Hosting of global health summit a honour: Solangi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Tuesday that "Global Health Security Summit" was being held in Islamabad on January 10 and 11.

Addressing a joint press conference along with Caretaker Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan here he said that problems related to the health of the people were the real problems. He opined that hosting the Global Health Security Summit was an honour for Pakistan. This conference had nothing to do with politics or artificial intelligence, it was related to the health of humanity, Murtaza Solangi added.

Ex PTI chairman admitted article published by foreign journal was AI generated: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi said that former Chairman PTI had admitted that he didn't write the article published by The Economist and it was an artificial intelligence-generated write-up.

Using his social media platform X account, the minister said that the current Chairman of PTI did not endorse its anti-establishment and anti-American content but the PTI overseas, some semi-literate anchors and The Economist were jubilant over AI-generated shenanigans.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi expressed deep grief over the death of the mother of Radio Pakistan's Director General Saeed Ahmed Sheikh.

In a condolence message, the minister expressed heartfelt sympathies to Saeed Ahmed Sheikh and his family over this loss. Sharing the grief with the bereaved family, the minister said the mother's loss was a great tragedy for the children. He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.

Biden interrupted during speech

CHARLESTON: US President Joe Biden was briefly interrupted during a speech when several people upset over by his staunch support for Israel in its war against Hamas called out that if he really cared about lives lost.

They chanted and shouted, calling for ceasefire in Gaza to help innocent Palestinians who are being killed under Israel's bombardment. The chants of "ceasefire now" were drowned out by audience members chanting "four more years."

Biden responded by saying he was working with the Israeli government to reduce its operations in Gaza. Biden was speaking at the Mother Emanuel AME Church, where in 2015 nine black parishioners were shot to death by the white stranger they had invited to join their Bible study.

Also on Monday, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman received US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the Winter Tent in AlUla. They discussed regional and international developments and efforts being made toward them in order to achieve security and stability, especially the latest developments in the situation in Gaza. — Arab News

Haripur delegation discuss issues with KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A large number delegation consisting of elders from Tehsil Khanpur of District Haripur called on the caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah here at Chief Minister's House Peshawar on Tuesday and apprised him of the public issues of urgent nature of the area.

The issues were mostly related to Board of Revenue, Forest, Education, Health and Galyat Development Authority. Provincial Caretaker Ministers Amir Nadeem Durrani, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel and spokesperson to the Chief Minister Brig. (R) Syed Mujtaba Tirmizi were also present on this occasion.

The notables made complaints against the officials of revenue staff for taking bribes in mutations, issuance of Fard and other service delivery matters. The caretaker Chief Minister while taking notice of the alleged malpractice on the part of concerned revenue staff, directed Anti-corruption Establishment to immediately register case against the officials involved in corruption adding that elements found involved in corrupt practices would not be spared.

"Such officials will be dealt with iron hands and given exemplary punishment", the chief minister remarked and further directed the divisional com-

missioners and deputy commissioners across the province to hold Khuli Kacharies with the purpose to listen to the public issues and complaints related to revenue services. He directed that all the commissioners and DCs should ensure surprise visits to the public service outlets in their respective divisions and Districts on regular basis; and report of the same should be sent to Chief Minister Secretariat.

He directed the revenue authorities to ensure that computerization of land records and other routine activities are carried out side by side; and mutation process should not be stopped at any cost due to the ongoing computerization process.

Syed Arshad Hussain Shah maintained that there were complaints from all over the province regarding the computerization of land records, and directed the concerned authorities to identify flaws in the process and corrective measures be taken accordingly. The Chief Minister maintained that computerization of land records had been initiated for the convenience and ease of the general public and it must achieve its desired results. He said that all the issues related to Khana-e-kasht and Khana-e-Milkiyat be resolved on priority basis. The delegates also made a complaint that

Galyat Development Authority was unduly enforcing its By-laws in the rural residential areas, and requested that such rural

residential areas should be administered under the relevant Tehsil Municipal administrations. In this regard the chief minister directed the quarters concerned to prepare a case in line with the relevant rules and regulations for the consideration of the provincial cabinet. The Chief Minister, on another complaint of the delegation, directed the quarters concerned to ensure availability of staff in the schools and hospitals of the area.

Three bodies found

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Bodies of three people including a woman were found while a young dumper was shot dead by robbers in different areas of Ferozewala district Sheikhupura, police said on Tuesday.

According to details, robbers signaled to stop a crush stone laden dumper near Ghazipura but the driver did not stop after which they opened straight fire at vehicle. As a result of firing, 22-year-old driver identified as Muhammad Zubair, hailing from Sargodha was killed on the spot and robbers fled the scene.

