

SC dismisses APML's appeal
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed an appeal of the All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) for restoration of its election symbol 'Eagle'. A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali heard the case filed by the APML.

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ISLAMABAD: Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, Andreas Ferrarese paid a farewell call on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

PHC grants transit bail to KP Speaker
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprised of Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Waqar Ahmad granted transit bail to former Speaker of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Mushtaq Ahmad Ghani, on Friday.

The lawyer for Mushtaq Ghani told the court that Mushtaq Ghani was in London and wanted to come back to Pakistan. He said the applicant may be granted a new passport and not to be arrested on his return.

Justice Shakeel Ahmad in his remarks said the court gives the applicant a deadline and he has to come back to the country on time adding that Mushtaq Ghani has to land at Peshawar airport.

According to the court's verdict Mushtaq Ghani must return to the country by 22nd January and with expiry of the date, the order will stand as cancelled. The court also issued directives that Mushtaq Ghani should not be arrested on his arrival.

It is worthy to mention that PHC had provided relief to Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly till 27th December 2023 but didn't appear while submitting a plea for renewal of passport which was accepted earlier.

2 terrorists killed in N Waziristan
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in North Waziristan District, on reported presence of terrorists.

During the conduct of operation, after an intense fire exchange, two terrorists: Abdullah Khadri and Khalid @ Janan, were sent to hell. The killed terrorists remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area including target killing of innocent civilians. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area as the Security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country.

Shehbaz withdraws from NA-242
F.P. Report

KARACHI: Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) president Shehbaz Sharif will not contest election from NA-242 constituency in Karachi.

Shehbaz withdrew his nomination papers after Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) refused to withdraw its candidates Mustafa Kamal from NA-242. Meanwhile, PML-N Senator Nehal Hashmi said that Khawaja Shoaib will be PML-N's candidate from NA-242 in place of Shehbaz Sharif as no consensus reached with MQM-P for seat adjustment.

Strikes on Yemen had good effects: Pentagon

WASHINGTON: US-British strikes on Iran-backed Houthi forces in Yemen had "good effects," Pentagon spokesman Patrick Ryder said on Friday, and their militaries will continue to monitor the situation for any retaliatory strikes.

There are currently no plans to send additional US troops to the region, Ryder said in an interview with CNN. "Our initial assessment is that we had good effects," he said. "We will continue to monitor and as the president and (Defense) Secretary Austin have said, we will continue to take necessary action."

Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin, who was hospitalized on Jan. 1 to treat an infection, was in good condition, had spoken twice to President Joe Biden in the last two days and had been "actively engaged in overseeing and directing these strikes." US and British warplanes, ships and submarines launched dozens of air strikes across Yemen overnight in retaliation against Iran-backed Houthi forces for attacks on Red Sea shipping, widening regional conflict stemming from Israel's war in Gaza.

Asked about worries that the conflict might escalate, Ryder said the US continues to work to contain the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. The Houthi militants' attacks on commercial shipping in the vital Red Sea waterway has affected more than 50 countries, Ryder noted, and the United States and its allies see the actions as distinct from what is happening in

TFP suggests The White House to create museum of harmony
Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: To fight religious extremism in the East and the West, *The Frontier Post* suggested the White House to initiate something (maybe a museum) which can bring harmony between the believers of different faiths in America.

While referring to recent events taking place around the world and the rising anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in America, *The Frontier Post* reminded that many of the prophets in Islam and Christianity are the same individuals who are called with different names.

In response to question and suggestion by *The Frontier Post*, White House National Security Spokesperson, John Kirby said that he appreciates the question and that President Biden strongly believes in freedom of religions. He also stated that America has no place for those who spread hate and violence on the basis of religion. It is important to note here that since the Gaza conflict has started, there have been several incidents reported where Muslims, Christians and Jews have been subjected to violence in America. In recent days an Imam of a local mosque in New Jersey was also shot dead.

Gaza. "No one wants to see a wider regional conflict. But again, we also cannot allow for this kind of dangerous, reckless behavior," he said.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Yemenis gathered in several cities on Friday to hear their leaders condemn US and British strikes on their country in response to attacks by Houthi militants on Red Sea shipping. The US and Britain carried out dozens of air strikes on Houthi military targets overnight, widening a wave of regional conflict unleashed by Israel's war in Gaza.

"Your strikes on Yemen are terrorism," said Mohammed Ali Al-Houthi, a member of the Houthi Supreme Political Council, referring to the United States.

Forces able to respond to any threat: COAS



RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff, (COAS), witnessed firing of different Air Defence weapon systems during Exercise Al-Bayza-III, 2024 at Sonmiani. COAS viewed integrated fire and battle maneuvers of Army Air Defence systems which includes High to Medium Air Defence Weapons System (HIMADS), Low to Medium Air Defence System (LOMAD), Short Range Air Defence system (SHORADs) and Extended Short Range Air Defence system (ESHORADs).

In a landmark achievement and milestone in enhancing the Air Defence of the aerial frontiers of Pakistan, HIMAD system in maiden fire was able to successfully engage the target at maximum ranges along with other layered weapon systems which were tested during the exercise. COAS highly appreciated the remarkable achievement of engaging targets with precision and operational readiness of Corps of Army Air Defence.

While interacting with the officers and troops, COAS highlighted that Armed Forces of Pakistan are modernising their systems in line with our requirements to deter and be able to respond to any threat emanating against Pakistan. Corps

PM for boosting ties with Italy
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday, acknowledging Pakistan's longstanding friendly ties with Italy, emphasized the need to boost trade, investment and cooperation in diverse areas, including migration, mobility, agricultural technology, education and tourism.

The bilateral ties were discussed in a meeting with Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan Andreas Ferrarese who paid a farewell call on him, a PM Office statement said. During the meeting, the prime minister appreciated the ambassador's contributions to strengthening bilateral relations, noting his efforts to foster economic ties and facilitate cooperation in various fields.

The Italian ambassador thanked the prime minister for receiving him and expressed gratitude for the excellent cooperation he received throughout his stay in Pakistan. He also briefed Prime Minister Kakar on key developments during his tenure. The ambassador lauded the valuable contributions of the vibrant Pakistani diaspora to Italy's economic development. The prime minister wished the outgoing ambassador success in his future endeavours.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday expressed condolence over the death of Khalid Butt, a renowned actor of Pakistan Television, theatre and film.

"Khalid Butt was a very talented actor of PTV and theatre as well as the film industry," the prime minister said in a statement. He prayed to Allah Almighty for peace of the departed soul and strength for the bereaved family to bear the loss.

Alvi accepts Justice Ijaz's resignation
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday accepted the resignation of Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan, the third senior-most judge of the Supreme Court who stepped down abruptly a day earlier, on Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar's advice.

Justice Ahsan resigned under Articles 179 and 206 (1) of the Constitution. Article 179 allows an SC judge to resign sooner than his retirement age. "A Judge of the Supreme Court shall hold office until he attains the age of sixty-five years, unless he sooner resigns or is removed from office in accordance with the Constitution."

Article 206 (1) reads: "A judge of the Supreme Court or of a high court may resign from his office by writing under his hand addressed to the president." After the president approved Ahsan's resignation, the Ministry of Law and Justice issued a notification regarding it.

As per the notification, the resignation has been approved from January 11. The third senior-most judge of the apex court had said in his resignation to President Alvi that he wished not to continue as the top court's judge anymore. The resignation came only two days after Justice Sayeed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi's stepped down from his office amid misconduct allegations.

The untimely departures of the senior judges have triggered widespread speculation. The president had on Thursday accepted Naqvi's resignation. In his resignation to the president, Ahsan said he no longer wished to continue as the top court's judge, therefore, he was resigning under Article 206(1) of the Constitution with immediate effect. Both the judges were considered 'close' to former CJP Umar Ata Bandial, with analysts saying that the jurists were involved in issuing controversial orders — along with another judge, Justice Munib Akhtar.

Every citizen has fundamental right to vote: CJP

Apex court adjourns hearing of plea against PTI's 'bat' symbol till today

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa on Friday observed that democracy was a fundamental right, which should be present in both a country and a political party.

"Every citizen has a fundamental right to vote for a political party of its choice and every political party member has the same right too," he remarked, adding that if this right was snatched then there would be "dictatorship on the national and local level". The observations came as a three-member Supreme Court bench — comprising the CJP, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali — took up the ECP's petition challenging the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) decision to restore the PTI's iconic 'bat' election symbol. The proceedings were broadcast live on the apex court's website.

But during hearing, CJP Isa raised a pertinent question did the high court declare PTI's intra-party polls in line with the law? "The issue of bat electoral symbol's allotment comes later. First, we will have to review the party's intra-party elections," Peshawar High Court did not issue a declaration that PTI's intra-party polls were in line with the law. It just ordered that PTI should be given its

election symbol back. The Peshawar High Court's decision is flawed and prima facie. At the outset of the hearing, PTI lawyer Hamid Khan and ECP lawyer Makhdoom Ali Khan appeared before the court, while PTI lawyer Ali Zafar attended the hearing via video link from the top court's Lahore registry. Akbar S. Babar, the estranged PTI leader who initially challenged the party's intra-party elections in ECP, also appeared before the court.

Meanwhile, Gohar Ali Khan, who was elected as PTI chairman in the controversial intra-party polls, party's chief election commissioner Niazullah Niazi, and lawyer Shoaib Shaheen were also present during the hearing. During the hearing, CJP Isa observed that the ECP is a constitutional body and no one can interfere in its domain.

"Supreme Court will not interfere in the domain of the Election Commission of Pakistan. However, if ECP commits any unconstitutional act then the court can look into it," the top judge added. The PTI counsel requested the court to adjourn the hearing till Monday to prepare for the case.

At this, CJP Isa said the PHC decision has to be suspended for three days if the case is adjourned till Monday. Meanwhile, ECP

only 14 senators were present in the 100-strong Senate. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Afanullah Khan and caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi had opposed the resolution while PPP's Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi and PTI's Senator Gurdeep Singh remained silent.

However, no one raised the quorum of the House during the moving and passage process of the resolution in the Senate. Speaking in the Senate, mover Dilawar Khan had said that there was a severe winter season in some parts of the country.

He said that there are security threats to the leaders of some political parties and intelligence agencies have issued a security alert of attacks on rallies. Senator Dilawar said the issue of COVID-19 is also there, so the elections on February 8 should be postponed.

Majority of the lawmakers present in the legislature had approved the resolution — seeking polls delay in the light of extreme weather in hilly areas and the deteriorating security situation — moved by independent lawmaker Senator Dilawar Khan. During the passage of the resolution,

We want to make Pakistan a modern state: Bilawal

LAHORE: The Pakistan Awami Tehreek has decided to support Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in NA-127. This was announced by the Secretary General of PAT, Khurram Nawaz Gandapur today.

Khurram Nawaz Gandapur announcing this decision, said that the PAT will hold a public rally in Lahore and announce its support publicly. He said that the PAT has supported the PPP in the bye-elections. Gandapur thanked Chairman PPP for supporting the PAT's stance on the Model Town incident. The PPP has always taken a principled stand on the Model Town incident and today, Chairman Bilawal reiterated that support.

Gandapur said that we have to bury the politics of revenge for Pakistan and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz believes in the politics of revenge. This is the

Two injured in Bajaur blast
F.P. Report

KHAR: As many as two individuals sustained injuries in a bomb blast that occurred in Utman Khel, a subdivision located in Bajaur, on Friday. A bomb blast was reported from Bajaur leaving two individuals injured including a woman. Meanwhile, the rescue officials shifted the injured to the nearby hospital where the doctors termed their condition, out of danger.

(Continued on Back Page)

‘Govt has introduced AI in hospitals’

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Prof Dr. Javed Akram said that the government had introduced a historic artificial intelligence systems in government hospitals across the province. Speaking at a book launch event, he emphasized the need for innovation in daily life and highlighted the pivotal role of technology in the development of powerful economies worldwide.

During his address, Dr. Akram stressed the importance of evidence-based policies in addressing Pakistan's challenges and advocated for local technology development instead of relying on imports. He lamented the absence of biotechnology plants in Pakistan and urged a collective effort, suggesting an all-party conference to enhance the system.

The event, attended by prominent figures such as Chairman Punjab Higher Education Commission Dr. Shahid Munir and Vice Chancellor University of Technology Prof. Dr. Adnan Noor Mian, showcased the commitment to advancing modern research and technology in the region. Dr. Javed Akram concluded with a prayer for the opportunity to serve Pakistan effectively.

‘Need to create atmosphere of love, tolerance’

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Minister for Aqaf Syed Azfar Ali Nasir has said that Ulama should play their role for promoting human respect and unity among Muslims.

He said this while delivering 'Juma' sermon at Badshahi Mosque here on Friday.

He said there was a dire need to create an atmosphere of tolerance, love, brotherhood and respect.

He said, "Our enemy want to create instability and unrest among us."

He appealed to the Ulama to keep an eye on elements who wanted to create unrest among Ulama. He also congratulated Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad for holding Ummat Conference.

PU students shine

LAHORE (APP): Students from Punjab University Department of Sports Sciences won the title of the best athletes by performing brilliantly in various competitions at the national level.

In the All Pakistan (Men's) Inter-University Athletics Championship held in Peshawar, Osama Hasan was declared the best athlete. Similarly, in the All-Pakistan (Women) Inter-University Athletics Championship held in Punjab University, Sports Sciences student Sunaina Musawar was declared the best athlete for her outstanding performance. PU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood congratulated the Chairman Department of Sports Sciences Prof Dr Zafar Iqbal Butt and the players on the achievement.

CM displeased with poor cleanliness in PIC

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi expressed displeasure over poor cleanliness, marks of dust and stains on tiles and counters during his inspection of the newly constructed emergency of the Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC).

He summoned the contractor, officials from the C&W department and the medical superintendent for an immediate explanation. He pointed out the signs of neglect in cleanliness arrangements and dust on tiles, expressing dismay over the situation. Inspecting the emergency, the CM questioned why the cleanliness conditions were so subpar. He summoned the commissioner and directed immediate improvements in cleanliness arrangements. He emphasized that poor cleanliness in the new emergency was unacceptable.

He also enquired about the well-being of a patient in a wheelchair, lifting a fallen file from the floor and placing it back on

the wheelchair. The patient expressed gratitude to the CM for his gesture. He also addressed the complaint of a patient from Gujrat about delayed scheduling for angiography. Ordering immediate action, he instructed the MS to expedite the angiography procedure.

The health secretary and others were also present.

Naqvi visits Mayo Hospital: Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has directed to install appropriate-sized signboards for the convenience of patients and their attendants at Mayo Hospital, during an inspection of the upgradation of the hospital's emergency block, which is in its final stage on Friday.

He further directed that the finishing touches should be completed expeditiously with high standards. The CM also emphasized the need for the timely completion of all tasks while maintaining the quality of work. The KEMU principal was also present.

Healthy activities continue to highlight positive image of Karachi: Mayor

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that healthy and constructive activities are ongoing to highlight the positive image of Karachi and KMC will continue to work together with the Sindh government for the betterment of the city.

He said this while addressing the opening ceremony of the 4th Mergold Festival at Bagh e Jinnah (Frere Hall lawn) on Friday. He said that we have a strong bond with the people and will always have this, more than 60 thousand flowers have been planted in Marigold Festival for the citizens, "I would like to congratulate the Parks Department for organizing the three-day festival."

Deputy Mayor Salman

Abdullah Murad, deputy parliamentary leader of PPP in City Council Dil Muhammad, Director General Parks Junaidullah Khan and other officers were also present, Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab along with Deputy Mayor Karachi inaugurated the Marigold Festival and distributed certificates of appreciation to the staff of the Parks Department.

Addressing the event, he said that the Frere Garden is an asset of the citizens, the work done by the Parks Department in the Frere Garden is appreciable, the Marigold Festival will continue for three days and the entry of the citizens will be free. He said that KMC with the help of the provincial government working in the city in a

dynamic manner.

He asked the citizens to come in large numbers to this festival and tell the world that good works are also done in our city. We are working day and night thinking that we should fulfil the promises made to the people, he said.

Mayor Karachi said that the Sindh government gave three snorkels to this city yesterday which have been added to the fire brigade fleet and will be used all over the city to put off fire. He said that buses have also come to solve the problems of public transport, the fire brigade department is quite active, and their annual performance has been good, the positive change is that now the complaints received on the 1122 are being processed without delay.

Dense fog disrupts traffic on motorways

ISLAMABAD (INP): Dense fog again blanketed plain areas of Punjab on night between Thursday and Friday, paralyzing routine life and disrupting road traffic on Motorways.

The thick fog has badly affected the flow of road traffic in several cities. According to a Motorway spokesperson, the Motorway M2 from Kot Momin to Pindi Bhattian, M3 from Jaranwala to Darkhana, Motorway M4 from Abdul Hakeem to Pindi Bhattian and Motorway

M5 from Uch Sharif to Zahir Pir have been closed for all kind of traffic.

The Motorway police have appealed the drivers to use Grand Trunk (GT) Road for travelling. They have also urged the drivers to drive slowly and switch on fog lights. The Motorway police have also requested the people to stay home and avoid unnecessary travelling.

Dense fog has also disrupted traffic at several places in the province at the National Highway due to low visibility.

Sindh Govt decides to appoint tourist guides for historical sites

KARACHI (APP): In a strategic move to enhance tourism in the province, the Sindh government has announced the appointment of professional tour guides for all tourist destinations across the province.

Provincial Minister for Tourism, Environment, Climate Change, and Coastal Development, Arshad Wali Muhammad emphasized the importance of trained tour guides for creating memorable experiences for tourists visiting

historical and cultural sites in Sindh.

Highlighting the rich historical and tourist sites, Minister Arshad Wali Muhammad stated that the presence of professional tour guides is crucial for making the experience of tourists unforgettable. Trained tour guides possess the knowledge to provide comprehensive information about these historical sites, enhancing the global tourists' overall experience. In this regard, Secretary of

Tourism and Culture, Khalid Chachar, has written to the Finance Department, referencing the directives of the High Court, requesting the release of funds for the recruitment of tourist guides. The decision aligns with the commitment to promote Sindh as a premier tourist destination, ensuring that visitors receive expert guidance, contributing to the overall growth and positive perception of tourism in the province.



LAHORE: A view of thick fog during the morning fog in the provincial capital.

Baqar directs Education Dept to provide hard, soft copies of textbooks to students

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (retd) Maqbool Baqar has directed the School Education Department to ensure that both hard and soft copies of textbooks are provided to students for online studying. We are in a digital age where children prefer digital content over hard copies and carrying them around, he added.

This he said while speaking at the launching ceremony of the website of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Mirpurkhas at CM House here Friday. Secretary U&B Noor Ahmad Samoo, Chairman Mirpurkhas Board Zulfikar Ali Shah, Secretary Board Anisuddin, Controller of Examination Anwar Aleem and others were also present.

In a simple ceremony, the chief minister punched the key to the computer and launched the website of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Mirpurkhas.

The Chairman Mirpurkhas Board Zulfikar Shah, while briefing the CM about the key achievements of the website, said that it

would offer an online Enrolment facility / Enrolment Cards, examination forms and Roll Number Slips. The website will also offer online affiliation facilities, Real-time facilitation for students, online verification facility, online all duplicate documents, online registration of examiners and supervisory staff, availability of informative videos for students and teachers, availability of online results of all examinations, and availability of correction forms, he said. The Chairman said that his Board was also offering an E-academy to facilitate the students, especially in remote areas of District Tharparkar first time in history.

The CM was told that to promote the co-curricular activities, the Board made model papers of SSC and HSC availability on its website and also launched official Social Media to facilitate the Students of far-flung areas of District Tharparkar on the step. "The Board has also established an information desk which ensures the availability of updated information desk day to day for Students and all stakeholders".

The CM was told that the

Board has established a Facilitation Center (One-Window operation) and created a Complaint portal for the quick redressal of grievances of students. It was pointed out that the demand for unnecessary documents from the students was waived.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is informed that Plot No. 36 Sector H measuring 600 Sq Yds) situated in Engineers Cooperative Housing Society, Sector D-18, Islamabad was allotted / owned by **Mr. Dost Muhammad Khan S/o Muhammad Yaqoob Khan** ECHS membership No ECHS-1404 Resident of Danishabad, Peshawar. This office has been informed that the allottee / owner of the subject plot, died on 27/11/92 and the following persons are legal heirs of the deceased:- (1) Shishtana Bibi (2)Fida Muhammad Khan (3)Shakeel Muhammad Khan (4)Tariq Muhammad (5)Mushtaq Muhammad. The above persons/Legal Heirs have applied to this office for transfer of above plot. If any Bank Financial Institution or Person have any objection etc, for transferring the plot, they should contact the society Office within 15 days of the publication of this advertisement and furnish their written objection. After the expiry of said time period no claim will be entertained and the plot shall be transferred in the name of above legal heirs.

Honorary Secretary | Engineers Cooperative Housing Society
Sangjani Post Office Tarnol, Sector D-18, Islamabad.
Telephone No. 051-2229754-6

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, C&W DIVISION MALAKAND

CORRIGENDUM

The Nit for the Developmental Schemes submitted to Director Information and published in Daily "AJJ" vide INF(P) 3100-23 Date 28/12/2023, the Last Date of submission of E-Bids may be read as **29/01/2024** instead of 12/01/2024. All terms and conditions may remain intact

INF(P)75/2024

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
C&W DIVISION MALAKAND

Pak-Malaysia bilateral cooperation to boost economies: Governor Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori has said that bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Malaysia was in the interest of both the countries as it would boost the economies mutually. This he said while talking with the eleven-member delegation headed by Tan Sri Rastam Bin Mohd Isa, Chairman Felda Global Venture, engaged in Palm oil production.

Renowned Industrialists Bashir Jan Muhammad and Rasheed Jan Muhammad were also present on the occasion. Governor Sindh further said that Pakistan wants to learn from the experience of Malaysia in Palm plantation. "The coastal but from Karachi to Thatta was ideal for this purpose and we have already started a pilot project in this regard", he added. Kamran Khan Tessori said that there were ample opportunities for investment available in agriculture, health, energy and education sectors and the investors from Malaysia can benefit from the conducive investment environment in Sindh. "We would extend all possible help and assistance to them, he assured. While emphasising close cooperation in the agriculture sector, the governor said that agriculture was the most important sector in Pakistan and cooperation of Malaysians would boost this sector.

Mohd Hairul Abdul Hamid, Chief Financial Officer FGV, Fakhrummiam bin Othman, Director FGV, Zulkifli bin Othman, Head of Marketing FGV, Mohd Azamsi Rajab, Chief Executive Officer Felda Trading, Tan Sri Dato Seri Lee Oi Hian, CEO KI Kepong Malaysia, Ooi Liang Hin, CEO Astra KLK, Tan Kwan Yung, Executive KLK, Lim Jit Uei, CEO Ioi Edible Oils, Malaysia were present on the occasion.

NOTICE FOR AUCTION OF MINOR MINERALS LEASE OF DISTRICT KOHAT

The District Auction Committee of District **Kohat** invites applications from registered contractors of Minor Minerals for participation in auction and grant of Minor Mineral lease of the whole District **Kohat as one unit** under provision of section 78 subsection (3) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines & Mineral **Act 2017** (Amended) for mining for a period of one year on the basis of "As is where is" against reserve price of **Rs. 1,65,00,000/-**, and call deposit of **Rs. 41,25,000/-** in the office of **Deputy Commissioner Kohat on 20/02/2024 at 11:00 am**. In case of non-auction due to any reason, next date of auction will be **21/02/2024 at 11:00 am**.

- TERMS AND CONDITIONS**
- Only those persons or firms registered with Directorate General Mines & Minerals. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as Minor Minerals Contractors can participate in auction. Interested parties can register themselves in the Directorate General Mines & Minerals Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
 - The registered parties/individuals shall submit application form at the cost of Rs. 10000/- (Ten thousand) non-refundable on any working day at least three (03) days before the auction.
 - Blacklisted/Defaulter persons or those persons who are not registered with Directorate General Mines and Minerals are not allowed to participate in the auction.
 - The interested parties can visit and check the advertised areas before auction. The sketches of the areas are available for the interested parties in the office of the undersigned.
 - Call deposit shall be deposited under account No. No. 0066-2008140092 and application fee under account No. 0066-2008209319 in any branch of Bank of Khyber.
 - The registered applicants/parties shall also submit attested copies of CNIC, income tax registration certificate (NTN) and partnership deed/article & memorandum of association along with evidence of paid-up capital (if applicant is partnership firm/ company).
 - The successful bidder shall deposit 1/4th of the total bid money as security within three days from the date of auction, otherwise, call deposit shall be forfeited in favor of the Government and the bid of second highest bidder shall be considered as highest bid, subject to condition that the difference between the first and the second highest bids is not more than 10 percent of the highest bid.
 - The successful bidder shall demarcate his leased area within fifteen days from the issuance of Allotment letter on his own expenses.
 - The successful bidder shall be bound to pay Excise duty to Commissionerate of Mines or its approved excise duty collection contractor on government notified rates.
 - The successful bidder before issuance of allotment letter shall be bound to deposit withholding tax under Rule-236-A of ITO2011 with Income Tax Department and Professional Tax as per rules to the Excise & Taxation Deptt; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
 - The successful bidder will be bound to pay surface rent to the land owner under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines & Minerals act 2017 (amended).
 - The successful bidder shall be responsible to work in leased area strictly in accordance with the provisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Mineral Act 2017 (Amended).
 - The successful bidder shall be bound to use only verified challans for transportation of minor minerals duly verified by the concerned Assistant Director. Transportation without a verified transit challan shall be considered as un-authorized transportation and action under section-56 of the ibid Act shall be initiated against the lessee as well as other offenders.
 - The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject any bid with cogent reason.
 - Other information in this regard can be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office time i.e., 09:00 AM to 05:00 PM on any working day.

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Assistant Director Mineral Development Kohat.



LAHORE: A view of train is running on the tracks Railway Station.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah launching 'Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dashboard.'

Ministers chair meeting

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Irrigation, Communications and Works, Ahmad Jan, and Provincial Minister for Rural Development and Local Government, Ameer Nadeem Durrani, have announced plans for direct connectivity of Abbottabad city with a Hazara Motorway.

They propose initiating immediate work at Sherwan Interchange to link Abbottabad through a tunnel, facilitating interchanges for the center of city and improving traffic flow in and around Abbottabad. The provincial government has requested federal government support for expanding Sherwan Interchange and constructing an interchange via a tunnel for Abbottabad. This initiative aims to connect various areas, including Abbottabad city, Manshera, Nathiagali Murri, and others areas, minimizing traffic congestion within the city.

During a meeting at the Commissioner House in Abbottabad, officials from NHA, C&W, WSSA, Sui Gas, Health, and Forest departments discussed these plans. The focus is on immediate actions, such as starting work on Abbottabad BRT project, cleaning up rainwater drains, and addressing road issues near Hazara Motorway's conclusion at Peshawar Mor. The officials emphasized the need for timely completion of infrastructure projects, addressing issues left by previous contractors, and conducting inquiries into incomplete work.

Moreover, a comprehensive plan for the redesigning and cleaning of all drains in Abbottabad was discussed, with an urgent emphasis on immediate cleaning of all drains in the short term. The officials directed the concerned authorities to collaborate with TMAs for measuring all drains and to ensure prompt action for their redesign. The provincial ministers instructed the relevant authorities to write to the Public Service Commission regarding vacant positions in DHQ hospitals, especially in the evening and night shifts, and to seek NOC from the Election Commission for addressing staff shortages in the hospitals.

Transparent polls a must

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party said Feb 8 election will determine future and right direction for the country and expressed confidence that political elites, opportunists and mafia who grabbed politics for decades, they will be defeated with people's vote.

Faiq emphasized transparent polls are essential to elect true public representatives and steer the country from a quagmire situation and called for removal of the impression of rigging in the election. The party leader pledged to change the fate of the people of Pakistan, promising to address the prevailing issues of inflation, unemployment, poverty and economic crisis.

Responding to direct online queries of people from different walks of life and segments on Friday, Shah said only a true public representative government will remove suffering of people. He asked people to reject mafia and political manipulators with the power of their vote in the Feb 8 elections.

SCCI express concern over water shortage

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq has expressed concern over the low water level in Peshawar and asked the government and World Wide Fund (WWF) Pakistan to take joint measures to control the increasing wastage of water and preserve it on an emergency basis.

He made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation of World Wide Fund (WWF) Pakistan led by its Program Manager ILES Muhammad Rashid held here at the chamber house on Friday.

Other members of the delegation include WWF Pakistan Head Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region Muhammad Waseem, Conservation Officer Peshawar Aimal Khan Barki, Senior SP ILES Hamza Latif, Project Officer Maham Zahna, and Liaison Officer Anwar.

The SCCI senior vice president Sanaullah Khan,

secretary general Sajjad Aziz and others were present during the meeting.

Representatives briefed the president SCCI Fuad Ishaq regarding the WWF Pakistan intervention and projects in various sectors including agriculture, forest, wildlife, climate change and oceans and the key role of the organization. Members of the WWF delegation asked the SCCI to launch joint ventures for conservation and preservation of water on which president Fuad Ishaq agreed and he identified the various sectors for which both institutions can be collaborated in future.

Fuad Ishaq said he had given proposals of government and relevant departments/authorities that if the chamber suggestions would be implemented with true spirit then it can help to control the waste of water, besides to prevent increasing hatreds and damages from the environmental challenges. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially in ice factories, cold storage

and other important sectors wherein we can collaborate and conserve the water, Fuad Ishaq said.

On the occasion, the SCCI chief gave suggestions to WWF Pakistan for collaboration in various sectors under a joint venture and program, upon which the delegation fully agreed and expressed willingness to jointly work on water conservation and preservation.

In this regard, an agreement was reached between both institutions that a formal memorandum of understanding (MoU) will be signed shortly. Earlier, the SCCI president Fuad Ishaq participated in stakeholders' workshop/seminar on increasing water challenges in KP, organized by WWF Pakistan in a local hotel in Peshawar. Fuad Ishaq gave various proposals to organizers and participants of the stakeholders' workshop with regard to conservation and preservation of water and control of the increasing waste in the province.

Jamal visits PAF-IAST, inaugurates innovation lab

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah on Friday visited Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology (PAF-IAST).

Adviser National heritage and Culture Kashif Irshad, Director General PNCA Muhammad Ayub Jamali, Director Lok Virsa Anwar ul Haq and Director Hunerkada Amna Shah were also accompanied the Minister. Prof. Dr. Mohammad Mujahid, Rector, along with faculty members and Prof. Zafar Iqbal extended a warm welcome to Federal Minister.

The Rector provided a comprehensive overview of PAF-IAST, highlighting cutting-edge features and facilities. He said that from modern Smart Classrooms, advanced Data Center, and powerful HPC Cluster, to state-of-the-art buildings and infrastructure, every aspect reflects commitment

to excellence.

"We also had the opportunity to showcase our prestigious Medical College, advanced HiTech labs and the groundbreaking Sino-Pak Center for Artificial Intelligence", he added. He also highlighted Center of Excellence in Transportation/Railway Engineering, as well as Special Technology Zone and vibrant Technology Park. The Minister inaugurated Innovation lab at School of Design, Art & Architecture Technologies (SDAAT), PAF-IAST.

After briefing, Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) were also signed between PAF-IAST and National Institute of Folk & Traditional Heritage, Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) and Hunerkada. Addressing the students and faculty members, the Minister highly praised the efforts of PAF-IAST for education, research and innovations.

He said that diverse and

rich cultural heritage, beautiful topography and archaeological sites of historical value situated in Pakistan offer enormous opportunities those could be utilized for economic advancement of the country. Jamal Shah said Pakistan is situated at the place that was rightly called as melting pot of culture and civilization while diversity of old cultures make it an attractive bunch of beautiful flowers.

The Minister said that youth is the largest chunk of country's population as well as precious asset of Pakistan and holistic measures were required for ensuring provision of education and development opportunities to young generation besides facilitating their meaningful engagement, adding that we have to equip our young generation with education so that they could become productive part of the society and contribute in progress of the nation.

Training workshop held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar (SBBWU), Bint e Hawa Forum and Directorate of Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa jointly organized two-day training workshop to impart digital skills,

freelancing, content writing, cooking and beautician skills to female students of newly merged district.

The founder of Bint e Hawa Forum, Alam Zeib Khan said that this two-day training was organized under the pilot project and a memorandum of understanding would be signed

with SBBWU Women Development Center under which various courses would be organized in the university.

He said that SBBWU would jointly work with Bint Hawa Forum to organize the 3rd Edition of the Bint e Hawa Achievement Awards in March.



PESHAWAR: Adviser to KP CM on Health Dr. Riaz Anwar inaugurating IBP Block at Institute of Kidney diseases.

Mainly very cold weather with isolated rains predicted

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Regional Meteorological Center Peshawar on Friday predicted that very cold and partly cloudy weather with foggy conditions in plain areas are likely to occur in most districts of the province.

It said that isolated rain (light snow over the hills) is likely to occur over Chitral, Upper Dir, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Mansehra, Battagram, Torgar and Abbottabad districts. The center further informed that light to moderate foggy condition is likely to continue to prevail over Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi, Haripur, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, D.I. Khan and Tank districts as well as over Motorway (M1) / Highways.

During the last 24 hours, very cold and dry weather prevailed over most districts of the province, while moderate to dense foggy conditions prevailed over plain areas. Rainfall recorded in the province was nil. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar 20/03, Chitral 17/-01, Timergara 20/00, Dir 21/-02, Mirkhani 17/-01, Kalam 15/-05, Drosh 16/02, Saidu Sharif 19/00, Pattan 22/12, Malam Jabba 11/01, Takht Bhai 9/01, Kakul 19/01, Balakot 21/01, Parachinar 15/-01, Bannu 21/01, Cherat 17/05, D I Khan City 17/05. The lowest temperatures recorded in the province was -05 in Kalam and -04°C in Tirah valley of Khyber district.

Naeem Anwar quits PML-N

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Naeem Anwar, the Tehsil president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, (Mardan chapter) has resigned from his party post as a protest when the PML-N leadership did not allot him the party ticket for up-coming general elections.

Talking to The Frontier Post here on Friday, Mr. Naeem Anwar told that he had applied for allotment of tickets of PK-59 and NA-21 constituencies to contest the next general elections scheduled to be held on February 8. He deplored that the party leadership ignored him and awarded the PK-59 ticket to another party member. Besides, the PML-N leadership asked him to withdraw his nomination papers from NA-21 constituency as the party had decided not to field its candidate on the said seat, he added.

Promoting local industry: How strategic imports can fuel Pakistan's growth

Salman Raza

Pakistan has struggled with export-oriented industrial development during the last two decades. The rising trade deficit, which peaked at a value of around 48 billion USD in 2021-2022 and then about 27 billion USD in 2022-2023, increased a set of problems during to Forex crunch.

Efforts in this regard are underway, with plans to scale Pakistan exports up to 100 billion USD in 5 years. Export-oriented industrial development is crucial to alleviating the burden of debt, averting economic downturns, and setting the country on the path to growth and development. Pakistan uses Strategic Trade Policy Frameworks to target export growth and development of export-oriented industries in Pakistan historically. Most of the proposed plans had clear directions toward developing export-oriented initiatives and focused exports from the country but needed a clear path toward imports.

While we always had export-oriented strategies, we needed import strategies to boost our productive capacities and give much-needed stability vital for industrial development in a country. All the success stories of export-oriented growth ranging from Japan to China have achieved success not only through export orientation but also the result of export-oriented industries through developing the right kind of industries. While Pakistan has always had some of the best plans to achieve export-oriented growth, our trade deficit has swelled from 3.28 billion USD in 2003-2004 to 48.35 billion USD in 2022-2023. Numerous factors are behind such a situation, but one ignored factor is a plan for importation. According to the father of the global value chain, Gary Gereffi, import substitution policies, and export-oriented industrial development have played a key role in

Minister stresses for bringing May 9 perpetrators to justice

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Information and Tourism, Feroz Jamal Kakakhel here Friday reiterated for bringing the perpetrators of the May 9 riots to justice.

Addressing a press conference along with Anwar Sher Khan, the brother of Kargil War hero Capt Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed

(NH) here, the minister said that heirs of the martyrs wanted justice of the disgrace made to their loved ones during May 9 rioting. He said Captain Sher Khan have showed exemplary bravery during Kargil War and the enemy commander also praised his heroic battlefield performance.

He said that disgrace of martyrs were unacceptable and time has come to award

exemplary punishment to the May 9 rioters. The Minister said that he recently visited to the grave of Captain Karnal Sher Khan and expressed solidarity and sympathies with his family. Earlier, Anwar Sher met with the caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice retired Arshad Hussain Shah at Governor House Peshawar.

Minister underscores urgency to address climate change challenges

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The caretaker Finance Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ahmed Rasul Bangash, took center stage as the Chief Guest at a workshop on 'Navigating Voluntary Carbon Markets in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa', emphasizing the critical role of climate finance in sustainable development.

The session was organized by UK-Aid funded Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Program with the aim to explore how Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can realize its significant capacity for carbon projects, particularly those centered around nature-based solutions and renewable energy projects.

In his address, Finance Minister Mr. Bangash underscored the urgency of addressing climate change challenges, recognizing them as a global imperative that demands collective action. He highlighted the adverse impacts already affecting communities and ecosystems, emphasizing the need for innovative approaches to mitigate environmental risks and build resilience.

The Finance Minister acknowledged the significance of voluntary carbon markets in unlocking climate finance and at the same time building resilience, pointing out their potential to drive positive environmental outcomes while creating economic opportunities. He praised the efforts of the SEED program for its instrumental role in promoting sustainable development and facilitating GoKP in pursuing climate investments.

Bangash commended the commitment of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government in addressing climate change challenges and shared the government's proactive measures to integrate sustainable practices into policymaking. He emphasized the importance of collaboration between government entities, private sector stakeholders, and international partners to create effective and scalable solutions.

The session provided a platform for stakeholders to discuss the potential of voluntary carbon markets, exchange ideas, and explore avenues for partnerships. Minister expressed optimism about the positive outcomes that could arise from such collaborations, including economic growth, job creation, and tangible progress in the fight against climate change.

The Finance Minister's participation as the Chief Guest underscored the government's commitment to prioritize environmental sustainability and leveraging financial instruments to create lasting positive impacts. The event marked a significant step towards advancing climate resilience and fostering sustainable development in the region.

conomic growth, job creation, and tangible progress in the fight against climate change.

The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Peshawar Chairman Nasarullah Khan Yousafzai said the schedule has been changed due to the commencement of the Holy month of Ramadan.

KP govt postpones matric exams

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The KP government postponed matriculation exams to April 18, previously scheduled for March 14, in respect of the Holy month of Ramadan.

The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Peshawar Chairman Nasarullah Khan Yousafzai said the schedule has been changed due to the commencement of the Holy month of Ramadan.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali listening problems of people.



In brief

Fire kills one in Upper Dir

UPPER DIR (INP): An entire neighbourhood in Patrak Guldai Berkeley in Upper Dir was reduced to ashes when a fire broke out in the area killing a man and injuring several others on Friday. The cause of the fire is not known yet. The local people managed to control the fire with the help of the volunteers of Al-Khidmat Foundation, but by then it was too late and the entire neighborhood, which consisted of 10 houses, was reduced into a pile of ashes. A mosque located in the area was also partially damaged. One person was killed and several others sustained injuries in the firefighting. The injured were shifted to a hospital.

Afghan thieves gang busted F.P. Report

KOHAT: The Kohat City Circle Police on Friday claimed to have arrested the ringleader and two members of an Afghan thieves' gang who stole various gadgets from the PTCL exchange here. The action was taken under the supervision of DSP City Nawab Khan, SHO City Waqar Afridi, ASI Rauf Khan and in-charge Tehsil Post Faizan Sattar along with a police team. The stolen valuables were also recovered from the arrested gang. The arrested gang of thieves belongs to Afghanistan, police said, adding that eight electric batteries and copper wires were recovered from their possession. Police said the members of the gang broke the doors of the telephone exchange located at Liaquat Memorial Women and Children Hospital and stole several batteries and wires and went into hiding. The accused Afghan thieves identified as Naseer, Sher Alam and Allah Noor were shifted to police station for further interrogation.

ANP to secure majority in KP F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: Awami National Party (ANP) involves in politics for protection Pakhtun rights as well as upholding voice of deprive segment of the society across the country. This was claimed by ANP NA-13 candidate Haji Ahmad Bahadar Khan along with PK-60 candidate Sher Afghan Khan while addressing election rally at residence Haji Zafar Khan Dam-e-Koh area of Takhtbhai tehsil. The speakers claimed that 18th constitutional amendment is result of ANP struggle for provincial autonomy. The speakers claimed that ANP's politics is based on ethics and principles not like fascist goons. They claimed that ANP will secure majority in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly which will turning point for the development of the province.

Seminar held

MULTAN (APP): Emerson University Multan (EUM) organized a one-day seminar titled 'Research Methods in Linguistics and Literature' here on Friday. The event aimed to empower students across academic levels to cultivate independent research skills. Dr. Muhammad Afzaal from Shanghai International Studies University (SISU) emphasized the importance of aligning research topics with personal interests to navigate challenges in the research journey. Dr. Saleem Khan, Chairperson Department of English at the Institute of Southern Punjab, also addressed the seminar, acknowledging the increasing demand for articles and the enhanced facilities supporting students' creative abilities in research.



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

Two-day street book fair concludes in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A two-day street book fair arranged by the district administration in collaboration with the district youth affairs department, National Book Foundation and Timergara tehsil municipal administration, concluded here the other day. The additional assistant commissioner Hazrat Bilal along with other officials visited the book fair and appreciated the visitors on the occasion.

He said that no one could deny the importance of books and its reading. They asked the visitors to make books-reading as their hobby instead of wasting their time on social media and the internet. District youth officer Shehzad Tariq told local journalists that hundreds of books' lovers visited the book fair and more than 1000 books were sold to them at 50 per cent discount rates. He said the youth affairs department would continue its struggle for motivating local youths and students toward positive and fruitful activities. He also lauded the efforts of district administration and the National Book Foundation for facilitating his department in arranging a historical event in the district.

ANP joined: Scores of political workers and area elders joined the Awami National Party (ANP) during a function held at Timergara here on Friday. The gathering was addressed by the ANP candidates for NA 7 Zahid Khan, PK 16 Malik Sajjad Yousafzai, PK 14 Malik



Muhammad Zeb and others. The elders of Mohmand community living in the area announced that they would support all the ANP candidates in the district.

The speakers said that the ANP was unable to run its election campaign during the 2018 general election as it was the worst affected political party of terrorism at that time. They said the ANP government from 2008 to 2013 completed record development projects in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. They said the people of Dir had never voted for their party but despite it the ANP senators and lawmakers did well for people uplift.