Body of a drug addict woman who allegedly died of intense cold weather was found Kala Khatai Road near Libanwala area of Ferozewala. Body of an unidentified person was found from Ayaz Park, in Ferozewala police station jurisdiction.

ECP has right to decide

(Continued from Page 1)

infrastructure.

PM assures govt's full support to UNICEF on public welfare projects: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar assured the government's full support to the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) for launching the projects of public welfare in Pakistan.

"The government will provide all possible facilities to the UNICEF for launching welfare projects in education, health and other sectors," he said while talking to the UNICEF's representative in Pakistan Abdullah Fadil who called on him here. During the meeting, Abdullah Fadil briefed the prime minister on the steps taken by UNICEF in various areas of Pakistan.

He told the prime minister that during the last five years, around US\$1 billion projects had been established in a range of fields including humanitarian aid, clean drinking water, food supply, education, and health under UNICEF in Pakistan. The prime minister appreciated UNICEF Pakistan for successfully launching several projects for public welfare.

Terming UNICEF's role in the anti-polio drive in Pakistan as of special importance, he said a positive change in the anti-polio vaccination drive was being seen among the masses due to mutual collaboration of the government of Pakistan and UNICEF. The prime minister also appreciated UNICEF for taking steps in the education sector in Azad Jammu and Kashmir despite intense Indian criticism. He asked Abdullah Fadil to constitute a new and effective strategy to provide education to the out of school children in Pakistan. He also supported the steps taken by UNICEF

to introduce modern technology in the education sector in underdeveloped areas of the country. "The illiteracy rate in the country can be brought down significantly by helping the students of remote areas get access to the state of the art information through tablets," the prime minister added. He assured that the government of Pakistan would fully support the projects launched by UNICEF to create job opportunities for the youth.

PM underscores need to enhance trade, economic linkages with African countries: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, while acknowledging that Pakistan and Africa had enjoyed excellent political relations over the years, stressed the need to enhance trade and economic linkages which were yet to realize their full potential. He also highlighted the importance Pakistan attached to Africa and expressed the desire to strengthen ties with African countries, at the bilateral as well as regional level. The prime minister met a group of resident envoys representing African countries as well as select Asian countries over lunch, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassadors of Algeria and Sudan as well as High Commissioners of Bangladesh, Brunei, Malaysia, Mauritius, and South Africa. Other participants included the Charges d' Affaires of Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe. The caretaker prime minister mentioned that the 4th Pakistan-Africa Trade Conference was underway in Cairo, Egypt from January 9-11 where Pakistan was represented by a large business delegation led by the commerce minister.

PM Kakar also expressed deep appreciation for Pakistan's historic ties with the Southeast Asian countries, particularly Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia. He said Pakistan was keen to expand bilateral trade ties with the key countries and sought their assistance in strengthening its engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Referring to the ongoing situation in Gaza, the prime minister stressed the need for dialogue among nations and for intensifying collective efforts to end the violence and bring lasting peace in Palestine. He also praised the diplomatic envoys for their efforts to build stronger ties with Pakistan and their respective countries. The diplomats thanked the caretaker prime minister for sparing time to interact with them and said they would continue to work closely with Pakistan to enhance bilateral relations.

PM orders fast-track privatization of PIA, outsourcing of airport services: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar directed the authorities concerned to pace up the privatization process of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), the national flag carrier.

In a meeting with his Adviser on Aviation Air Marshal (ret'd) Farhat Hussain, the prime minister emphasized ensuring transparency in the process of privatization. PM Kakar said privatization of state-owned enterprises was on priority for the government to save the national exchequer from further financial losses. He said the country's aviation industry had a high scope of growth through investment. The prime minister also directed the out-sourcing of airport operations in a bid to ensure improvement of services.

Zardari vows to provide sui gas to Dera Bugti if elected

F.P. Report

DERA BUGTI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-Chairman and former president Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday vowed that his party after coming to power would lay a pipeline in Dera Bugti to provide Sui gas to the local people.

If voted to power, the PPP would also ensure the share of local people in gas fields and ample employment opportunities for them, he said while addressing a public meeting here through video link.

Zardari, who was unable to travel to Dera Bugti due to bad weather, promised that he would soon visit the area and meet the workers. He said that he was well aware of the problems of the people of Dera Bugti in general and Balochistan in particular, and would take concrete steps to resolve them.

The provision of jobs and the establishment of a best hospital in Dera Bugti were part of the PPP's election, he reiterated. Zardari appreciated Sarfraz Bugti, who joined the PPP recently and the party workers for organizing such a successful gathering in the cold weather conditions.