They said the former senator Zahid Khan, who is contesting for NA 7, had played a key role in provision of Sui gas to different areas of the district and spread a network on roads. They asked the voters to vote for the ANP if they wanted the area developed and prosperous.

Meanwhile the ANP senior vice president Hussain Shah Yousafzai withdrew

his nomination papers in favour of the party candidate Zahid Khan for NA 7. Talking to local journalists Hussain Shah said that he had some reservations on the award of tickets but the ANP provincial chief along with other party leaders visited his residence and convinced him to withdraw from the run. He said that he was a worker of 'Bacha Khan' and would remain as a worker forever.

PTI internal rifts: The internal differences in the Pakistan Tahreek Insaf widened as a diehard party activist Ali Shah Mishwani on Friday refused to withdraw his nomination papers in favour of the party candidate in NA 6 Lower Dir-I. Talking to local journalists at Samarbagh Mr Shah announced that he would never withdraw his nomination papers and would contest the general election for national assembly with the 'pomegranate' symbol. He said that he withdrew his nomination papers for PK 17 and PK 18 after consultation with his voters and relatives.

Political parties award party's tickets in Bannu

F.P. Report

BANNU: The political parties had granted tickets for one National and Provincial Assemblies to the activists in wake of general election scheduled on 8th February, on Friday.

According to details, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Pakistan Tehreek Insaf, Pakistan Muslim League and ANP candidates collected party tickets while some senior Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders collected papers from national and provincial constituencies. The local leaders and workers of the Jamiat Ulema Islam PTI and the National League, determined to succeed, came to Kachheri district along with their supporters from different political parties.

Party tickets for four provincial constituencies were issued to former deputy speaker of the National Assembly Zahid Akram Khan Durrani,

while former chief minister Akram Khan Durrani was issued party tickets for two provincial constituencies, PK100 and PK102, to the leader of Jamiat Ulema Islam.

Senior Lawyer Sinan Durrani Advocate collected the relevant retorting officers, party tickets were announced by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf for boys in NA39 for Mumtaz Alam Deen Maulana Syed Naseem Ali Shah, circle PK99 on Zahid Allah Wazir, circle Tickets were issued to former MPA Malik Pakhtun Yar Khan on PK100, former provincial minister Malik Shah Muhammad Khan on circle PK101, and Malik Adnan Khan on circle PK102 who collected party tickets from returning officers of Qaumi and provincial circles.

On behalf of the Muslim League, party tickets were issued to the former IGF Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghaniur Rahman, this is 39,

while PK101 for Sadiq Khan, PK102 for Sami Allah Shah, who regularly collected in the relevant circles on this site. A large number of workers arrived in Kachheri under the leadership of Provincial Vice President Malik Ahmad Musafiti Ali Khan, Education Sadr Omar Shahid Khan, while on behalf of ANP, under the leadership of senior leader Advocate Faheem Khan Azad, constituency PK99 was for Noorani Khan as Wazir, while constituency PK100 The tickets issued by the party of Asghar Nawaz Advocate among those who withdrew their nomination papers are Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders Malik Zafar Hayat Khan, NA 39 and PK100, Abdul Razzaq Khan PK100 while former Provincial Assembly Speaker Haji Hameed Khan Durrani Advocate NA and PK102 returned the papers and the parties withdrew in favour of the candidates.

PPP candidate from D I Khan returns party ticket

D I KHAN (INP): Quite surprisingly, a ticketholder of the Pakistan People's Party from Dera Ismail Khan has returned the party ticket and joined the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam.

Reportedly, PPP ticketholder Makhdoom Aftab Haider Shah from DI Khan, returned his ticket to the party. He is the son of late

provincial finance minister Makhdoom Murid Kazim Shah. Aftab Haider announced to join Maulana Fazlur Rehman's JUI during a press conference.

PK 11 comes in Maulana Fazl's constituency NA 44. Besides Aftab Haider Shah, Sajjada Nashin Balut Sharif Makhdoom Murtajaz Shah also announced joining the

JUI on this occasion.

Former opposition leader in KP Assembly Maulana Lutfur Rahman, ex-federal minister Maulana Asad Mahmood, Maulana Ziaur Rahman, Musa Khan Baloch, and all ticketholders of JUI from Dera Ismail Khan Division were also present during the press conference.

PPP to win polls elections with majority: Rozi Khan

QUETTA (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Balochistan General Secretary Rozi Khan Kakar said that the PPP believed in serving humanity and the party would win upcoming elections with a thumping majority.

He said this while addressing the party's provincial secretariat on the occasion of the resignation of Sardar Ashraf Khan Kakar, the head of Kakar National Jirga and independent candidate from NA-262 constituency of the Provincial Assembly, in favour of Haji Ramzan Achakzai, the candidate of the PPP.

Sardar Ashraf Khan said that he had decided to participate in the upcoming elections as an independent candidate after consulting with friends, he announced his withdrawal in favor of PPP's candidate Haji Ramzan Achakzai. He also declared full support to the candidates of the PPP party on the provincial assembly seats from Constituency NA 262, 263 and 264 and

Quetta.

Provincial General Secretary of People's Party Rozi Khan Kakar and candidate from Constituency NA 262 Haji Ramzan Achakzai thanked Sardar Ashraf Kakar for his withdrawing both seats. They said that the position of the candidates of Pakistan People's Party has been strengthened by his participation saying that the party was the biggest political party in the country. The PPP party has been fighting for the rights of the people since its inception till today, the party leaders and workers sacrificed their lives and endured the hardships of prison to get the rights of the people, they highlighted.

Polio security officer injured in Quetta firing incident: A firing incident was reported in which an officer appointed on the security of polio workers was injured in Quetta.

According to the initial reports, the firing incident took place near Eastern Bypass School in which an

on-duty officer got injured. Meanwhile, the injured individual was shifted to the nearest hospital for immediate medical assistance.

Earlier to this, at least two cops were martyred as terrorists attacked a polio team in Bannu Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As per details, DIG Qasim Ali Khan said that exchange of fire took place between terrorists and police in Bannu, resulting in the death of two cops while injuring two others.

The police officials stated the terrorists have taken refuge in a house however clashes between the police officials and terrorists continued. Later the DPO Iftikhar Ali Shah announced the successful completion of operation stating that a rocket attack was launched at the house where the terrorists were hiding. Moreover, the DPO said that SSG commandoes are carrying out search operation and recovered two dead bodies so far.

RPO award certificates, prizes to officials

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Muhammad Suleiman has said that the officers who stop crimes with courage and bravery are the pride of the police department. Brave, hardworking and capable officers will be appreciated at all levels.

He was speaking at a function organized in connection with awarding Takhtbhai police with certificates of appreciation for the recovery of the child who was abducted for the purpose of ransom of Rs.50 crors. SP Sadar Khalid Khan, DSP Takhtbhai Ashiq Hussain, SHO Noor Muhammad Khan, Additional SHO Police Station Takhtbhai Tajbar Shah, ASI Manzoor Khan and Adnan Khan were among the recipients of awards.

According to the details, a report of the kidnapping of a child Fahad Ali, son of Fawad Ali, aged 8/9 years, was received from the Garoshah area of Takhtbhai against unknown suspects on 20-12-2023. The police team worked hard day and night with the help of CCTV cameras and other scientific devices and by obtaining footage and videos of the kidnappers,

narrowed the circle against the accused and continued to raid the places of the accused. On 22-12-2023 during the night, the abductors escaped leaving the child behind.

Police recovered the abducted child and arrested the accused Sangin Shah, son of Tawab Shah resident of Miraj Colony and arrested his brother as per the rules. The accused confessed his crime and also pointed out the place of abduction of the kidnapped child.

Elected members argued govt for implementation Islamabad Declaration: Civil society and elected members of Neighbourhood Councils have collaboratively urged both the provincial and federal governments to execute the ten commitments outlined in the Islamabad Declaration. This declaration was signed by all South Asian governments during the South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN) in 2018.

Tensions arose when IRSP, a local WASH-led organization, supported by FANSA, presented a compiled study showcasing the achievements made by South Asian countries in line with SACOSAN-VII & also shared the WASH

sector investment plan review.

SACOSAN is a biennial South Asian advocacy and practice forum on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), co-led by the governments of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This regional event provides a forum to generate political will towards better sanitation in the region, with the following objectives:

To accelerate the progress in sanitation and hygiene promotion in South Asia. To, reiterate political commitment in each country of the region for furthering the sanitation agenda. To share experiences and lessons learnt in sanitation and hygiene promotion

Every two years, key government officials from SAARC countries meet together – alongside development partners, WASH networks, think tanks, and civil society members – to evaluate progress made on WASH-related targets. The latest thinking on effective approaches is shared and discussed to support countries in their sustainable development goals journey.

Dozens of families joined ANP in Timergara

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Dozens of families including the Mohmand community in Timergara have announced their joining ANP and have announced their full support for NA-7 candidate former Senator Zahid Khan and Malik Sajjad Yousafzai from PK-16, on Friday.

ANP senator and NA 7 hopeful Senator Zahid Khan, PK 16 ANP candidate Malik Sajjad Yousafzai and PK 14 hope-

ful Malik Muhammad Zeib Khan addressed the joining ceremony and said that the 2018 elections ANP was conducting funerals while other political parties were engaged in election campaign. On the one hand, we were facing terrorism in the government of ANP, while on the other hand, ANP completed record development projects in the province during its rule.

ANP has taken away the rights of its province from the center. ANP does not

rely on empty slogans but believes in practical measures. The MPs of the districts were senators, but they completed record development projects including gas, electricity, connecting bridges in Lower Dir. If the people of Dir district want development and prosperity, then vote for ANP. Use your vote wisely and vote for those people who can serve Dir district and raise their voice for the people in the assembly.

Heroin factory sealed in Khyber

F.P. Report

KHYBER: The police sealed a heroin manufacturing factory in far flung area Sheen Ghar. The culprits opened fire at police but fled after retaliatory action. The police recovered 15 kilogram heroin and chemical used in production of the drug here on Friday. According to District Police Officer (DPO) Khyber

Saleem Abbas, the police on a tip-off raided a heroin manufacturing factory in far flung area Sheen Ghar.

The culprits opened fire at police but fled after retaliatory action. The police recovered 15 kilogram heroin, 17 kilogram chemical used in manufacturing

of the drug and sealed the factory. The recovered heroin and chemical values millions of rupees in international market. The police confiscated recovered drug, chemical and after registering a case against three accused started efforts for their arrest.



ABBOTTABAD: KP Caretaker Minister Amir Nadeem Durrani chairing a meeting.



Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria sign deal to clear floating Black Sea mines

ISTANBUL (Reuters): Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria signed an agreement on a joint plan to clear mines floating in the Black Sea as a result of the war in Ukraine, following months of talks between the NATO allies.

Turkish Defence Minister Yasar Guler, his Romanian counterpart Angel Tilvar and Bulgaria's Deputy Defence Minister Atanas Zapryanov signed a memorandum of understanding in Istanbul to form a trilateral initiative to clear the explosives. "With the start of the war, a threat of floating mines in the Black Sea has arisen. To combat it ... we agreed to form a Black Sea mine counter-measures task group," Guler said at the signing ceremony.

Sea mines have posed a threat to Ukraine's export routes via the Black Sea since Russia's invasion in February 2022 and several commercial ships have been hit, including a bulk carrier heading to the River Danube port to load grain in December. Three minehunting ships from each country and one command control ship, will be assigned to the initiative, a Turkish defence ministry official said.

Naval commanders of the three countries will form a committee to run the operation, Guler said, adding that it might include other Black Sea



states after the war in Ukraine ends. Guler said Turkey viewed potential contributions to this initiative by non-Black Sea NATO allies as "valuable" but that it will only be open to ships of the "three littoral allied countries."

Turkey said last week it would not allow two minehunter ships donated to Ukraine by Britain to transit its waters en route to the Black Sea since it would violate the 1936 Montreux Convention, an international pact concerning wartime passage of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. "As Turkey, we have implemented the Montreux Convention carefully, responsibly and impartially, which ensures the balance in the Black Sea," Guler said. NATO spokesperson

Dylan White welcomed the deal in a post on social media platform X, saying that it was "an important contribution toward greater freedom of navigation and food security in the region and beyond."

Defence ministers from the three Black Sea countries held talks on the mine clearing plan at a NATO meeting in Brussels in October last year and in Ankara in November as they worked to finalise the initiative. Ankara, which maintains good ties with both Kyiv and Moscow, is also working with the United Nations, Ukraine, and Russia to revive the Black Sea grain initiative which Moscow quit last year, though there have been no public signs of progress on those talks.

US denies striking rocket launcher in Iraq

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The US military said it did not carry out an air strike on a rocket launcher near Ain al-Asad air base in western Iraq which hosts US and other international forces, a US military official said.

"The vehicle mounted rocket launcher, which was reportedly found approximately 7km east of Al-Asad Airbase, Iraq, was not destroyed as a result of a US air strike", the US military official told Reuters. Two Iraqi army officials told Reuters that a US air strike on a rocket launcher late foiled an attack on Ain al-Asad air base.

The US military official said "any damage to the launcher could have been the result of a malfunction or misfire". Since October 17, the US and Coalition forces have been attacked at least 130 times in Iraq and Syria, the US military official said. There had been 53 attacks in Iraq and 77 in Syria, usually with a mix of one-way attack drones, rockets, mortars, and close-range ballistic missiles, the official added. Iran-aligned militia groups in Iraq and Syria oppose Israel's campaign in Gaza and hold the US partly responsible.

NK poised to admit first known tourists

SEOUL (Reuters): A group from Russia is poised to be the first known tourists allowed into North Korea since anti-pandemic border lockdowns began in early 2020, according to a post from Russian provincial authorities and a Western tour guide.

North Korea imposed some of the strictest border controls in the world during the spread of COVID-19, and has yet to fully reopen to foreigners. The trip, advertised by a Vladivostok-based agency, was arranged when the governor of Russia's far eastern region of Primorsky Krai, which borders North Korea, visited Pyongyang for talks in December, the regional government said in a post on Telegram this week. The four-day tour will depart on Feb. 9 and include stops in Pyongyang and a ski resort, according to an online itinerary.

Simon Cockerell, general manager at Beijing-based Koryo Tours, which is not involved in the trip, told Reuters that his partners in North Korea had confirmed the Russian visit is going ahead under special circumstances. "It is a good sign, but I would hesitate to say it necessarily will lead to a broader opening due to the special circumstances for this one trip," he said. "But given that no tourists have been for four-plus years, any tourism trip can be viewed as a positive step forward." North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin met for a summit in eastern Russia in September, where they pledged deepening cooperation on economic, political, and military fronts despite international sanctions. Tourism is largely unaffected by UN Security Council resolutions that restrict business with North Korea over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

Many Republicans seek a largely unconstrained president

WASHINGTON (Reuters): About half of Republicans say the US needs a strong president who is not unduly restrained by courts or Congress, a possible sign of support for Donald Trump's pitch that if re-elected he should be able to operate with minimal legal constraints, a new Reuters/Ipsos poll found.

The week-long poll, which closed, found Trump's Republican Party appears divided on where to draw the limits on presidential power that help define American democracy. Forty-six percent of Republican respondents agreed with a statement that "the country is in a crisis and needs a strong president who should be allowed to rule without too much interference from courts and Congress," while the same share disagreed. The rest were unsure.

Among Democrats, 25% agreed with the statement, while 64% disagreed and the rest were unsure. Trump, who is facing dozens of charges for alleged crimes committed during and after his 2017-2021 White House term, is currently arguing in federal court that he should be largely immune to prosecution for actions taken while in office. His lawyer told a panel of judges this week that a president who used commandos to assassinate a political rival could be prosecuted only if he had first been impeached by the House and convicted in the Senate. While the poll question did not name Trump, some 47% of respondents who said they

would vote for him if the presidential election were held today agreed with that statement. Some 23% of people who said they would vote for Biden said they agreed.

Among other crimes, prosecutors accuse Trump of using fraud to try to overturn his loss to Democrat Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election. Trump claims innocence on all counts and says criminal cases against him are "witch hunts" engineered by political foes including Biden. The Reuters/Ipsos poll showed Biden and Trump, the frontrunner for the Republican nomination, were neck-and-neck, each getting 35% support and rest saying they were undecided or would vote for someone else or no one at all. Trump's many legal challenges are a key risk for his shot at winning back the presidency, with 49% of independents saying they would not vote for him if he were convicted by a jury, compared to 12% who said they would still back him. Another 35% said they didn't know and 3% didn't answer the question. Conviction could even cost Trump Republican votes. Twenty-eight percent of Republican respondents wouldn't support Trump if he were convicted, compared to 43% who said they would still back him and 28% who said they weren't sure.

Trump has long cultivated a strongman image and last month told supporters he won't be a dictator if re-elected except "on day one." The significant

slice of Republicans seeking a largely unfettered president signals a potential weakening in US democratic institutions, said Matthew MacWilliams, a political scientist at Comms Hub, a pro-democracy consultancy. "It's hard to have a democracy when that attitude is afoot," said MacWilliams, who does research on public opinion and authoritarianism.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll also showed Republicans strongly embrace a hard-line proposal for immigration policy that has been tied to Trump's campaign. Sixty-nine percent of Republicans said they agreed with a statement that "illegal immigrants should be arrested and put in detention camps while awaiting deportation hearings," compared to 21% of Democrats. Trump has promised to carry out the largest deportation operation in US history if re-elected and a former aide for immigration policy, Stephen Miller, recently advocated for immigrant detention camps in an interview with the New York Times.

Trump campaign advisor Jason Miller declined to comment on the Reuters/Ipsos poll findings on presidential power and immigration, instead repeating campaign positions that America is in decline under Biden in part because of "open borders and the weaponization of our justice system." The Reuters/Ipsos poll, conducted online Jan. 3-9, surveyed 4,677 randomly-selected US adults and had a margin of error of about two percentage points.

Biden's record age, 81, is an 'asset': First lady

WASHINGTON (AP): First lady Jill Biden says her husband's age is an "asset," as President Joe Biden - at 81 already the oldest American leader in history - faces persistent questions from voters about his decision to seek another term.

In an interview with MSNBC's "Morning Joe" released, Jill Biden responded to those concerned the Democratic president is too old, saying, "I say his age is an asset." "He has wisdom. He has experience," she continued. "He knows every leader on the world stage. He's lived history. He knows history. He's thoughtful in his decisions. He is the right

man or the right person for the job at this moment in history."

Joe Biden for months has used humor to try to defuse the issue - even as polls suggest it's no laughing matter. An August poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 77% of US adults, including 69% of Democrats, viewed Biden as too old to be effective for four more years. When Biden celebrated his 81st birthday on Nov. 20, 2023, he joked repeatedly about his advanced age, saying it was "difficult turning 60" and promising he wasn't at a ceremony for pardoning

Thanksgiving turkeys when the tradition started 76 years earlier: "I want you to know I wasn't here - for the first one." But while Biden was poking fun at his age, the White House was busy defending his stamina and trying to bat away suggestions the issue could cost him votes in this year's election. Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said then that the president's age should not be a primary focus. "Our perspective is it's not about age, it's about the president's experience," she said, highlighting several major pieces of legislation he had championed through Congress.

Illegal tunnel under New York City synagogue destabilized buildings

NEW YORK (AP): The illegal tunnel discovered under a historic Brooklyn synagogue compromised the stability of several structures surrounding the religious complex, prompting an order to vacate as well as citations against its owners, city officials said.

Inspectors with New York City's building safety agency uncovered a tunnel that was 60 feet (18.3 meters) long and 8 feet (2.4 meters) wide beneath the Chabad-Lubavitch global headquarters in Crown Heights. It connected four buildings owned by the Hasidic group through openings cut into basement walls. The excavation work was done without the approval of the Department of Buildings, agency spokesperson Andrew Rudansky said in an email to The Associated Press. He said the tunnel was

empty except for dirt, tools and debris.

The findings came after a two-day investigation into the structural stability of the complex, an internationally revered Hasidic Jewish center that became the site of a brawl between police and worshippers seeking to defend the tunnel. The chaotic standoff brought public attention to a long-simmering split within the community related to the dynasty's longtime leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who died in 1994. Those who supported the construction of the tunnel said they believe Schneerson is the messiah, that he is still alive and that he supports an expansion of the synagogue. The messianic view is rejected by Chabad's administrators. Rabbi Motti Seligson, a spokesperson for Chabad, said the underground passage was built

by a group of "young agitators" seeking unauthorized access to the synagogue. When Chabad officials attempted to seal the openings, worshippers inside the tunnel refused to leave until they were dragged out by police.

Nine people were arrested, including some who used crowbars to rip off the synagogue's wood paneling, according to a police report. Levi Huebner, an attorney for five of the men arrested, said his clients may have suffered from a "little naivete," but had no intention of harming the building structurally. "I'm 100% confident they wouldn't go near anything, do anything to disrupt the foundation of the synagogue in any way whatsoever," Huebner said.

City inspectors said the excavation had undermined the stability of two single-story structures

behind the synagogue. An adjacent two-story brick building containing offices and lecture halls used by Chabad was also ordered vacated due to the illegal removal of fire-rated walls in the building's cellar. They said the building containing the synagogue was not destabilized. It remains closed to worshippers. Rudansky said the department has cited the synagogue for the illegal excavation work that created the tunnel, but confirmed that the owners are taking the appropriate steps to fix it. Construction crews began pouring concrete into the passage, Seligson said. "This episode has been deeply painful for us and the entire Jewish community," he said. "We look forward to the sanctity of the synagogue being restored and its light continuing to emanate to the world."

The toll on migrants of a free bus north from the border

BROWNSVILLE, Texas (Reuters): Jose Manuel, a Venezuelan asylum seeker, boarded the Chicago-bound charter bus in Brownsville, Texas, a town on the US-Mexico border, at around 7 a.m. on a late October morning, his journey paid for by the state of Texas.

Jose Manuel, whose full name is being withheld for security reasons, was among some 100,000 migrants the Republican-led state of Texas has bused to Democratic cities since April 2022. After passing an initial asylum screening in detention, Jose Manuel was released and had planned to head to South Carolina to meet a friend and find work.

But Republican Governor Greg Abbott wasn't providing free buses to a fellow Republican state, so Jose Manuel opted to take the bus to the Democratic-run city of Chicago. Texas said it has spent more than \$100 million since April 2022 to bus migrants who recently crossed the US-Mexico border to Chicago, New York, Denver and other Democratic-led cities. The arrivals have exacerbated homelessness and taxed social services in those cities and increased the pressures on US President Joe

Biden as he runs for re-election in November.

Biden, who was facing criticism from Republicans for his border policies, now also faces demands from his own party to ease the burden on the cities receiving migrants. Abbott has said the free bus transport was intended to "bring the border" to Democratic cities and provide relief to overwhelmed border communities. Tom Perez, a senior White House adviser, said the Biden administration shares Democratic mayors' and governors' frustrations with "extreme Republicans" like Governor Abbott who attempt to use migrants as political pawns.

He said Biden is focused on securing more funding for communities receiving migrants. Reuters journalists spoke with more than a dozen migrants traveling from Brownsville to Chicago, New York City and Denver, and then tracked the 26-hour, 1,400-mile (2,250-km) journey of one bus to Chicago. They followed seven of the migrants for several months. Some - like Jose Manuel - changed their destinations based on the offer of free transportation, even though they had immigration court

dates in other parts of the US, or friends and family waiting for them elsewhere. Barbara and Brenda, who came to the US hoping to live openly as a same-sex couple, got on a bus to New York although they had a friend in Maryland.

After their Chicago-bound bus was delayed, Fernando Fernandez and his partner Mariela Gil headed in different directions. Fernandez waited for the bus while Gil took up an offer of a bus ticket and a temporary house-keeping job in Sarasota, Florida. Alejandra Perez ended up sleeping in a tent outside a Chicago police station with her former partner Jader Castro, and her children Sharlott Barrios, 9, and Juan Sebastian Castro, 5, because of a shortage of shelter beds. Miskel Gomez got off the bus in Chicago and moved on to Ohio. Chicago is now housing more than 15,000 migrants in shelters, some of whom spent the fall sleeping outside police stations.

New York, unlike Chicago, is legally obliged to house the homeless, and is housing more than 69,000 migrants in hotels, government buildings and tent cities, even as officials worry that this might make the city a magnet for more migration. The may-

ors of New York, Chicago and Denver have repeatedly pushed for more federal funds and taken steps to discourage uncoordinated migrant bus drop offs, including penalizing bus companies. They have also pushed for faster access to work permits, so that the newcomers can support themselves. "We need a resolution at the border," New York Mayor Eric Adams told reporters this week. "You cannot just place the financial responsibilities onto the cities." The Biden administration in 2021 and 2022 rejected a proposal to transport some migrants to other US cities because the White House did not want "full ownership" of the issue, one former official said. The White House declined to comment.

While the migrants Reuters spoke with welcomed the free busing, many had little understanding of the geography of the United States or the winter conditions that awaited them at their destinations. When Jose Manuel told Team Brownsville volunteer Gerry Page he was going to Chicago, she shuddered. "Muy frio," Page said, with a broad American accent. She handed him a long-sleeved shirt. They had run out of coats.

The migrants, mostly from Venezuela, waited near the bus station for news of when a bus to their chosen destination would be leaving. Arrivals were slow that weekend, and buses were taking days to fill up. The first bus to depart, carrying Jose Manuel, Fernandez and Gomez, cut through Arkansas before arriving in Chicago. Reuters followed that bus. A second bus, carrying Perez and her family, took an alternate route through Oklahoma.

Both trips took more than 26 hours. In Chicago, Jose Manuel waited several hours for a friend to pick him up. He has an initial court date scheduled in October 2025 in Charlotte, North Carolina. If he decides to stay in Chicago, he will need to file a motion with the immigration court to change his hearing location. At the drop-off point, city officials directed Alejandra Perez and her family to a waiting yellow school bus. Perez had heard from a relative in the US that as a family with young children they would get priority for shelter spots. But the bus took them to the Shakespear district police station, where they said they were told there was no space for

them to sleep. Officials told them to take public transport to O'Hare airport and try to sleep there, Perez said. But at the airport, they were told they could not stay without a plane ticket, Perez said, and were sent back to the same police station. It was midnight and drizzling when they bedded down in a tent outside a different police station in central Chicago, more than 40 hours after they left Brownsville.

The next evening, Perez bathed the children in the police station bathrooms, before withdrawing to the tent to eat instant soup for dinner. The family would stay there for two weeks, even as temperatures dropped below freezing and snow began to fall. "Our local economies are not designed and built to respond to this type of crisis," Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson told reporters last month. At another Chicago police station a few miles away, Fernandez got a video call from his partner Mariela Gil, who had taken a commercial bus to Florida. He assured her he was doing well. But the night before, arguments had broken out outside the police station over people hoarding donations, he said.

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Rising militancy in Afghanistan

AN explosion near the Abu Muslim Khorasani Mosque in Kabul was reported on Thursday, which presumably had been detonated by the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K). Previously, Daesh claimed an explosion that occurred in the eastern part of the Afghan capital resulting in 3 deaths and 4 injuries. This marks the second attack in a week in the city of Kabul for which ISIS has claimed responsibility. Yesterday's attack seems to be the part of the ongoing series of attacks being launched by the banned terror outfit in Afghanistan.

The Taliban government is nearly to complete two and a half years of its sovereign control of the country since taking power in mid August 2021. Over the past years, the major challenges encountered by the interim rulers other than their self created issues relating to human and women rights and softcorner for terror outfits had been the acute economic and humanitarian crisis together with the serious security risks emanating from the Islamic State commonly known as IS-K, the branch of the infamous Daesh operating in the AfPak region. A low level insurgency by the anti- Taliban elements in the previous Republican setup and the ruins of the Northern Alliance are gradually simmering in Northern parts of the country. While a strong political alliance comprising of Salahiddun Rabbani's Jaimat-e-Islami party, Ahmed Wali Massoud group and anti-Taliban politicians is currently mulling over the scenarios to collectively launch efforts to depose Taliban from Kabul.

The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), the Afghan chapter of Daesh has expanded its network and gradually shaped into a grave security risk for interim Taliban government in Afghanistan. Historically, the global Intelligentsia and regional experts already warned about the potential upsurge in terrorism immediately after Taliban took over of the country because of their ideological conflict with the ruling cleric regime and massive attraction among the youths from a particular faction of the Muslim society in the greater AfPak region. Since the Taliban took control of the country, the Taliban forces remained engaged against their adversaries, while their main challenge was to forestall incidents like explosions, targeted killings, and acts of terror which continuously occurring in various parts of the country. The recent series of explosions in the Afghan capital had caused great worries in Taliban authorities who often under estimated the threat poses by Daesh.

In fact, the Islamic State's presence in Afghanistan is not a risk only meant for Afghanistan but it is a real threat to all adjoining nations in the broader Indo-Subcontinent including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Maddives, Sri Lanka and Myanmar that constitute a significant Muslim population and all those peripheries are equally expose to the presence and extremist activities of the hardline militant groups due to prevailing social injustices, and bad governance in the Muslim states while rising Islamophobia and religious bigotry in non-Muslim countries in South Asia. In Afghanistan case, the Islamic State faces a struggle for relevance in the face of competition with the ruling rival militant group and strong counterterrorism pressure in the entire AfPak area.

Presently, the IS-KP poses a growing threat to Afghanistan due to the absence of a strong law Enforcement, technical expertise and Intelligence mechanism. The Afghan government lacks capacity to effectively defeat Daesh, yet lax border control and difficult mountainous terrains obstruct effective border management and facilitate cross border movement of terrorist groups that is real threat for almost all nations in South and Central Asia. There is a need for teamwork, collective efforts and counter terrorism cooperation between all neighbouring states to effectively defeat this common threat as early as possible otherwise no nation will be secure from it's malignance in the future.

Fantasize politics versus real issue

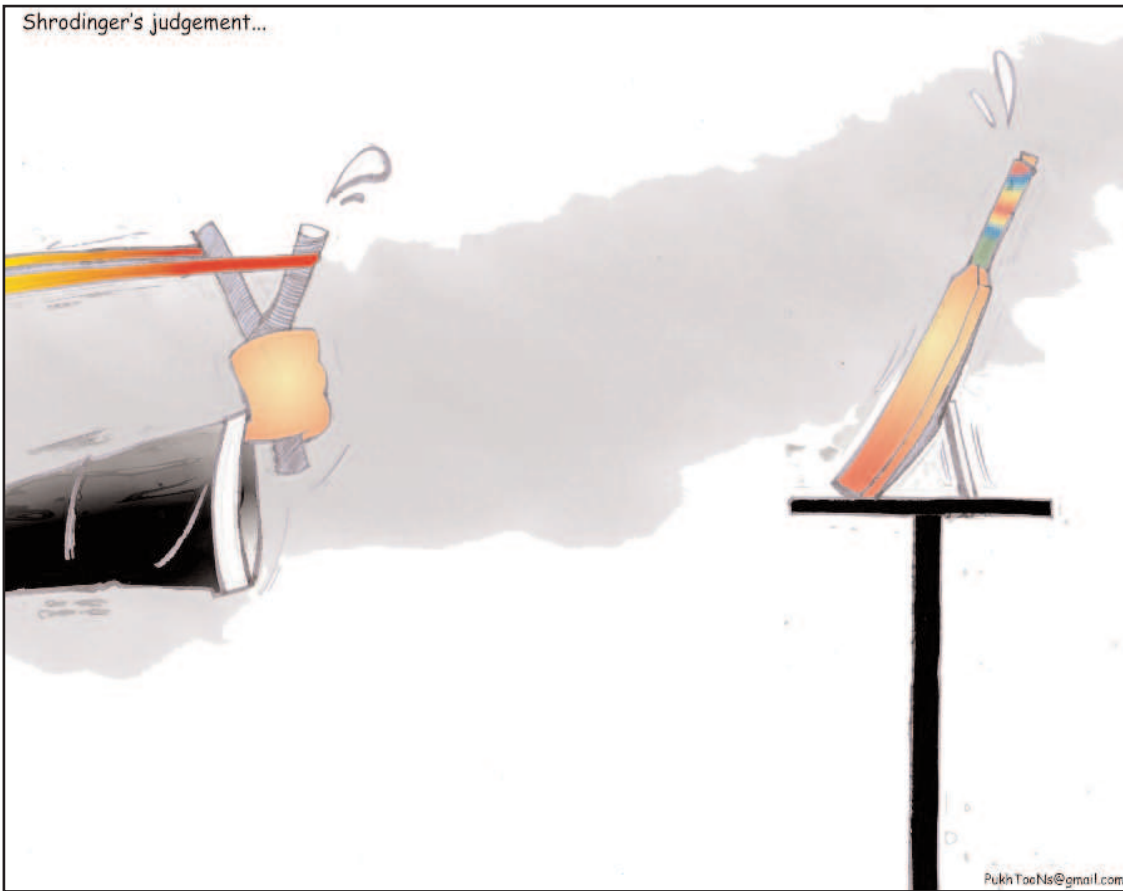
CHAIRMAN Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that the people are witnessing unprecedented poverty, inflation and unemployment at the current moment. He vowed to implement a 10-point economic agenda for the people if the PPP comes to power in the aftermath of the upcoming general elections. Bilawal announced to provide 300 units free of cost electricity to poor people of the country along with providing free education, and establishing universities meeting international standards. He also vowed to provide free and international standard health facilities to every citizen so people do not go abroad for treatment anymore in the future. Bilawal expressed resolve to provide three million houses to the poor people with ownership rights. According to him, Benazir Kissan Card and Benazir Mazdoor Card will be introduced to provide rights and offer financial assistance to growers and labourers.

As the election season began, the election campaign of political parties and their candidates is currently in full swing. The contesting parties and leaders are in efforts to leave behind their competitors in the race to attract the public's sympathies by tactful use of people's weak aspects including rising inflation, ever growing cost of living and no availability of daily use items. The slogans of free of cost electricity, free education, free healthcare, construction of homes for the poor along with other incentives including the provision of Insaaf cards, Benazir Card, and Nawaz Cards are being used to entrap voters until the election season is over. The same strategy is being used by all civic groups including the PTL, the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party, PML-Q, while other political groups use racial, ethnic or religion cards to attract voters and grab votes of the public.

Interestingly, every other leader vowed to distribute government funds among the public and is determined to provide costly electricity to the public on a throw away basis but no one has a plan to support the deteriorating national economy while putting it on the upward trajectory. A logical path for providing a long term sustainable financial relief to the public. In fact, such kind of politics neither serves public interests nor brings in any reasonable solution by any competing groups for betterment and welfare of the masses. It is high time that political parties and leaders shed off from using fake and counterproductive strategies to attract voters instead adopt an applicable and fact based manifesto that supports national interests, fulfil public needs and brings in a healthy competition in the country.

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How to deal with Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

HOUTHIS militia-men launched a complex attack toward international shipping lanes in the southern Red Sea on Tuesday, according to a statement by the US Central Command. They used Iranian-designed one-way attack drones, anti-ship cruise missiles and an anti-ship ballistic missile, according to the US statement. In addition to their complexity, the attacks were launched from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen at about 9:15 p.m., indicating nighttime fighting capabilities.

Eighteen of the suicide drones, two anti-ship cruise missiles and the anti-ship ballistic missile were shot down by a combined effort of the US and UK military assets in the region, according to the American statement.

On Wednesday, led by the US, the UN Security Council condemned "in the strongest terms" the Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels since Nov. 19, demanding that the group immediately cease all such attacks. The resolution called for "respect for the exercise of navigational rights and freedoms by merchant and commercial vessels in line with international law." It gave tacit approval of US actions by "taking note" of the right of countries, in accordance with international law, to defend their vessels from attacks.

Although Houthi attacks on merchant shipping are in clear violation of international law, the speed with which the UNSC adopted this resolution indicated a clear double standard. Compare that to the council's failure to pass a resolution condemning Israel and calling on it to stop its war against Gaza after more than 90 days of destruction and the death of more than 23,000 Palestinians, along with tens of thousands more injured and hundreds of thousands homeless. This double standard is highlighted and cynically exploited by groups such as the Houthis, with considerable resonance in the region, thus undermining the rule of international law and UN credibility.

In October, the Houthis launched missile and drone attacks against Israel, citing its war on Gaza. Although

the attacks were apparently futile, the armed group gained popularity in Yemen and elsewhere for what it portrayed as standing up for the people of Gaza as they suffered under Israel's brutal onslaught. The Houthis began targeting what they believed to be Israel-bound vessels in the Red Sea, garnering more political support as the war in Gaza intensified, with very little international action to stop Israel's atrocities.

Since then, the Houthis have widened their stated aim to include all international shipping companies, until Israel allows full humanitarian supplies to enter Gaza. Houthi actions and warnings have caused many companies to divert ships far to the south

against individuals and entities associated with the group. They are benefiting from their increased political popularity and, as such, are not likely to heed the UNSC resolution issued on Wednesday night and let it restrain them. They have ignored past resolutions on the Yemen conflict, including Resolution 2216, which was issued under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

While efforts should intensify to stop Houthi attacks against passing ships and threats to the international shipping lanes in the Red Sea, the international community should take a longer-term view and see beyond the current attacks. There are several essential but overdue steps that can be taken to secure

The persistence of these incidents and the size of this week's attack have demonstrated the group's defiance. Tuesday's incident came less than a week after 14 countries, led by the US, issued a joint statement warning: "The Houthis will bear the responsibility for the consequences should they continue to threaten lives, the global economy, or the free flow of commerce in the region's critical waterways."

around the Cape of Good Hope, driving up costs and threatening to disrupt the global supply chain, much of which goes through the Red Sea.

Tuesday night's attack was believed to be the 26th on commercial shipping lanes in the Red Sea since Nov. 19, when the group started aiming at ships with no clear Israeli connections. The persistence of these incidents and the size of this week's attack have demonstrated the group's defiance. Tuesday's incident came less than a week after 14 countries, led by the US, issued a joint statement warning: "The Houthis will bear the responsibility for the consequences should they continue to threaten lives, the global economy, or the free flow of commerce in the region's critical waterways."

The Houthis have not given any indication that they will stop, despite these warnings and US sanctions

this vital artery.

First, the international community should provide greater support for the ongoing Yemen peace process to ensure the success of the UN, Saudi Arabia and Oman's mediation between the Yemeni parties. The UN special envoy has now presented a proposed roadmap toward a permanent ceasefire and political solution, which could include measures to reduce the use of anti-shipping attacks for political purposes - a clear motive for the recent attack by the Houthis.

Second, the newly deployed military capabilities in the Red Sea could help enforce the arms embargo imposed by UNSC Resolution 2216 in order to prevent the importation of missiles or missile components that can be used to threaten shipping. There are many gaps in the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen that was established

under the resolution. It only inspects vessels exceeding 100 tons, allowing smaller boats to pass through, even if they carry suspicious loads. In addition, there have been consistent reports that ships exceeding 100 tons do evade its inspections in Djibouti.

Third, UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism inspectors should be allowed to fulfill their mandate by inspecting shipments in the Hodeidah port, as was originally intended, and not just in Djibouti. Similarly, staff at the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement should be allowed to exercise its role without hindrance. This mission was set up following the UN-mediated agreement between the Yemeni government and the Houthis that was signed in Stockholm in 2018 and endorsed by UNSC Resolution 2451. However, the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement's movement and ability to carry out its mandate are currently severely restricted.

Fourth, the increased military presence could assist by gathering information about troop movement on the Yemeni mainland to provide early warning of impending attacks on shipping. Better reconnaissance would have the added value of monitoring violations of the UN-mediated truce on Yemen's mainland. The truce has been holding more or less since April 2022 but needs better monitoring. Fifth, the clearing of sea mines deployed by the Houthis, which pose a mortal danger for shipping, is extremely important and is quite feasible with the added presence of military assets in the Red Sea. Sixth, as the UNSC resolution on Wednesday urged, there is an urgent need to "support capacity building efforts" of the Yemeni coast guard to "protect the sovereignty and integrity of the country" - a long overdue measure.

These and other similar measures are already included in previous UN resolutions on the Yemen conflict. It is the lax enforcement of those instruments that has allowed the Houthis to pose a threat to maritime security. Now is the time to put them into effect.

Arab News

US must restrain Netanyahu before he extends war to Lebanon

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

THE Israeli government is threatening war with Lebanon. The Americans do not want a strike that could extend the Gaza conflict into a regional war. Hezbollah does not want a war and neither does Iran. But can American diplomacy tame Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu? Especially since most Americans are worried that the US will be drawn into another Middle East conflict.

It is very clear that Iran does not want to waste a valuable asset, Hezbollah, just to support Hamas and the Palestinians. It prefers to keep the group as a front-line defense in case it gets attacked by Israel. This is why Hezbollah is keeping the fight within the rules of engagement.

The US is pressuring Lebanon for it to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1701. This resolution was put in place to end the 2006 war. It emphasizes that the Lebanese state has to extend its sovereignty to all Lebanese territories, as dictated by resolutions 1559 of 2004 and 1680 of 2006, and put in place the necessary security arrangements.

These include the creation of a buffer zone between the Blue Line and the Litani River that is free of all armed elements, except for the UN Interim Force in Lebanon and the Lebanese army, as well as increasing the number of UNIFIL troops to 15,000. UNIFIL should support the Lebanese Armed Forces and coordinate its activities with the Lebanese and Israeli governments. According to the resolution, Hezbollah should retreat north of the Litani. In 2006, the group complied. However, it started slowly redeploying later on. Two factors helped it extend its presence in the south: the Syrian war and the emergence of Daesh. This meant the army had to relocate troops to Lebanon's eastern and northern borders. The second factor was related to the country's financial crisis of 2019. The army's presence became further diluted, as the budget did not allow for any new recruitment in all state departments, including the military. The less the LAF was present, the more Hezbollah extended its presence.

UNIFIL is operating under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which revolves around the pacific settlement of disputes. Hence, its use of force is limited. These developments led to the loose execution of UNSC Resolution 1701, which increased Israel's sense of insecurity.

Now, the US has tapped Amos Hochstein, the envoy who was in charge of the successful Israel-Lebanon maritime demarcation talks, to solve the issue diplomatically and prevent a strike on Lebanon.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, in a speech he gave following Israel's assassination of Hamas politburo member Saleh Al-Arouri in Beirut last week, indirectly opened the door for negotiations by saying this could be an occasion to solve the problem once and for all. Israel assassi-

nated Al-Arouri in Dahiya, a Hezbollah stronghold. Nasrallah has stated before that any assassination in Lebanon was a red line. Israel crossed this red line and yet has so far not faced any massive retaliation. Following the assassination of Al-Arouri, Israel this week targeted Wissam Tawil, a high-ranking officer in Hezbollah's elite Al-Radwan forces. He was also Nasrallah's brother-in-law.