Meanwhile, addressing the public meeting, former caretaker federal interior minister and PPP leader Sarfraz Bugti said that the PPP would form the government in Balochistan by securing a clear majority in the general elections due on February 8. He said the PPP has always raised voice for rights and betterment of the poor and farmers.

He said that the heirs of the martyrs in the Pakistan People's Party. He said that the heirs of the martyrs should never think that they have become isolated, because Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-Chairman and former president Asif Ali Zardari are the heirs of the families of the martyrs. Earlier, thousands of tribals from far-flung areas of Dera Bugti and surroundings attended the public meeting.

Judges skeptical of Trump's immunity claim

WASHINGTON (Reuters): A Washington appeals court questioned Donald Trump's claims that he is immune from criminal charges for trying to overturn the 2020 election, as the former US president on Tuesday warned he could prosecute Joe Biden if he returns to the White House.

Trump looked on as his legal team sought to convince a panel of three judges that former presidents should not be prosecuted for actions they took in office. Trump is due to go to trial in March on federal charges of election subversion. Judges reacted skeptically to that argument.

"You're saying a president could sell pardons, could sell military secrets, could tell SEAL Team Six to assassinate a political rival?" Judge Florence Pan asked Trump lawyer D. John Sauer. Sauer said that a former president could be charged for such conduct only if they were first impeached by the House of Representatives and convicted in the Senate.

Trump did not address the court, or speak to news media that waited outside the courthouse. He did, however, confer quietly with his

attorneys several times during the hearing. With the Republican state-by-state presidential nominating contest due to kick off next week, Trump used the hearing as an opportunity to claim he is the victim of political persecution.

In a video posted to social media ahead of the hearing, Trump said he could prosecute Democratic President Joe Biden if he wins the November presidential election. "If I don't get immunity then crooked Joe Biden doesn't get immunity," Trump said. "Joe would be ripe for indictment."

Trump, who lost to Biden in the 2020 election, has opened up a commanding lead over his rivals for the Republican presidential nomination since the first criminal charge against him was announced last March. He is expected to easily win Monday's contest in Iowa. The US Justice Department has long held that presidents cannot be prosecuted while in office for doing their official duties. Trump, the first former US president to be criminally prosecuted, faces 91 criminal counts in four separate cases.

Sauer, Trump's lawyer,

told a three-judge panel of the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit that allowing prosecution to go forward would lead to a cycle of retribution after each election and "open a Pandora's Box from which that nation may never recover." He said presidents must first be impeached and removed from office by Congress before he could be prosecuted. Trump was impeached twice but the Senate failed to convict him.

Some Republican senators declined to convict him after he was impeached for trying to overturn the 2020 election, on the grounds that he could be held accountable in court. US prosecutors argue that Trump was acting as a candidate, not a president, when he pressured officials to overturn the election results and encouraged his supporters to march to the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

The case against Trump reflects the unprecedented nature of his efforts to overturn the 2020 election and granting him immunity for those actions would give future presidents license to commit crimes, Justice Department lawyer James Pearce told the panel.

ASI martyred, two cops injured in Bannu attack

F.P. Report

BANNU: Unknown Motorcyclists attacked polio team in which an Assistant Sub Inspector shot killed while two other policemen were critically injured in the premises of Mirian police station, on Tuesday.

During the polio campaign in Bannu region, during the polio campaign, unknown armed motorcyclists killed an ASI, while two police officers with the polio team were seriously injured, while one attack and other injuries were reported by the police in return fire.

According to the details, the area of Teri Ram Touri, located within the boundaries of Mirian police station, the polio campaign was going on, during which unknown armed men on

motorcycles fired at the police officers to protect the anti-polio campaign workers, as a result of which the police killed Aamir Khan and Zahid Khan was shot and injured. Police sources say that on being informed of the incident, the police party in the nearby areas also arrived and a fight with armed men began, during which police ASI Fayazuddin was killed while two police officers were injured.

After the attack, police officers were also injured. Police personnel were taken to DHQ Hospital for first aid. After the incident, Regional Police Officer Qasim Ali Khan and District Police Officer Syed Iftikhar Shah arrived at the scene along with a heavy contingent of police. They went and surrounded the

area and started a search operation and the area was completely sealed.

In addition to this, additional personnel from DSPS, SHO's and police stations are also present in their limits, while I and the Regional Police Officer Qasim Ali Khan will also be on the road during the polio campaign and inspect the police teams in various BHUs.

They said that our police and polio team were regularly present in Mirian police station to plan anti-polio drops, but during this time unknown armed motorcyclists opened fire, injuring two young policemen who were He was transferred to HQ Hospital and his condition was declared to be out of danger. polio campaign will continue.