We can deduct from Israel's behavior that, faced with what it perceives to be a lack of deterrence from Hezbollah, it is pushing the limits. However, a miscalculation could occur. The group could respond all of a sudden. Israel is playing with fire.

Nevertheless, Tel Aviv wants to show that it is strong and can crush its enemies. This is beyond security. It wants to restore the trust that was lost on Oct. 7. Israelis no longer have confidence in their military. They do not think it is capable of protecting them.

There is also another reason, perhaps the main reason, Netanyahu wants to prolong the war: Once the war stops, he will have to go to court, and probably to jail. A source told me that Netanyahu wants to continue the war until next year in the hope that Donald Trump will return to the White House. Netanyahu is banking on Trump to keep him in power. Is this true? No one really knows, but it could be a possibility - and a dangerous one. This would mean that Netanyahu wants to extend the war to Lebanon to ensure his political survival.

Can the US prevent such a disastrous scenario? Can it convince Israel to abide by certain security arrangements? Maybe, but not with the soft stand it is currently taking toward Israel. The US was not able to stop Israel from targeting schools, hospitals and places of worship. It was not able to prevent Israel from targeting journalists, doctors and UN personnel. Can it twist the arm of Netanyahu and forbid him from striking Lebanon?

Will the risk involved in conducting such a strike prevent Israel from targeting Lebanon? Lebanon is not Gaza, Hezbollah is not Hamas, and the precision-guided missiles the group has are different from Qassam rockets. Still, the risk and American pressure may not be enough to dissuade Netanyahu.

The dangerous part is Israeli public opinion. The Times of Israel this month published a survey that showed that a slight majority of Israelis, 50.9 percent, are in favor of opening up a front in the north. This could be the perfect excuse the overwhelmingly unpopular prime minister needs to go to war with Lebanon. This is where American diplomacy should take a firm stand against Netanyahu. It should make sure he is stopped before he makes a miscalculated step that unleashes an all-out war that will destroy Lebanon, hugely damage Israel, have grave repercussions for the region and, most importantly for the White House, temper Joe Biden's chances of getting reelected.

Ireland's pro-immigration elites are driving the country to the brink

Michael Murphy

PRO-IMMIGRATION elites have turned Ireland into a powder keg. The fuse was lit last November when riots broke out in Dublin after three young children and a woman were stabbed by a man of Algerian origin. Angry locals took to the streets.

Buses were set alight, shops were looted and police were viciously attacked, in an outpouring of violence unlike anything the city has seen in modern times. Since then, a migrant hotel in Galway and a planned homeless shelter in Dublin have been put to the torch - and Irish politicians and media have been quick to finger "far-right" hooligans as the villains of the story.

But the same people now hand wringing about right-wing extremism have themselves been busily heaping gunpowder into the barrel. Ireland

has in recent years opened its doors to enormous numbers of immigrants - more than 140,000 arrived in the year ending April 2023, contributing to growth of almost two per cent in its population.

The new arrivals needed to be housed in a country which has a shortfall of 250,000 homes, and other public services stretched thin. Those questioning the wisdom of this risk being labelled racist or far-right, or censored. And once Ireland's draconian hate speech laws are passed through the Dail, it is possible that doubters can expect to be arrested. This is the undesirable lot of Ryan Casey. He is the boyfriend of Ashling Murphy, a 23-year-old schoolteacher, who was stabbed 11 times in the neck last year while she was out jogging near Tullamore, in County Offaly. Mr Casey said in a statement after the sentencing of his girlfriend's

murderer (a 33-year-old man of Slovakian extraction) that he was sickened that "someone can come to this country, be fully supported in terms of social housing, social welfare, and free medical care for over 10 years...never hold down a legitimate job, and never once contribute to society in any way shape or form" before committing "such a horrendous evil act of incomprehensible violence".

This was sufficient to cast Mr Casey as a hero of Ireland's "far-right" in the eyes of liberal elites. It is unsurprising, then, that Mr Casey's remarks were omitted in much of the Irish media's reporting. When asked about this on the BBC, Irish Times journalist Kitty Holland said she thought this decision was "right" as the remarks were "incitement to hatred", and that it

would not be "helpful" to share them. When Ireland's hate speech laws - which would elicit blushes from even the old Catholic church censors - are rolled out, it isn't inconceivable that they could even be illegal.

Teacherly censoriousness of his kind has prevented Ireland from having a grown-up conversation about its immigration policy. There are upsides to immigration, which politicians are happy to discuss. But there are downsides, too, which can be far-reaching and intractable. Not all immigrants arrive with a spirit of gratitude and munificence toward their host country - as we in Britain, and much of western Europe, have learned at great cost. Whether the Irish public agree with their governing class that this can all be set aside is another matter. A recent

poll found that 75 per cent of Irish voters thought Ireland had taken in "too many" refugees. The Irish government has now belatedly accepted this, framing it entirely as a "capacity" problem.

There is undoubtedly a dearth of homes and services. Many of the newcomers have been bussed to towns and cities across the country, often at night, where they have been put up in hotels and other spaces. Some have pitched tents because there is not enough room to house them all. There are countless stories of locals first encountering their new neighbours, loitering with nothing to do and nowhere to go, on their morning commute. But housing is not the be-all and end-all. Communities are also composed of a shared sense of history, culture and values. Mr Casey alluded to this when he said: "I feel like this

country is no longer the country that Ashling and I grew up in and has officially lost its innocence when a crime of this magnitude can be perpetrated in broad daylight."

Ireland's pro-immigration elites in the media and government take pride in the country's membership of the European community. But they have chosen to ignore the signal lessons that that community has to offer on immigration. By opening the doors to mass-immigration, and censoring debate around its pitfalls, Europe is now wracked with imported social ills and the Right is in the ascent across the continent. Ireland is starting to see the downsides of immigration. Will it now follow in the footsteps of the European continent and cede the debate to the "far-right", giving them a monopoly on speaking uncomfortable truths?

US, Japan defense moves imperil peace

THE 2024 Fiscal Year National Defense Authorization Act US President Joe Biden signed in December approves the record-high defense budget of \$886 billion for this year. And Japan increased the country's defense budget by 16.5 percent to about \$55.9 billion for 2024, which also set a new record.

Both the US and Japanese governments have said the increase in defense spending is aimed at boosting their capability to address current and future threats, identifying China as one of the primary threats. The increase in the two countries' defense budgets is likely to affect regional peace and stability and impact the international security situation. First, the fact that the US has increased its defense budget and is trying to consolidate its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region at a time when geopolitical competition is escalating will heighten tensions in the region. The National Defense Authorization Act has allocated \$12.7 billion to the "Pacific Deterrence Initiative", which focuses on bolstering the US' military presence and defense capability in the Asia-Pacific, and deepening military cooperation with its regional allies.

The NDAA upholds the AUKUS(Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States) alliance, including the commitment to supply at least three Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarines to Australia in the 2030s. It also approves the exemption of export control for the UK and Australia to facilitate the joint development of disruptive weapons and military technologies such as hypersonic

weapons, artificial intelligence and quantum computing. It is clear therefore that the US is strengthening its alliances in the Asia-Pacific to isolate China and undermine regional security, thus increasing the risk of confrontation.

Second, tensions across the Taiwan Strait are escalating due to the US' efforts to boost Taiwan's "defense capability", potentially raising the risk of conflict in the region. In fact, the NDAA includes several provisions related to Taiwan, including assessment of the absorptive capacity of the "defense forces" of Taiwan, helping Taiwan to bolster its resilience, establish comprehensive training, advisory, and institutional capacity-building programs for Taiwan's "security forces", and deepening cybersecurity cooperation with Taiwan. It also gives the US administration the green light to invite Taiwan to participate in the Rim of the Pacific exercise. Hence, the act is part of the US' bigger scheme to interfere in China's internal affairs, and poses a threat to China's sovereignty, national security and development interests, thereby raising the risk of conflict.

Moreover, the US is trying to check the development of key technologies to prevent China from making any advancements in the military and high-tech sectors. In the name of securing the defense supply chains and preventing any potential security risks, the US has refused to have any military cooperation with China. Worse, the NDAA prohibits the US Department of Defense from entering into any contract of purchasing goods, services or technologies

from companies associated with the Chinese government or collaborating with companies providing consultation services for the People's Liberation Army or related entities. In addition, it restricts cooperation with all seaports that use or share data with China's National Transportation and Logistics Public Information Platform.

The act has expanded the scope of the ban on the purchase of Chinese-made drones while banning the purchase of Chinese-made computers, printers and specific battery technology. This makes it clear the US will use the NDAA as a tool to undermine China's defense capability and global competitiveness.

As for Japan, it has increased its defense budget for the 10th consecutive year. According to the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy and the Defense Buildup Program, which were approved in December 2022, Japan will allocate about 43 trillion yen (about \$300 billion) over five years, from fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2027, to boost the country's military capability. Japan's annual defense expenditure will nearly double to about 10 trillion yen (about \$68 billion), making it the world's third-largest military spender - behind only the US and China. And the Japanese government claims this decision is primarily in response to the growing military threats from China, Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Japan's defense budget includes several key elements. To begin with, Japan has prioritized the

strengthening of its long-range missiles, and plans to procure Tomahawk cruise missiles from the US to bolster its counterstrike capability, particularly in case of a cross-Taiwan Strait conflict. Also, Japan is focusing on bolstering its regional defense capability by, among other things, allocating more funds to fortify its Integrated Air and Missile Defense System, which is designed to counter emerging threats, and has plans to build new destroyers equipped with the US-made Aegis missile defense system to boost its defense capability.

In particular, Japan aims to bolster its deployment capability to secure its southwestern islands in the event of a cross-Strait conflict. And to achieve its goal, the Japanese government plans to establish a new joint land-sea-air force, which will ensure the rapid deployment of troops, equipment and supplies to Japan's southwest-ern islands. As a matter of fact, the US and Japan have reached an agreement to hold more military exercises around Japan's southwest islands.

To be sure, Japan's record defense budget will greatly impact the security situation in the surrounding region, which in turn will exacerbate tensions in both the East China Sea and the South China Sea, increasing the risk of conflict. And the strengthened Washington-Tokyo alliance could prompt the US to adjust its military deployment in the Asia-Pacific, potentially undermining the regional strategic balance. As such, China needs to closely monitor the situation and use diplomacy to defuse the tensions in the region.

The China Daily

Sudan should avoid the mistakes that kept Angola in conflict for 27 years

WHEN General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the leader of Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and former deputy chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council of Sudan, landed in Gauteng, South Africa on January 4 for talks with President Cyril Ramaphosa, he looked dignified and dapper in a navy blue suit.

His calm, confident and businesslike demeanour implied he was on a mission to rescue Sudan from the violent excesses of his obstinate adversaries in the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. Thus, as Dagalo, known widely as "Hemedti", posed for pictures with a smiling Ramaphosa, he did not look like a rogue military commander who is alleged to have overseen horrendous war crimes - torture, extrajudicial killings and mass rape among others - in Darfur in 2014 and 2015.

Standing proudly next to the president of Africa's second wealthiest nation, acting like a dignified and magnanimous statesman, he did not look like a vicious, power-hungry military operative who had just nine months ago launched a devastating civil conflict that already

killed 12,000 people and displaced over seven million others. Hemedti's recent rebranding as a mainstream political leader and a rightful representative of the Sudanese people - achieved through well-advertised performances of camaraderie not only by Ramaphosa but also the leaders of Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda among others - is of course nothing but a charade.

Since the beginning of Sudan's latest civil war, Amnesty International says, fighters from both Hemedti's RSF and al-Burhan's SAF have committed egregious human rights violations and war crimes including deliberate attacks on civilians, attacks on civilian infrastructure like churches and hospitals, mass rape and other sexual violence. The RSF has also been accused of driving the Masalit people out of Sudan's volatile West Darfur region through an ethnically targeted campaign of violence, sparking fears of a new genocide in the region.

At best, Hemedti, who has acquired a dubious fortune by seizing gold mines and selling gold, is a political reincarnation of his former boss, ousted Sudanese President al-Bashir, who ruled with an iron fist, rigged general elections, stifled dissent through systemic violence, and only paid lip service to constitutional freedoms for 30 years. At worst, he is a rebel without a cause, palpable ideology, or moral compass who appears determined to exploit the Sudanese people's genuine struggle for democratic change for his own political ends. After he met with Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni on December 27, Hemedti said unnamed figures from al-Bashir's old regime and the "misguided leadership of the Sudanese Armed Forces" seek to impede the peace process and prolong the war. And he claimed he was engaged in a military effort to "rebuild the Sudanese state based on new, just foundations".

Then, on January 2-3, Hemedti held talks with the

Tafi Mhaka

leader of the Coordination of Civilian Democratic Forces (Taqaaddum), Sudan's former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. These discussions concluded with the two leaders signing the Addis Ababa Declaration, supposedly a comprehensive blueprint for peace talks and civilian rule. However, Malik Agar, the deputy chairman of Sudan's ruling Sovereign Council, dismissed the plan as "an agreement between partners, as Taqaddum and the RSF are essentially one body with two faces", adding "there is nothing new or groundbreaking here". That Hemedti appears to have developed a newfound appetite for civilian rule at a time when the RSF has been scoring significant military victories against its rivals, including the capture of Wad Madani, the country's second city, comes as no surprise. All along, Hemedti's goal has been to defeat his adversaries militarily and use these victories to proclaim himself as the legitimate leader of his country.

Like many other former rebels who have needlessly pushed their people into armed conflict while pretending to be working for peace, because continuous fighting helped them obtain or maintain political power, Hemedti shows newfound but questionable commitment to advance an unimpeded constitutional order and avoid a return to war sometime in the future. As a rebel leader whose primary motivation for fighting appears to be accumulating personal power rather than improving the living conditions of his people, Hemedti is more similar to Jonas Savimbi, the founder of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), than any other political figure in Africa. Following a power struggle that broke out soon after Angola gained independence from Portugal in November 1975, Savimbi waged a 27-year intermittent civil war against the ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

The cold-war conflict, in which Russia supported the MPLA and the US, alongside apartheid South Africa, backed UNITA, killed one million people and made four million others homeless. For 27 years, Savimbi foiled several peace initiatives from the United Nations and the Organisation for African Unity - the predecessor to the AU. Despite the leading role he played in the continuation of the devastating conflict, however, he was accepted as a legitimate political player who should have a say over the country's future. He was treated as a mainstream political figure, and even an anti-colonial hero, by many African leaders and was also hosted by then US President Ronald Reagan at the White House in 1986.

In November 1994, amid growing pressure from both the UN and AU, UNITA finally signed the Lusaka Protocol, which called for a permanent ceasefire, demobilisation of UNITA's troops, and the integration of UNITA's military and political wings into government departments. The protocol, however, was never fully implemented, largely due to Savimbi's desire to continue the conflict that was the pri-

mary source of his power and political relevance. With MPLA similarly not interested in ending the conflict, for four long years the two parties continued to purchase arms and provoke each other while supposedly negotiating for a permanent end to hostilities. Ultimately, in 1998, UNITA's refusal to demobilise its soldiers and submit UNITA-controlled areas to a civilian authority led to the complete breakdown of the Lusaka Protocol. After the demise of Lusaka, UNITA and the MPLA continued to fight, and cause immense suffering to the Angolan people, until the latter killed Savimbi in February 2002. Only two months after the rebel leader's killing, the two parties managed to reach a permanent ceasefire agreement and end the war for good.

Suffering from a conflict similarly fuelled by leaders more interested in consolidating power than building peace, Sudan must learn from Angola's 27-year-long civil war, and the failures of the Lusaka Protocol. Although several African leaders, who could not care less about everyday Sudanese, seem to have embraced Hemedti's sudden and highly suspect metamorphosis from vicious commander to democratic statesman, just as it was the case with Savimbi, there is little reason to believe he is genuine in his newfound commitment to building peace and establishing civilian rule. RSF forces have, after all, already failed to adhere to international humanitarian law and protect civilians after agreeing to do just that in the Jeddah Declaration of May 2023. Thus, the mistakes made in Angola more than 20 years ago should not be repeated in Sudan today. A peace agreement must facilitate the complete disbandment of the RSF, ensure Sudan's army makes a long-awaited return to the barracks, and lay the groundwork for a feasible transition to free, transparent and credible multiparty elections. To back up a new dispensation, the United Nations Security Council must impose an arms embargo on all parties to the conflict and undertake a key role in implementing peace. Most importantly, Hemedti - or any other commander who played a role in Sudan's ongoing devastation - should not be allowed to reinvent himself as a democrat and sacrifice any prospects for sustainable peace in pursuit of power.

In Angola, Russian and US financial, military and diplomatic support for warring parties fuelled a catastrophic civil conflict for years, diminishing fragile prospects for peace in the country. To prevent a repeat of this avoidable catastrophe, foreign actors backing the RSF and the SAF, such as the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, must end their meddling in Sudan's internal affairs at once and stop supporting the personal agendas of power-hungry commanders like Hemedti and al-Burhan. The welfare and aspirations of everyday Sudanese must take precedence over the narrow interests of Sudan's military complex and the self-serving agendas of regional and global powers. A democratic Sudan will have no place for people like al-Burhan and Hemedti.

ME can be a beacon of sustainable development

THE Middle East and North Africa region is at a crucial turning point in its efforts to combat climate change. Encouragingly, nations such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been proactive and are taking steps to invest significantly in renewable energy with the aim of broadening their energy portfolio, decreasing their reliance on fossil fuels and tackling environmental issues.

The imperative for MENA countries to increase their investments in renewable energy is not merely an environmental commitment, but also a strategic response to the pressing challenges posed by climate change. As global temperatures rise and extreme weather events become more frequent - and due to the climate vulnerabilities of the region -MENA countries must accelerate their transition toward sustainable energy sources to mitigate the impact of climate change and ensure a resilient and prosperous future.

The region is familiar with the negative effects of climate change, as its temperatures are rising, water scarcity is increasing and desertification is intensifying. Extreme weather events are also becoming more frequent. Coastal areas face the threat of rising sea levels, while arid regions experience more prolonged droughts. But by increasing their investments in clean energy, nations in the region can fortify their resilience to these negative effects.

Firstly, to address this issue, it is critical to chart a path toward decreasing greenhouse gas emis-

sions. As we know, a significant portion of global greenhouse gas emissions can be attributed to the burning of fossil fuels, particularly in developed nations. Transitioning to renewable energy sources, particularly solar power, can be a powerful tool in reducing nations' carbon footprints.

By harnessing the abundant sunlight that bathes the Middle East and North Africa, countries can decrease their dependency on fossil fuels, thereby limiting their release of greenhouse gases and contributing to global efforts to curb climate change.

The second reason it is important to expedite the transition toward renewable energy is that the region grapples with water scarcity - a challenge that is exacerbated by climate change. Clean energy solutions, particularly solar power and wind power, can address the water-energy nexus by offering sustainable alternatives to traditional energy sources, which often require significant water consumption.

Solar power, in particular, is a water-efficient energy source that not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but also helps alleviate the strain on already-scarce water resources. This dual benefit approach is a crucial aspect of sustainable development in the face of climate change.

Additionally, solar-powered irrigation systems and climate-resilient infrastructure contribute to building adaptive capacity, ensuring that the region can with-

stand and recover from the impacts of a changing climate.

Thirdly, in the context of climate uncertainties, securing energy needs should be given paramount importance. As has become evident, climate change introduces uncertainties into the availability and accessibility of traditional energy sources. By investing in clean energy, the region can enhance its energy security in the face of climate-related disruptions.

For example, solar power offers a reliable and consistent source of energy that is immune to the geopolitical tensions and market fluctuations that often characterize fossil fuel-dependent economies. This transition to more secure and sustainable energy sources not only shields the MENA region from external vulnerabilities, but also fosters long-term stability.

Fourthly, the economic implications of climate change cannot be overlooked. Extreme weather events, disrupted supply chains and shifting agricultural patterns can have profound effects on economies, particularly those dependent on traditional sectors.

In other words, investing in clean energy is not only an environmental imperative, but also an opportunity for economic diversification. The renewable energy sector, including solar, offers avenues for job creation, technological innovation and the development of new industries. By fostering a green economy, the MENA region can build resilience against the economic impacts of climate

change and position itself as a leader in the global transition to sustainability.

But addressing climate change requires coordinated effort on a global scale. The Middle East can play a pivotal role in international climate diplomacy by shaping global narratives, fostering collaboration and contributing to the achievement of international climate goals. This not only aligns with international expectations, but also establishes the MENA region as a key player in the global fight against climate change.

In a nutshell, the imperative for the region to invest in green energy is not just a response to environmental concerns, but is also a strategic necessity.

Fortunately, nations like Saudi Arabia and the UAE have already made substantial investments in renewable energy as they aim to broaden their energy portfolio, diminish their reliance on fossil fuels and confront environmental challenges. From mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to a changing climate and from fostering economic diversification to assuming a leadership role in global sustainability efforts, the benefits of this ongoing transition are far-reaching. With its unique environmental challenges and abundant solar resources, the MENA region has the potential to emerge as a beacon of sustainable development, illustrating that the pursuit of clean energy is not just a global responsibility, but a pathway to a resilient and prosperous future for the region and the planet.

A turning point in Ukraine

Michael Bociurkiw

left to take down the Russian rockets," Olha Radkevych, a friend and former OSCE colleague in Odesa told me.

"We are talking human lives here and everyone realizes that if the United States stops supporting us that those attacks will become more frequent and more severe," she added. "People are so tired nowadays. You can see the weariness more and more. How much longer can a person live in such an environment?" Even as Radkevych dined with friends on New Year's Eve in a vain effort to try and forget about the war, a Russian drone buzzed around their neighborhood, demanding their attention and careful monitoring. There was a time when security experts speculated that Russia's stockpile of weapons was running low. But the Kremlin has apparently managed to re-supply and is now reported to be using short-range ballistic missiles in Ukraine produced by its ally, North Korea.

Meanwhile, the supply of drones from Iran seems almost limitless, amid worrying reports that Iran has transferred technology for more drones to be produced in Russia for a new stockpile that is "orders of magnitude larger" than previous stocks. As Russia's full-scale invasion grinds toward the two-year mark, and with seemingly no end in the near future, Ukraine's leaders have more to ask of their citizens. It's expected that parliament will pass a new mobilization legislation that could bring up to 500,000 more men into battle.

President Volodymyr Zelensky, who appeared to be maneuvering to distance himself from the controversial act, said it was needed to relieve those who've fought on the frontlines for months. In a blatantly political move, he placed the onus on the military brass, in particular Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Valeriy

Zaluzhnyi, who's also viewed as a potential political rival, to explain the rationale to the public. Zelensky has also suggested the minimum draft age might be lowered to 25 years from the current 27. Tinkering with mobilization is a political hot potato few leaders dare touch. Even President Vladimir Putin waited several months before signing off on Russia's first mobilization since World War II. While it's impossible to put an exact number on Ukrainian war losses, anyone who visits the military portion of the Lychakiv Cemetery in Lviv can see that its expanded to almost maximum capacity. This is a war being fought on many fronts. On a pre-Christmas visit to Kyiv, I saw a visible slowdown in economic activity and the spreading scars of war are now almost impossible to ignore.

Moments after emerging from the central train station, passengers come face to face with a tall office building facade heavily damaged from explosions. At a city center bistro once frequented by expats, Le Cosmopolite, a lone waitress had only two tables to serve. "People are getting poorer and it's getting worse and worse every month," she told me. With fears that two aid packages from the US and European Union, for \$61 billion and \$52 billion respectively - are stalled due to political bickering, the mood across Ukraine has turned understandably glum. The clock is ticking louder than ever. Ukraine has been running a massive budget deficit and there are reports that come February, it won't be able to pay public sector wages. 2024's big unfreeze?

But there is at least one area where Ukraine can feel hopeful: Russian assets. Ukraine scored a big win last week when the EU approved sanctions against Russia's largest diamond producer, Alrosa, and its CEO. The EU

said the company, which accounts for 90% of Russia's diamond production, "constitutes an important part of an economic sector that is providing substantial revenue to the government." Russia's diamond exports total around \$4.4 billion a year, of which \$1.6 billion are imports into the EU. That could blow a significant hole in funding for Putin's war machine. Ukraine could soon be receiving profits from the estimated hundreds of billions in Russian assets frozen overseas, starting with the tax revenue collected by Belgium, where the bulk of frozen Russian sovereign assets are held. That estimated \$2.4 billion tax collection would be a huge ledger addition for reconstruction or plugging Kyiv's budget gap. The US and western allies are working diligently on the remaining assets frozen elsewhere. The development of a roadmap, being led by the US, could even materialize before the second anniversary of the full scale invasion in mid-February. Ultimately though, it could fall to the Ukrainian people themselves to prevent Putin from achieving his goal of fully destroying Ukrainian statehood. When I hear of Ukraine tripling its domestic military production in 2023 and creating advanced drones seemingly out of thin air, it gives me hope that, with or without ramped-up western help, Ukraine will beat back Russia.

Whenever that seems like a distant fantasy, I try to remind myself of what Member of Parliament and Holos Party chief Kira Rudik, who on January 2 had her Kyiv flat badly damaged from a Russian attack, told me. "I have seen so much love and support, and people working together that I don't usually witness. So, every time someone says we are exhausted - well of course war exhausts you." But do we have it in ourselves to fight more and stand with each other? Absolutely yes.

CNN

US mustn't interfere in Taiwan's elections

AS Taiwan prepares for local elections on Saturday, it is imperative that the United States refrain from interfering in or manipulating the election process. Ironically, according to Reuters, a senior official from the Biden administration stated on Wednesday that the US strongly opposes any external interference in the elections, sending a clear message to the Chinese mainland.

Let's consider the facts. First, there is only one China and Taiwan is an integral part of China, which is recognized by all countries including the US. The US' talk of external interference in the elections rings hollow when it comes from a country with a history of meddling in the internal affairs of others. The US has its fair share of interferences in China's internal affairs, and yes, that includes the Chinese island's elections.

The official, speaking to journalists on condition

Liu Jianna

he/she not be named, emphasized that Washington maintains a neutral stance regarding the elections and does not endorse or favor any specific candidate. If this is indeed the case, it is important for the US to avoid sending misleading messages to the politicians in Taiwan.

Adding a layer of complexity is the ongoing military collaboration between the US and Taiwan, complete with more and larger arms sales. The US' approval of a \$300 million arms deal right before the elections raises eyebrows and prompts questions about the underlying message.

In what could be another provocative move for Beijing, US officials are suggesting an unofficial post-election visit to Taiwan. Also, the interactions between the US and Taiwan officials, especially during this politically charged period, could be

seen as provocations by Beijing. However, some players in Taiwan seem willing to align with the US, perhaps even at the expense of the island's broader interests. A case in point: mistaking a mainland satellite for a missile in the lead-up to the elections. A mix-up that underscores institutional failure, political complications, and a sense of helplessness on the island.

Accusing the Chinese mainland of meddling in Taiwan elections is a baseless charge. The US might want to reflect on its own role as an observer rather than an active participant. Taiwan residents face a crucial choice - they not only need to choose the island's leadership, but also choose between war or peace depending on the leadership's future policies. The hope is that Taiwan residents will prudently make this decision themselves and for themselves. While for the US, it's time to stop dancing in someone else's ballroom.



Weekly inflation up by 1.36 pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 1.36 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on January 11, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 317.92 points as compared to 313.66 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last

year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 44.16 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, increased by 1.20 percent and went up to 312.23 points from last week's 308.53 points. The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517;

Rs. 29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, it increased by 1.34 percent, 1.29 percent, 1.28 and 1.34 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 21 (41.18%) items increased, 08 (15.68%) items decreased and 22 (43.14%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included potatoes (5.92%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (0.84%), sugar (0.43%), vegetable ghee

2.5 kg (0.29%), mustard oil (0.26%), cooking oil 5 litre (0.17%), garlic (0.13%) and pulse moong (0.06%).

The items that recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included tomatoes (15.63%), onion (8.94%), chicken (6.42%), electricity charges for q1 (5.11%), eggs (4.31%), match box (2.56%), gur (2.30%), LPG (2.29%), pulse gram (2.11%), energy saver (1.40%), pulse mash (0.83%) and rice irri-6/9 (0.67%).

‘Ministry of IT to launch ‘Smartphone for All’ project on easy installments’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr Umar Saif, on Friday said that the Ministry of IT is set to launch the "Smartphone for All" project, allowing individuals to acquire smartphones through easy instalments.

In a statement on his official social media account, he said that the ministry is concurrently establishing a research and development fund to support mobile phone manufacturing companies and facilitate the growth of the mobile phone manufactur-

ing sector.

Regarding the "Smartphone for All" project, he explained that in the event of failure to pay instalments, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) would block the handset following the pattern of the Device Identification, Registration, and Blocking System (DIRBS).

The minister said that the objective is to encourage responsible financial behaviour and ensure the continued expansion of smartphone accessibility.

Under this policy, he said that telecom compa-

nies will have the opportunity to directly offer smartphones to customers through instalment plans, thereby extending the advantages of mobile broadband, particularly among the low-income segments in Pakistan.

Dr Umar Saif said that Pakistan ranks as the seventh major mobile phone market globally, with 190 million mobile phones in use. He expressed the government's goal to reduce mobile phone imports by promoting the manufacturing of affordable and high-quality mobile phones within Pakistan.

SBP launches its official WhatsApp channel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has formally launched its WhatsApp channel. WhatsApp users can follow the verified SBP WhatsApp channel through the below provided link or QR code.

This is another step in line with SBP's continuous efforts to provide reliable information to its stakeholders in a seamless and timely manner. The channel will serve as a tool of communications where followers will directly receive information from SBP on its policies, initiatives, notifications and awareness campaigns.

WhatsApp Channel Link: <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaCSf6cEKyZMXfJbUcIi>

China-Russia trade at record high in 2023

BEIJING (AFP/APP): Trade between China and Russia hit a record high in 2023, official Chinese data showed on Friday, while commerce with the United States fell for the first time in four years.

China-Russia trade reached more than \$240 billion, China Customs figures showed, overshooting a goal of \$200 billion set by the neighbours in bilateral meetings last year. The figure is a record number for the two countries, who have grown closer politically and economically since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

ICCI urges political parties to unveil their manifesto for the revival of the economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Friday urged the political parties to unveil economic agenda of their election manifesto for the revival of the economy to achieve sustainable economic growth and prosperity.

The trade body said that it would provide a direction to the business community and investors and help them finalize their short and long-term business and investment plans for the country.

Talking to a delegation of traders and industrialists President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that less than one month period is left in the next general elections, but most of the political parties have not announced the economic agenda of their election manifesto as yet.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the economy of Pakistan is facing many big challenges as the external debt has exceeded US\$124 billion by June 2023, the power sector circular debt has crossed

Rs.2.3 trillion, the inflation rate surged to over 39 percent in 2023, which has drastically reduced the purchasing power of the common man and reduced the growth of business activities. ICCI President said that the UN's World Economic Situation and Prospects Report for 2024 has also projected that the economy of Pakistan is confronted with many challenges, including inflationary pressures, currency depreciation, and high levels of sovereign debt.

Save on your holiday or stopover to Dubai this winter with Emirates

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Emirates has today announced an exciting new offer for travellers planning to visit Dubai this winter. Starting from 12th January, people who have bought flights to Dubai or add a stopover in Dubai of 8 hours or more can enjoy free tickets to two of Dubai's biggest attractions – the Museum of the Future and Atlantis Aquaventure.

The Museum of the Future is the newest jewel in the Dubai skyline where you'll be transported into the world 50 years from now. Furthermore, you can cool off on the slides and rides at Atlantis Aquaventure, the world's largest waterpark.

This special offer is valid on tickets bought between 12th January to 1st February 2024, for travel between 15th January and 31st March 2024.

The offer is available in all cabins and bookings made on emirates.com, Emirates call centre, Emirates ticketing office or via travel agents can be redeemed at least 96 hours before you travel.

Experience more of Dubai with Emirates

From soaking up the sun on beautiful beaches, shopping at Dubai Mall, enjoying the views from the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa to dining at incredible restaurants in Dubai, why not make Dubai your next winter sun

holiday? Other Emirates benefits include:

My Emirates Pass: Take advantage of hundreds more offers in Dubai and the UAE thanks to My Emirates Pass. Available until 31st March 2024, just show your Emirates boarding pass at participating restaurants, spas, activities and more to access exclusive offers and discounts. To see all My Emirates Pass offers, please visit www.emirates.com/myemiratespass.

Create your Dubai Experience: Pack more into your visit with Dubai Experience. Customers can browse, create, and book their own customised itineraries including flights, hotel stay, visits to key

attractions, and other dining and leisure experiences in Dubai and the UAE.

Emirates Skywards Partners: There's more to enjoy as a member of the airline's award-winning loyalty programme. You can earn Skywards Miles on everyday spends at retail outlets in the UAE with the Skywards Everyday app. Spend your Miles on flights and upgrades or get tickets for concerts and sports events through Skywards Exclusives. Learn more about Emirates Skywards here: <https://www.emirates.com/english/skywards/>.

Emirates currently operate 57 weekly flights from Pakistan to Dubai. For more information, visit [emirates.com](https://www.emirates.com).

Tractor assembling grew 67.51% in six months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Domestic farm tractor production during the first six months of the current financial year grew by 67.51 per cent as compared to the production of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period from July-December, 2023 about 23,610 tractors were locally assembled as compared to the assembling of 14,094 tractors of the corresponding period of last year.

Meanwhile, the sales of locally assembled tractors during the period under review grew by 103.34 per cent as compared to the sales of the same period of last year, according to the data of Pakistan Automobile Manufacturers Association (PAMA).

During the period under review, Massey Ferguson produced 15,258 tractors as compared to the production of 7,430 tractors, which was higher by 105.35 per cent when compared with the assembling of the

same period of the last year.

Meanwhile, the sales of the above mentioned company also remained on an encouraging growth trajectory as it grew by 139.62 per cent and sold about 15,099 tractors as compared to the sale of 6,301 tractors in the same period of last year.

In the first six months of the current financial year, Fiat assembled 8,325 tractors as compared to the production of 6,664 as the output of the company grew by 25.33 per cent.

It is worth mentioning here that the wheat crop has been sown across more than 22.81 million acres of land in various crop-growing regions during the current Rabi season to meet staple food requirements as well as to maintain strategic reserves throughout the year.

The crop sowing targets for the current season (2023-24) were fixed at 22.22 million acres as the cultivation targets surpassed by 102.67 per cent. The crop sowing has gained

momentum across the wheat-producing areas in the country as Punjab Province has surpassed its wheat sowing targets and completed cultivation of over 103.09 per cent of areas against the set targets.

The Punjab, which is the largest wheat-producing province in the country, has completed crop sowing over 16.48 million acres as compared to the fixed targets of 15.99 million acres during the current season.

Meanwhile, Sindh Province has achieved 106.66 per cent of its targets as wheat cultivation in different divisions of the province was completed over 3.16 million acres as against the set targets of 2.97 million acres.

Meanwhile, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also achieved wheat sowing over 100 per cent of its set targets and crop cultivation was completed over 1.93 million acres as compared to the set targets of 1.93 million acres during the current sowing season.



SIALKOT: A vendor is selling vegetables to the customer.

1st special credit guarantee company for SMEs inaugurated

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Finance and Karandaaz here Friday launched Pakistan's first special credit guarantee company namely the National Credit Guarantee Company Limited (NCGCL), with an objective to provide financial assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the country.

The inauguration ceremony, among others, was attended by representatives from the British High Commission, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCP), State Bank of Pakistan, and the Ministry of Finance.

NCGCL, the joint venture of Ministry of Finance and Karandaaz aims, to enhance financial accessibility through special credit guarantee facilities, particularly focusing on expanding financial reach for busi-

nesses operating at the small and medium scale across the board.

Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamsad highlighted the significance of this revolutionary initiative. She said, private credit for SMEs in Pakistan stands at a mere 5.2 percent, declining from 7.7 percent in the last five years in the country.

She said the credit level was significantly lower compared to other South Asia, which has an average of over 17 percent, undoubtedly they do better on exports and they do better on competitiveness.

She said, reality is that SMEs sector accounts 90 percent of formally registered businesses, contributes to around 40 percent of GDP and employees around 80 percent of non-

agriculture labour forces, offering an opportunity to low income strata.

She was of the view that inadequate investment in SME sector, globally recognized to enhance competitiveness of countries and industries and value addition as well as employment generation, has hindered Pakistan's sustainable growth and development. She said launching of NCGCL was a far reaching institutional reform that is being launched, adding the purpose of this transformative step was to facilitate smoother capital investment paths for small businesses.

She said, a well-designed and effectively implemented credit guarantee schemes can create an average 30 to 35 percent financial additionality in the market which translates into economic additionality in terms of higher produc-

tivity and innovation, employment generation etc.

The minister said, NCGCL would create various products tailored for the Pakistani market, catering to over 1.5 million SMEs and a market volume exceeding PKR 3.7 trillion.

Dr. Shamsad Akhtar emphasized that the collaboration with financial institutions through NCGCL will ensure a guaranteed access to credit in the market, fostering economic growth for businesses.

Speaking on the occasion, British High Commissioner Jean Merritt said initial investment of Rs.6 billion has been made in the company under the financial inclusion program. On the occasion, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Karandaaz also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the expertise of his company in this particular sector.

US stocks shrug off inflation data, Nikkei ends at peak since 1990

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Wall Street stocks largely shrugged off a disappointing US inflation report Thursday, while Japan's Nikkei finished above 35,000 for the first time since 1990.

The Department of Labor's consumer price index, a key measure of inflation, was up 3.4 percent from a year ago and up slightly from November.

The data had been keenly anticipated for its implications on potential Federal Reserve interest rate cuts.

But after a meandering session, US indices finished near flat.

"The CPI was not a good number... but (it) wasn't bad enough to give us a real reason for a sell-off either," said Steve Sosnick of Interactive Brokers. "And that's why we were sort of muddling around at slightly lower levels."

Global equity markets had powered higher in the closing months of last year on expectations the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank could soon begin loosening monetary policy as pricing pressures eased.

Leading analysts have predicted the Fed could undertake its first interest rate cut in March or May. "The rise in headline inflation should dampen expectations for an imminent rate cut as the Fed will be conscious of pinning inflation down to its two percent target before releasing the pressure," said Richard Flax, chief investment officer at the European wealth manager Moneyfarm.

While European equities fell, Tokyo tacked on 1.8 percent to finish above 35,000 points for the first time since early 1990 as a weak yen boosted exporters.

The pace of the Nikkei's recent gains "deserves a speeding fine," joked senior strategist Ryuta Otsuka of Toyo Securities. "The biggest factor behind the rally is most likely hopes that the Japanese economy will finally get back to normal after years of deflation," he told AFP.

The Nikkei's all-time high was 38,915 on December 29, 1989, during Japan's boom years from around 1986 to 1990.

Elsewhere, Bitcoin surged after the New York open, rising to nearly \$49,000 on news that the US Securities and Exchange Commission had given the go-ahead for wider trading of the world's biggest cryptocurrency in the form of exchange-traded funds.

The SEC approved the plans for 11 ETFs to list on leading exchanges including the New York Stock Exchange "on an accelerated basis," it said.

ETFs are traded on public markets, granting investors exposure to price movements in asset prices without taking direct ownership of the underlying assets.

Bitcoin, which had rallied strongly in recent months on expectations of the SEC approval, fell back to just over \$46,000 later Thursday. - Key figures around 2150 GMT - New York - Dow: UP less than 0.1 percent at 37,711.02 (close) New York - S&P 500: DOWN 0.1 percent at 4,780.24 (close)

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New York - Dow: UP less than 0.1 percent at 37,711.02 (close)

New York - S&P 500: DOWN 0.1 percent at 4,780.24 (close)

New York - Nasdaq: FLAT at 14,970.19 (close)

London - FTSE 100: DOWN 1.0 at 7,576.59 (close)

Paris - CAC 40: DOWN 0.5 percent at 7,387.62 (close)

Frankfurt - DAX: DOWN 0.9 percent at 16,547.03 (close)

EURO STOXX 50: UP 0.6 percent at 4,442.28 (close)

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP 1.8 percent at 35,049.86 (close)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: UP 1.3 percent at 16,302.04 (close)

Shanghai - Composite: UP 0.3 percent at 2,886.65 (close)

Euro/dollar: DOWN at \$1.0969 from \$1.0973 on Wednesday

Pound/dollar: UP at \$1.2770 from \$1.2742

Euro/pound: UP at 85.94 pence from 86.11 pence

Dollar/yen: UP at 145.29 yen from 145.76 yen

West Texas Intermediate: UP 0.9 percent at \$72.02 per barrel

Brent North Sea Crude: UP 0.8 percent at \$77.41 per barrel

Haier astound with its annual event Haier Brand Seminar 2024

F.P. Report

KARACHI: As we step into a new year, Haier astound with its annual event Haier Brand Seminar 2024. This year's seminar revolved around a profoundly impactful theme: "Leading Together; Transformation, Localization, Digitalization," reflecting Haier's commitment to not just keeping pace with but leading the ever-evolving world of technology.

Haier Brand Seminar showcased how Haier's latest offerings are not just products but solutions tailored to modern lifestyles, emphasizing transformative technologies that redefine consumer experiences.

The 2024 seminar takes a deep dive into the importance of localization. Haier understands that every market is unique, with its distinct needs and preferences. Haier reinforces its dedication to designing products that cater specifically to local markets.

Moreover, digitalization stands as a central pillar of Haier's vision for the future. The seminar highlights Haier's innovative steps in embedding digital technology into its appliances, creating an interconnected ecosystem that offers convenience, efficiency, and a smarter way of living.

Haier demonstrated its innovative smart home ecosystem, designed to provide seamless, integrated experiences that cater to the local cultural nuances and lifestyle preferences of Pakistani households.

Haier lineup for this year included ultra-efficient, solar-powered Air Conditioner, inverter Refrigerators with customizable features, the latest eco-friendly Washing Machines and Kitchen Appliances have enhanced technology and manufactured locally.

Haier's new range of LED TVs with advanced AI capabilities and Deep Freezers have a complete range of convertible freezers. Peshawar Zalmi players and many other star cricketers attended the event.

The Dealers, Zalmi players and even the Haier family was pleasantly surprised with the new Launches and proud of the achievements of Haier as a brand.

On the event Haier Pakistan & Peshawar Zalmi also did Signing Ceremony for PSL 9. Mr. Feng Xianfa, The CEO of Haier Pakistan showed his excitement and said "Haier is here to serve its customer in best possible way and Haier will not only meet but it will exceed customer's expectation."

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Dagar Appeal No.56/13, Institution 12/6/2023. Date of hearing: 9/2/2024. Rasol Khan VS Walidad Shah etc. Notice to no 4/2.Amerdad Shah . 4 / 3 . K h e r d a d Shah.4/4.Zahid Shah. 4 / 5 . H u s a i n Shah.4/6.Mohmad Imran sons Yaqoob Khan (late).4/10 .Dilfaraza s/o Yaqoob Khan resident of Batai teshel Gadezai district Buner Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 9/2/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



In brief

Female umpires induction course

PESHAWAR (APP): The four-day female umpire's induction course will take place at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore from Saturday. The PCB received applications from aspirants in December 2023 as per the criteria where a minimum of intermediate education was mandatory for applicants, except for international players, while the age bracket was kept between 28 to 40 years. Member of ICC's Elite panel of Umpires, Ahsan Raza and PCB's International Umpire Asif Yaqoob will be the instructors of this course. The candidates will be required to undergo a three-day basic training course initially and on the fourth day, a written test, a fitness test and interviews will be conducted. Successful candidates will be inducted into the PCB Female Panel of Umpires for the next domestic cricket season, which will allow them to officiate Region, District and Club level matches.

Israel ice hockey team barred

JERUSALEM (Agencies): The Israel ice hockey team have been barred from taking part in international competitions, the sport's governing body said late on Wednesday, citing safety concerns. The International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) stated that it "has decided to restrict the Israeli National Team from participating in IIHF Championships until the safety and well-being of all participants, (including Israeli participants), can be assured." Hamas fighters killed 1,200 Israelis on Oct. 7 in the deadliest Palestinian militant attack in Israel's history, prompting an Israeli retaliatory ground and air offensive. Three months of Israeli bombardment has killed more than 23,000 people, according to Gaza health authorities. Last year, the IIHF used similar safety and security language to justify its decision to suspend all Russian and Belarusian national teams and clubs from participating in international events across every age category following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. The Ice Hockey Federation of Israel was not immediately available to comment.

Elgar joins English county Essex

LONDON (AFP): Former South Africa opener Dean Elgar has joined Essex after calling time on his international career, the English county announced on Friday. Elgar ended his time as a South Africa player earlier this month after 86 Tests and over 5,000 runs for the Proteas. His final international appearance last week saw him captaining the Proteas who crashed to a seven-wicket defeat against India in Cape Town in a game that lasted just 642 balls - the shortest completed match in Test history. The left-handed batsman was an English County Championship winner with Surrey in 2018 and has also represented Somerset with whom he had been linked again this time. He will fill the void at Essex left by the retirement of former England captain Alastair Cook at the end of last season. "I'm thrilled to embark on this new chapter of my cricketing journey with Essex," Elgar said on Friday after signing a three-year contract with the team. "The club have been pushing for honours in recent years and I'm eager to contribute to further success.

Schedule for HBL PSL 9 unveiled

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The upcoming HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 will run from February 17 to March 18 with two-time champions and defending champions Lahore Qalandars taking on winners of the 2016 and 2018 editions Islamabad United in the curtain-raiser.

The marquee event will be played in four cities – Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi – with the final of the six-team tournament taking place at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on 18 March.

Over the course of the 34-match T20 tournament, Karachi will host 11 matches, including the Qualifier, two Eliminator and the final.

Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium and Rawalpindi's Pindi Cricket Stadium will each host nine matches, while fans in Multan, the city of saints, will witness five matches.

The much-anticipated contest between Lahore Qalandars and Karachi Kings will be played on 24 February and 9 March. Gaddafi Stadium will stage the 24 February contest, while National Bank Stadium will see Qalandars and Kings locking horns on 9 March.

Kings, Qalandars, Sultans and United will play five matches at their home ground, while Peshawar Zalmi will play four matches at the Pindi Cricket Stadium.

Quetta Gladiators will play three matches each in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi, while they will play one match at the Multan Cricket Stadium against the home side Sultans on 25 February.

Like the previous edition, the forthcoming HBL PSL 9 will take place in two legs with Multan Cricket Stadium and Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium hosting 14 matches between them from 17 to 27 February.

The cricketing action will then move to Rawalpindi's Pindi Cricket Stadium and Karachi's National Bank Stadium, where 16 matches will be played from 28 February to 12 March. The tournament will then move to Karachi in its entirety for the playoffs.

Chair of PCB Management Committee, Mr Zaka Ashraf: "We are thrilled to announce that the HBL Pakistan Super League's ninth edition is set to kick off on February 17, showcasing the best of T20 cricket in four cities across Pakistan.

"The decision to host the marquee event across these cities is a testament to our commitment to bring top-notch cricket to fans across the country.

"We believe that hosting matches in these venues not only adds to the excitement for fans but also promotes cricket at the grassroots level.

"As we gear up for this spectacular event, we look forward to witnessing thrilling action and creating unforgettable moments for cricket enthusiasts worldwide."

Schedule of PSL 9 Matches

February 17, 2024 Lahore Qalandars v Islamabad United, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore

February 18, 2024 Quetta Gladiators v Peshawar Zalmi, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore; Multan Sultans v Karachi Kings, Multan Cricket Stadium

February 19, 2024 Lahore Qalandars v Quetta Gladiators, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore

February 20, 2024 Multan Sultans v Islamabad United, Multan Cricket Stadium

February 21, 2024 Peshawar Zalmi v Karachi Kings, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore; Multan Sultans v Lahore Qalandars, Multan Cricket Stadium

February 22, 2024 Quetta Gladiators v Islamabad United, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore

February 23, 2024 Multan Sultans v Peshawar Zalmi, Multan Cricket Stadium

February 24, 2024 Lahore Qalandars v Karachi Kings, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore

February 25, 2024 Multan Sultans v Quetta Gladiators, Multan Cricket Stadium; Lahore Qalandars v Peshawar Zalmi, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore

February 26, 2024 Peshawar Zalmi v Islamabad United, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore

February 27, 2024 Lahore Qalandars v Multan Sultans, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore

February 28, 2024 Karachi Kings v Islamabad United, National Bank Stadium

February 29, 2024 Karachi Kings v Quetta Gladiators, National Bank Stadium

March 2, 2024 Peshawar Zalmi v Lahore Qalandars, Pindi Cricket Stadium; Islamabad United v Quetta Gladiators, Pindi Cricket Stadium

March 3, 2024 Karachi Kings v Multan Sultans, National Bank Stadium

March 4, 2024 Islamabad United v Peshawar Zalmi, Pindi Cricket Stadium

March 5, 2024 Peshawar Zalmi v Multan Sultans, Pindi Cricket Stadium

March 6, 2024 Quetta Gladiators v Karachi Kings, Pindi Cricket Stadium; Islamabad United v Lahore Qalandars, Pindi Cricket Stadium

March 7, 2024 Islamabad United v Karachi Kings, Pindi Cricket Stadium

March 8, 2024 Peshawar Zalmi v Quetta Gladiators, Pindi Cricket Stadium

March 9, 2024 Karachi Kings v Lahore Qalandars, National Bank Stadium

March 10, 2024 Islamabad United v Multan Sultans, Pindi Cricket Stadium; Quetta Gladiators v Lahore Qalandars, National Bank Stadium

March 11, 2024 Karachi Kings v Peshawar Zalmi, National Bank Stadium

March 12, 2024 Quetta Gladiators v Multan Sultans, National Bank Stadium

March 14, 2024 Qualifier (1 v 2), National Bank Stadium

March 15, 2024 Eliminator 1 (3 v 4), National Bank Stadium

March 16, 2024 Eliminator 2 (Eliminator Winner v Qualifier Runner-up), National Bank Stadium

March 18, 2024 Final, National Bank Stadium.

PG, University of Peshawar wins overall Inter-College Boys Games trophy

PESHAWAR (APP): Post Graduate Department University of Peshawar clinched the overall general trophy of the Inter-College Degree Boys Games organized by the Directorate University of Peshawar here at different venues.

Former World Champion and legendary Qamar Zaman, former Pakistan volleyball team skipper Abdur Rahim, Deputy Director Higher Education Department Arshad Hussain, President Sports Committee and Principal Govt Post Graduate College Koi Sher Haider, Bara, Khyber District Professor Dr. Faizullah Khan, Director Admin University of Peshawar Gohar Rehman, Professor Dr. Abdur Rashid Anwar, Prof. Noor Sher Afridi, Professor Sabdar Khan, officials and players were also present.

Post Graduate Department University of Peshawar secured 38 points and won the overall trophy while Muhammad Danial of Post Graduate Department University of Peshawar was declared the best athlete by securing 40 points.

In Badminton PG UoP won first position, followed by PEF Post Graduate College got the second position while Government Superior Science College Peshawar got the third position. In Basketball, GCP won gold medals, followed by PG, University of Peshawar, and Pakistan Forest Institute Peshawar.

In cricket GCP won the gold medal, followed by PG Commerce College and PG UoP, in football Post Graduate College Landikotal got the gold medal, followed by PG UoP and

GCP. In Table Tennis, Edwards College took gold medal, followed by PG UOP and GCP, in volleyball GCP won gold medal, follow Govt College Matarra Village and PG UoP and in the Athletic PG UoP of Peshawar won the winner trophy, followed by PEF Postgraduate College Arbab Roadand Govt Superior Science College Peshawar.

A total of 32 teams of colleges participated in the Inter-College Games. Squash legend Qamar Zaman was the chief guest along with former captain of Pakistan volleyball team and current coach and chief selector Abdul Rahim, Deputy Director of Sports Higher Education Department Arshad Hussain, President of Sports Committee and Principal of Government College Kohi Sher Hyder Bara

Faizullah. DPE Safdar Hussain of various colleges including Director of Sports Peshawar University, Dr. Rashid Anwar and other sports in-charges and a large number of players were present. The trophy of the biggest athletes event was also won by the Post Graduate Department University of Peshawar with 72 points. President Sports Committee Professor Faizullah, squash legend Qamar Zaman and former volleyball captain Abdul Rahim highlighted the importance of sports in their addresses and said that there is no shortcut to become a champion, players can only become champions through hard work.

"If everyone works day and night, they will surely get their reward," Qamar Zaman said. Abdul Rahim Khan said that

there is no dearth of volleyball talent but such need to be proper guidelines and facilities. He also thanked University of Peshawar and Higher Education Commission Islamabad for giving funds to the under construction international standard gymnasium with all indoor Games facilities including Volleyball. He said in the National Junior and Senior Volleyball teams out of 12 players each of the team, 11 players each are from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which speaks the truth about the talent that we have in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

At the end, trophies and cash prizes were distributed among the winners, runners and third position holders while the guests were awarded with special souvenirs of the University of Peshawar.

Southee hits milestone with 151 wickets as NZ beat Pak

AUCKLAND (AFP): Tim Southee became the first player to 150 wickets in Twenty20 internationals, leading New Zealand's "nasty fasties" to a 46-run win over Pakistan in their series opener in Auckland.

Veteran seam bowler Southee claimed four wickets to pass the milestone and help dismiss the tourists for 180 in the 18th over in response to New Zealand's imposing 226-8, handing them first blood in the five-match series.

Southee's figures of 4-25 were the best of a run-dominated encounter at Eden Park and took him to 151 wickets in T20 internationals, 11 more than Bangladesh spinner Shakib Al Hasan.

He finished the job as Pakistan's run chase capitulated after Babar Azam fell in the 17th over, with the former captain having accelerated to 57 off 35 balls to keep his side in contention.

There were starts for openers Saim Ayub (27) and Mohammad Rizwan (25) but Azam struggled to find support from his team-



Tim Southee celebrates the wicket of Mohammad Rizwan.

mates before being caught at cover by captain Kane Williamson off Ben Sears' bowling.

Williamson said Southee's value across a 16-year career couldn't be understated. "Tim has been around for a long time and this is a credit to his consistent performances over a long period," he said.

"But he also adds so

much as a leader in our environment — a calm head and it's pretty good to have him out there with some young nasty fasties."

New Zealand's boundary-laden innings was the highest Pakistan had conceded in a T20, surpassing the 221-3 England scored in Karachi in 2022.

Daryl Mitchell blasted

Williamson was dropped twice as he scored 57 off 42.

New Zealand built on an explosive start from opener Finn Allen (34), who struck 24 runs off the third over, bowled by Pakistan captain Shaheen Shah Afridi.

Pakistan's new-look attack struggled to protect the ground's notoriously short boundaries, conceding 21 fours and 11 sixes.

Seamer Abbas Afridi impressed in his first international appearance in any format with 3-34 off four overs, although fellow-debutant Usama Mir had his leg spin attacked by Mitchell in particular and finished with 0-51.

Shaheen, who took 3-46, led Pakistan for the first time after Babar forfeited the captaincy in the wake of their failure to make last year's 50-over Cricket World Cup semifinals.

Shaheen said improvements will be necessary ahead of the second match in Hamilton on Sunday.

"We only have a short time. As a bowling unit, we have to improve and use our variations at the right times," he said.

"Kane Williamson and Mitchell played very well but there were mis-fires in the middle overs. We have to grab those catches and as a fielding unit we need to do better."

New Zealand spin-bowling allrounder Mitchell Santner wasn't selected after testing positive for COVID-19 earlier in the day.

15-day KP Athletic camps begins in Kohat Sports Complex

PESHAWAR (APP): The 15-days Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Junior Athletic training and coaching camp got under way at beautiful Kohat Sports Complex under the aegis of Directorate General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wherein a total of 25 athletes will through rigorous training.

This was stated by Head Coach Directorate of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Abid Afridi while talking to media men here on Friday. He said the 15-day camps was formally inaugurated by Regional Sports Officer Kohat Sajid Khan Afridi at Kohat Sports Complex.

He said, at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Junior Athletics Camp all the 25 short-listed athletes would be provided modern-day coaching and training under qualified coaches. It has been done for the athletes who have performed prominently in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Youth Athletics Championship held from December 2 to December 6, 2023. He said that all the facilities are being provided to the athletes in the camp so that they can represent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the national team. He said that Senior coach Jafar Shah also visited the coaching and training camp.

During his visit to the camp, Jaffar Shah said that the best players will be selected from this camp for the National Junior and Senior Athletic Meets. Abid Afridi said that this camp will continue for 15 days and accommodation as well as diet and food has been arranged for the players and it is hoped that the best players would be selected who will perform well while representing the province at the national and international levels.

He said that according to the instructions of Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Abdul Nasir Khan Mohmand, this camp has been organized in which not only the players of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but also the adjoining merged districts have been included.

Abid Afridi said that in the first phase, 25 Athletes have been selected, among the prominent athletes comprising Anisur Rahman in 400 meters from Mohmand district, Muhammad Hassan in 400 meters from Charsadda district, Khabaib and Shahswar in 800 and 1500 meters from Mardan district, Shah Hussain in 100 meters from Mardan district, Abrar and Irshad in 5,000 meters from Kohat, Uzair and Faizan of Bannu district in 10,000 meters, Abu Bakr and Zaid Khan of Peshawar in 22 meters, Attaullah Khan from Nowshera in triple jump, Gibran Khan of Peshawar in javelin throw, Owais Khan of Bajaur in marathon, Arsalan of Khyber district in long jump, North Waziristan district Abranul Haq in shot put. Have been short-listed on performance basis during the recently held Junior Athletic Meet. Abid Afridi said that holding such a camp will help in strengthening the performance of the athletes besides keeping them informed.

Raducanu confident she can return to top

MELBOURNE (AFP): Former US Open champion Emma Raducanu says her level is "just too good not to come through" as she looks to get her career back on track at the Australian Open.

The British player stunned the tennis world when she triumphed at Flushing Meadows in 2021 as a qualifier but only on one other occasion has she reached the fourth round of a Grand Slam. The 21-year-old has plummeted to 299th in the world after an eight-month lay-off with ankle and wrist injuries.

But she is confident that if she can achieve consistency, she can shoot up the rankings. "Success to me in the long-term is, for the rest of the year, to play a full season, to be healthy throughout, to be able to train consistent weeks," she said on Friday.

"I know my level is there, I just need to keep working on it to make it more consistent. "I think that will come with time in the gym, time on court, being able to play the calen-

dar, not thinking 'Will I have to pull out from this one? Does that hurt?'

Just being able to go consistently throughout the year.

"I think my level, to be honest, is just too good not to come through if I put consistent work together."

Raducanu, who has been criticised for chopping and changing her coaching team, has reunited with childhood coach Nick Cavaday as she prepares for her opening match in Melbourne against American Shelby Rogers.

She was asked whether she would do things differently in the future.

"Reflecting on the past, I think people are very important, like the people who I surround myself with is maybe sometimes even more so," she said. "I think surrounding yourself with competent and knowledgeable people is of course really important, but also the type of person and their character is big-time, just making sure we really get on and intentions are really good."

Warner arrives at SCG via helicopter for Big Bash match

SYDNEY (Agencies): David Warner flew by helicopter and landed in the middle of the Sydney Cricket Ground as he dashed from his brother's wedding to play in the Big Bash for the Sydney Thunder.

The 37-year-old, who retired from Test cricket at the same ground last week, flew 45 minutes from the Hunter Valley to face city rivals the Sixers. Warner scored 37 with two sixes but the Thunder fell to a 19-run defeat.

"I've done my utmost best to get down here," Warner said.

Speaking before the game, he told Australia's Channel 7: "I might look like a bit of a goose if I don't get any runs but it's my contribution to not just the BBL but Australian cricket."

The Sixers were put into bat first in front of the sell-out crowd and Steve Smith, who has replaced Warner as Australia's opening batter, was bowled for a golden duck.

They eventually posted 151 runs, with the Thunder then bowled out for 132.



In brief

Police net 12 lawbreakers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other lawbreakers here on Friday arrested 12 accused besides recovering over three kg charras, 25 litres liquor, two 30 bore pistols, a 9mm pistol, ammunition and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Rawat, City, Rattaamral, Pirwadhai, Bani, and Kalar Syedan police conducted raids in their respective jurisdiction and netted Mobeen, Ahsan Aslam, Hamza Bashir, Adil, Saeed, Sadaqat, Jan Nazir, Abdul Wahab, and Mazhar Iqbal and recovered over three kg charras and 25 litres liquor. New Town, Pirwadhai and Airport police arrested Yasin, Shehzad and Sohail and recovered two 30-bore pistols, a 9mm pistol and ammunition from their possession. Meanwhile, Rawalpindi District Police have registered 66 FIRs against underage drivers during the last 24 hours. A police spokesman informed that police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were taking action in accordance with the law against underage drivers.

Ahmed Faraz remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 93rd birth anniversary of renowned poet Ahmad Faraz was observed on Friday. He was born on January 12, 1931, in Kohat as Syed Ahmad Shah. He started writing poetry with the name of Ahmad Shah Kohati but later adopted the name Ahmad Faraz with the advice of the legendary Faiz Ahmed Faiz. His first collection of poetry "Tanha Tanha" was published when he was in graduation. Faraz added many colours to Urdu language with his poetry. Ahmed Faraz is ranked among the greatest Urdu poets of the current era because of his elegant yet simple poetry. Faraz was conferred numerous awards, including the Adam Jee Literary Award, Sitara-e-Imtiaz, and Hilal-e-Imtiaz, by the government of Pakistan in recognition of his literary contributions to the Urdu language. Ahmad Faraz passed away on August 25, 2008, and he was buried in Islamabad.

AIOU aims to enroll maximum students

ISLAMABAD (APP): Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has issued guidelines to assist students with the upcoming admissions for the spring semester of 2024. The vice chancellor has instructed regional heads to spread awareness about free matriculation education for students from Balochistan, Gilgit Baltistan, and merged districts (previously known as FATA) to encourage the enrollment of maximum out-of-school children in the matriculation program. He has directed regional heads to ensure that admission awareness reaches every interested individual so that they can take advantage of this opportunity to continue their education. Dr. Nasir has approved the establishment of prospectus sale points at the Union Council level across the country to ensure the availability of matriculation and FA programs prospectus and admission forms at the nearest places to the students. As per the instructions of VC, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, the regional offices have set up the facility centers on the campuses and alerted the SWIFT centers established across the country to support and guide the students.



ISLAMABAD: Students visiting Annual Exhibition titled "Enchanted World of Art and Creativity" at FG College of Home Economics & Management Sciences F-II.

‘Kashmir Consultative Committees to raise awareness at grassroots level’

RAWALPINDI (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, on Friday, said that the primary objective of the district-level consultative committees was to address the Kashmir issue at the grassroots level for comprehensive understanding, engagement with the community and to create a platform for meaningful discussions, advocacy, and actions that resonate with the local population.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the Rawalpindi District-level Kashmir Consultative Committee, she highlighted the significance of such meetings and emphasized that similar gatherings would be organized in various districts.

Mullick announced that

the inaugural sessions of the District-level Kashmir Consultative Committees in Lahore, Faisalabad, and Gujranwala were in the preparation phase and would be convened shortly. She further said that District-level Committees comprise intellectuals spanning various age groups and diverse backgrounds. Mushaal emphasized that these gatherings would play a pivotal role in organizing and propagating the Kashmir cause at the grassroots level. She underscored that Kashmir stood as a symbol of unity for Pakistan, transcending diverse beliefs and affiliations.

The SAPM further said that people from all walks of life hold profound reverence for the Kashmir cause, and through these district-level consultations, the aim was to solidify this unity further. She urged students

and academics to contribute by writing articles, research papers, and essays on the Jammu and Kashmir issue to raise local and global awareness.

She expressed her commitment to personally lead door-to-door campaigns to unite people for the Kashmir cause and promote collective efforts to advocate for justice and the rights of the oppressed people of IOJK.

Mushaal voiced deep concern over the ongoing demographic changes being implemented by India in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). She highlighted the persecution faced by peaceful leaders of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and emphasized that such actions were intended to demoralize the Kashmiri people.

Rainfed areas to remain under water stress conditions due to lack of rain: PMD

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Friday said that the rainfed areas will remain under water stress conditions next week due to persistent dry and cold weather conditions, advising the citizens to use water judiciously.

The PMD, in its advisory, informed that due to stable weather conditions, cold and dry weather is expected in most parts of the country during the next week. Very cold weather

conditions are likely to continue in plains of Punjab during the next week.

Dense foggy conditions are also likely to continue in plain areas of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and upper Sindh in patches. Frost is also expected to occur in upper parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pothohar region including Islamabad and Kashmir.

Light rain with light snowfall over the mountains is expected in Chitral and Gilgit-Baltistan on January

13, January 16 and 17. The PMD has also termed the rumours on social media regarding snowfall in plains of Punjab as baseless and urged the public to ignore fake information. About the impacts, the PMD said that the rainfed areas will remain under water stress conditions so the general public is advised to use the water judiciously. Due to foggy conditions in plain areas, day temperatures are likely to remain 04 to 06 degrees Celsius below normal.

ANF recovers 57 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 57 kg of drugs and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that a 2.3 kg Ice drug was recovered from a Bahrain-bound passenger going by Flight No. EK-613 at Islamabad Airport. 1.40

kg of Ice was recovered from a passenger travelling to Doha on Flight No. QR-601 at Bacha Khan Airport. 91 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger's stomach at Islamabad Airport. The accused was leaving for Sharjah by flight number PK-257. 45 kg heroin was recovered near GT Road Bupi area from the possession of two Afghan nationals

arrested during an operation.

A 5 kg crystal drug was recovered near Lakpass Toll Plaza Quetta and two accused were rounded up.

In the sixth operation, 3 kg of hashish was recovered from three suspects near Hayatabad Peshawar. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

Islamabad police enhances security measures in red zone

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad police have implemented enhanced security measures in the high security zone and directed officials to remain vigilant during their shifts, keeping a close eye on suspicious vehicles and individuals.

In a recent directive, ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan emphasized the need for a proactive approach to ensure the safety of pivotal government and private establishments, diplomatic missions, and other vital assets situated within the high security zone. The directive called for a meticulous focus on effective security protocols to swiftly address any untoward incidents.

SP High Security Zone, Saud Khan, led a crucial meeting with police officers and representatives from various government and private institutions operating within the Red Zone. During the meeting, attendees were briefed on the importance of upholding the highest standards of diligence and professionalism in their duties.

Security personnel assigned to the Red Zone were specifically instructed to

remain vigilant during their shifts, keeping a close eye on suspicious vehicles and individuals. The aim is to fortify the security apparatus, ensuring a rapid response to any potential security threats.

SP High Security Zone emphasized the significance of fostering positive relationships with citizens and encouraged security personnel to engage with the community. A special appeal was made to the public, urging them to report any perceived suspicious activity or individuals promptly. The designated helpline "Pukar-15" is available for citizens to communicate any security concerns.

These proactive security measures underscore the commitment of Islamabad Capital City Police to safeguarding the High Security Zone and maintaining the overall security and well-being of the capital city. The concerted efforts of law enforcement and the cooperation of the public are essential in creating a secure environment for all residents and stakeholders in the Red Zone.

Singer, actor Inayat Hussain Bhatti remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The illustrious singer and actor Inayat Hussain Bhatti was fondly remembered as his 96th birth anniversary was commemorated on Friday.

According to private news channel, Inayat Hussain Bhatti was born on January 12, 1928, in Gujrat and his remarkable journey unfolded as he ventured to Lahore in pursuit of higher education. His musical journey commenced when he began singing for Radio Pakistan, marking the genesis of an extraordinary career. In 1949, fate smiled upon him when composer Ghulam Ahmed Chishti recognized his talent, offering him a chance to record songs for producer-director Nazir Ahmed Khan's film, "Pheryar." After this film's popularity, Bhatti became a celebrity almost overnight. Subsequently, he was cast in the lead role in Nazir's Punjabi film "Heer" in 1955.

Inayat Hussain Bhatti wasn't just a singing sensation; he was a polymath – an actor, director, author, social leader, columnist, and a religious scholar. His deep-rooted interest in Sufi poetry, cultivated since childhood, added another layer to his artistic persona. With a mellifluous voice, he lent his vocals to nearly 500 films in both Urdu and Punjabi, amassing an impressive discography of 2,500 songs.

Six dacoits killed in two police encounters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Six dacoits were killed here as a result of heavy cross-firing during two police encounters in the jurisdiction of Race Course and Morgah Police Stations, said a police spokesman.

He informed that Rawalpindi District Police on Thursday in an important action in the case of the murder of a British citizen during a robbery three days ago, succeeded to kill four dacoits, members of an inter-provincial gang who were involved in the incident. According to details, the dacoits opened firing on the police party in the Race Course area late on Thursday night and during cross-firing, four were killed. The suspects had shot dead a citizen namely Tasaraf Mehmood on his return from the UK in the Race Course area.

‘Global Health Security Summit’ concludes successfully, projected positive image of Pakistan globally: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan Friday congratulated nation over the successful conclusion of Global health Security summit with participation of more than 70 countries leading health experts and diplomats which has projected the Pakistan's image positively.

Talking to a Private news channel, minister said that Pakistan has initiated a platform to boost the health system strongly and it would provide a regular platform for nations to review progress, share insights, and discuss emerging health challenges on a global scale.

He said that this health summit forum will also boost the confidence of world for Pakistan's health system, adding, Pakistan has a capable pharmacy workforce whom we can export and utilize for other countries in time of any Pandemic like situa-

tion. Collaborative efforts of policy makers, experts, policymakers, and stakeholders from around the world will further improve the health systems of poor countries, he added.

He emphasized the need for continued collaboration, and the implementation of evidence-based strategies to safeguard global health.

He said the moot had served as a great opportunity of bringing together international and national experts to share expertise and knowledge for a safer world.

Dr Nadeem Jan said holding of the international conference had proved that the country could play a key role in the health sector and it also sustained the dignity of Pakistan globally. The summit symbolized unwavering commitment to furthering a safer world, where health security knew no borders, he added.

Pakistan to be connected with high-speed ‘optical fiber network soon

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) Additional Secretary Aisha Humera Chaudhry Friday said that the government is all set to launch a landmark project 'optical fibre' to improve broadband connectivity and to boost deployment of digital infrastructure across the country.

Talking to PTV news channel, she said that the government and telecom companies would strengthen urban and remote areas with high-speed broadband connectivity, adding, that all available resources and facilities were being provided for the digital gateway initiative.

She said the govern-

ment was striving hard to ensure the availability of affordable high-speed Internet service to the citizens, particularly the students, and for that purpose, it was focusing on laying 'optical fibre' across the country. She further mentioned that the Ministry of IT and Telecom is fully cooperating with the telecom industry. Replying to a query, she highlighted that said that the provision of broadband services to the residents of the un-served and under-served areas of Pakistan is as much needed as for the big cities.

By increasing the optical fibre cable, the connectivity will be faster, and better internet facilities will be provided to the users, she added.

To another question about the E-rozgar program, she explained that the government has been setting up 10,000 'e-Rozgar centres' across the country to provide workspace for the country's budding freelancing community, announced the interim minister for IT and Telecom. She said that Pakistan's IT experts were giving their services in other 190 countries, adding, that over 1.5 million persons in Pakistan are working as online freelancers, making it the second biggest online workforce in the world. The government will provide interest-free loans to the private sector to convert real estate into co-working spaces i.e. e-Rozgar centres, she added.

Ijaz ul Haq for fair, transparent general elections

RAWALPINDI (APP): Head of the National Solidarity Alliance and Pakistan Muslim League, Zia (PML-Z), Ijaz ul Haq here on Friday said that the general elections should be fair and transparent.

Addressing a press conference along with Abdullah Gul, Ijaz ul Haq said considering the current situation, the National Solidarity Alliance was established.

He said, "We are inviting all the political parties to join the National Solidarity Alliance as there will be no improvement until all political parties join the charter of Pakistan."

He informed that he met with Pir Pagara, MQM, Sunni Tehreek, and other parties in Karachi. "Soon I will meet with the leaders of other parties including Jamaat-e-Islami," he said.

About 20 electable candidates were also contacted and the political situa-

tion was discussed with them, he said and informed, "They all are ready to join us." "Usman Buzdar, Abdullah Gul, Nawab of Bahawalpur, and several others are with us," he added. "We are prepared for the February 8 elections," he said.

Ijaz ul Haq said that foreign investors want continuity of the policies in Pakistan. The ideological politics is the need of the country and the time, he said adding, "We will end the polarization in the country." Abdullah Gul on the occasion said that efforts should be made to further strengthen the national unity which is the need of the hour.

The religious parties want to join such an alliance, which could bring forward the right-wing face, he added. He said that before March 2022, PTI representatives were being rescued from their constituencies by police. Abdullah Gul

informed that Tehreek Jawanaan Pakistan had issued tickets for around 70 national and provincial assembly seats.

Youth has a great role in the country, he said adding, that the nation wants a new face and unity. In the coming days, this alliance would emerge as the force of the right-wing, he added.

There is a need to strengthen the country against terrorism, Abdullah Gul said and added, "We will fight against poverty and terrorism."

"We will make efforts to end the division in the nation and make Pakistan one nation. Information Technology business will be promoted in the country to end unemployment," he added.

He demanded that those involved in the May 9 incidents should be brought to justice as without it, holding a free and fair election would be difficult.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of Motorcyclists crossing the bridge at Srinagar Highway in the Federal Capital.

Afghan businessman to invest \$10B

KABUL (Agencies): Mirwais Azizi, an Afghan businessman, during his trip to Herat province said that he will invest \$10 billion dollars in the energy and railway sectors in Afghanistan in the coming days. Azizi said that the opportunity to invest in the country has been provided and thousands of young people will be given job opportunities by launching large projects. Mirwais Azizi, head of Azizi foundation, said: "I want to invest \$10 billion in this country in the near future, and this is a very big investment."

Human rights watch

KABUL (Agencies): Human Rights Watch has released a new report stating that the Taliban has intensified and expanded its suppression of human rights, particularly women's rights, in Afghanistan. Tirana Hassan, the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, stated in this report that 2023 was a year of widespread human rights abuses and war crimes globally. She also mentioned signs of hope indicating the possibility of a different path.

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

US envoys for Afghanistan briefed house foreign affairs committee



KABUL (Agencies): Two top US envoys on Thursday briefed the House Foreign Affairs Committee of the US regarding President Joe Biden's policy of Afghanistan. Special envoy Thomas West told the House Foreign Affairs Committee that al -Qaeda's ability to threaten the United States from Afghanistan or Pakistan is at a low point since the group relocated to Afghanistan from Sudan in 1996. "Al-Qaeda's low capability is the result of successful counterterrorism action by the United States and its allies over 20 years," he said. "The Taliban's sheltering of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in a safe house in Kabul was a flagrant violation of their security commitments."

Washington assesses that the "Taliban have undertaken efforts to fulfill their security commitments with regard to al-Qaeda." He also pointed out other "terrorist groups" in Afghanistan, saying that Daesh Khorasan's capabilities and intent concern Washington the most. "The Taliban have waged an aggressive campaign against... [Daesh] which has taken out senior attack plotters, including the architect of the August 26, 2021 Abbey Gate attacks, and degraded... [Daesh] external operations capabilities," he said. "The Islamic Emirate's spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, said that there is no group in the country that has roots abroad. "There is no group in Afghanistan which belongs to (entities) abroad. The

Islamic Emirate is committed to its pledge to not allow Afghan soil to be used against others," he said. He also downplayed the threats posed by Daesh, saying that its threats have dropped to zero. Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls, and Human Rights, Rina Amiri, expressed concerns over increasing restrictions in human rights, freedom of speech and women and girls. "In the last two years, the human rights situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated severely. Many former government officials, security force members, and those suspected of ties to the resistance face serious risks; members of ethnic and religious minority communities and any who oppose and openly express disagreement with the Taliban's interpretation of

religious law are relentlessly exposed to threats and violence; media freedom has been sharply curtailed, and other vulnerable groups struggle in the face of widespread discrimination and persecution by the Taliban," she said. "Restrictions against women and girls have been the most calamitous. The Taliban have systemically targeted Afghan women and girls with more than 50 discriminatory edicts. There is no indication this will subside. They have attempted to erase Afghan women and girls from society, banning women and girls from accessing education beyond the primary level, prohibiting women's employment in most sectors, restricting their freedom of movement, and effectively removing them from public spaces. Those who raise their voices to protest or resist risk harassment, detention, and violence." She said that the US in coordination with our partners and allies, have repeatedly made clear to the "Taliban" that Washington "will not support steps towards normalization unless the rights of Afghan women and girls – and indeed, all Afghans – are respected." "Their extreme policies are opposed by Afghans and run counter to international norms," she said. Amiri said that they are working with partners including Western countries and Muslim majority countries to form a global effort to support the rights of Afghan women and girls.

Deputy PM discusses Afghanistan's engagement with UK charge d'Affaires

KABUL (TOLONews): Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, Mawlaw Abdul Kabir, met with the Charge d'Affaires of the UK Mission to Afghanistan, Robert Chatterton Dickson, and stated that the Islamic Emirate wants to have positive engagement with the world, particularly the UK, according to a statement of the Arg. The statement quoted Chatterton Dickson as saying that Britain wants to connect Afghanistan with the world. "As the UK expressed readiness to have good relations with the Islamic Emirate and to mediate between the Islamic Emirate and international community, it is a good word for the people of the two countries," said Hassan Haqyarz, a political analyst. Prior to Mawlawi Kabir, deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai met with



Chatterton Dickson, where he stated that the Islamic Emirate wants to negotiate and engage with all countries. "It is good that these visits happen because they come and talk about their assessment of Afghanistan

based on the realities here and also brief them [Islamic Emirate officials] on what the international community wants," said Ajmal Zurmati, a political analyst. "As long as the girls' schools are not open and the

rights of women are not observed, I don't think the western countries will come forward for engagement so easily," said Bilal Fatimi, a political analyst. No country has formally recognized the Islamic Emirate since it came to power.

Qosh Tapa canal to be funded by coal revenue



KABUL (TOLONews): Authorities in the National Development Company (NDC) say that the revenue obtained from the Balkhab District's coal in Sar-e-pul province is being spent on the construction of the Qosh Tapa canal. Abdul Rahman Attash, CEO of NDC, says that after the responsibility of the Balkhab District's coal mine was entrusted to this company, the extraction by the public has been prohibited. The Balkhab District of Sar-e-pul, which is covered with mountains and valleys, has abundant and high-quality coal mines. Until last year, the mines of the Balkhab basin were being extracted by residents and were at risk of collapses;

however, after the responsibility of the extraction of this mine was entrusted to the NDC by the Islamic Emirate, any kind of mining by the people has been prohibited. At the same time, several Balkhab residents complain about unemployment and lack of health utilities and ask the authorities to address their problem. "The extraction of mines has stopped, unemployment has increased and even people go abroad," Mirza Hasan, a resident of Balkhab, told TOLONews. Abdul Rahman Attash, CEO of the National Development Company, said that efforts to expand the exploration, extraction, and loading of the Balkhab

coal mine continue and in the future, most professional workers from this district will be employed for the extraction of coal. Abdul Rahman Attash also said that a road construction project is ongoing in several parts of Balkhab by the NDC and in this project some of the residents of the Balkhab have been appointed. "Inshallah, the work of the people will start in the near future, which will be legal and also will continue technically on the standards of the mines," he added. On the other hand, the Ministry of Finance emphasized that a part of the Islamic Emirate's budget is provided from the extraction and export of coal.

"We have exported 1.6 million tons worth 22 billion dollars of coal to Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Germany in 2023," said Ahmad Wali Haqmal, the spokesman of the Ministry of Finance. "Our coal has a belt that starts from Badakhshan and ends in Herat, and the length of this belt is more than seven hundred kilometers," said Shahabuddin Delawar, the Minister of Mines and Petroleum. The Balkhab district in Sar-e-pul province has over 130,000 inhabitants and most of them are busy with gardening and livestock. Based on the latest information, there are one and a half billion tons of coal in the mountains of Balkhab in Sar-e-pul district.

'No promise made to grant visas, residence permits to Afghans'

KABUL (TOLONews): Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on Thursday said that no promise was made to grant visas and residence permits to Afghan migrants, Anadolu Agency reported. Fidan's remarks came in response to a parliamentary question by Deniz Demir, Ankara deputy of Türkiye's main opposition, the Republican People's Party (CHP). The question concerned allegations that "legalization of Afghan migrants and work visas for Afghans" were discussed during a meeting between the Islamic Emirate's acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Khalil-ur-Rahman Haqqani, and Cenk Unal, Chargé d'Affaires and Head of Mission of the Turkish Embassy in Kabul, Anadolu Agency cited.



The foreign minister said it was a regular meeting between Unal and members of the Taliban-led interim administration. "The issues of combating irregular migration

originating from Afghanistan and, in this context, the return of irregular Afghan migrants in our country were discussed during the meeting," he said as quoted by

Anadolu Agency. Fidan underlined that Turkish missions and embassies are not in the practice of announcing meetings with the country's authorities.

Iran offers plan to solve Afghanistan's issues

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran has proposed a four-point plan for the purpose of solving the Afghanistan issue and trying to accelerate the country's participation in the international mechanism, and has called Afghanistan's regional environment and its neighborhood the gateway to the world community. This four-point plan

includes efforts to accelerate the country's participation in the international mechanism, strengthen consultation with neighboring countries, the formation and success of a specific government from different sections of the Afghan society, and the gateway of Afghanistan to the international community of neighboring countries and the region. Iran's four-point plan to

solve the Afghanistan issue is as follows: The need to resolve the issue of Afghanistan and the effort to speed up the participation of this country in the international charter mechanism with neighboring countries should be strengthened. Failure to succeed in the upcoming test will have devastating effects on international peace and security.

Afghanistan's gateway to the world community is its regional environment and neighborhood. Opening of new cases without organizing the rooted issues of the past and the formation and success of a certain government from the different strata of the Afghan society, and the role of all strata in interacting with the world constructively. "The issue of governance and the creation of the government is related to the nation of Afghanistan. The countries that have plans should manage the inequalities in their own country first, then provide a solution for Afghanistan," said Najuburrahman Shamal, an international relations analyst. "We should be equal in our interaction with other countries of the world and have bilateral relations," said Maceen Gul Samkanai, a political analyst. The head of the Islamic Emirate's Qatar-based Political Office welcomed offered help, but asked that existing issues not be complicated.



85% Afghans live on less than one dollar a day: UNDP

KABUL (Agencies): The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in a report said that Afghans are dealing with extreme hardship, and approximately 85 percent of them live on less than one dollar a day. The situation became markedly worse after August 2021, particularly for women, who are now facing severe restrictions that bar them from education and most jobs, the report said. It's stated in the report that the latest UNDP research indicates that the real GDP of Afghanistan has declined by 29 percent since 2020 and continues to spiral downward. The restrictions on women's rights alone are estimated to have caused an economic loss between US\$600 million and \$1 billion. According to the report, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Programme Director, Kanni Wignaraja, said: "We focus



on direct support to women-owned businesses, job creation, basic social services, renewable energy and disaster risk management to keep local economies running, ensure food and energy security, improve people's wellbeing and protect them from disasters." Meanwhile, the World Food Programme (WFP) said that one in three Afghans do not know where their next meal will come from. The World Food Programme (WFP) in a report said that it urgently needs \$670 million to reach

15.2 million men, women and children with lifesaving food, nutrition, and livelihood support. Stéphane Dujarric, spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, said: "WFP warns that every province in the country is currently in crisis or worse levels of food insecurity. Previously, large-scale and sustained donor contributions helped carry millions of Afghans through two difficult winters and pulled back more than 5 million people from the brink of famine."

The Ministry of Economy said that it is trying to solve the economic challenges by attracting investment and supporting domestic production and small businesses in the country. The spokesman of the Ministry of Economy, Abdul Rahman Habib, told TOLONews: "The Islamic Emirate tries to bring about employment and work opportunities and the gradual reduction of poverty through the coherence of national policies and programs." Earlier, The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), said that 23.7 million people—more than half of Afghanistan's population—will require humanitarian assistance to survive in 2024 as the country continues to reel from decades of war and grapple with climate-induced crises, recurrent natural disasters, entrenched poverty, and barriers to women's participation in public life.



ISLAMABAD: A German delegation of international food wholesaler, Metro Group, led by its CEO, Dr. Steffen Greubel, called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

PHC issues notice to ECP in contempt of court plea

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) issued notice to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in contempt of court plea and ordered for submission of reply till 16th January, on Friday.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Waqar Ahmad heard contempt of court plea filed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) against ECP for failure in compliance with the High Court orders.

According to details, ECP laying in the center of a legal battle as notices for contempt of court are issued in response to a petition filed by PTI. The court has called for responses from all parties involved, including the Election Commission, with a deadline set for January 16. The contempt petition alleges the Election Commission's failure to restore PTI's election symbol and promptly upload the certificate to its website, in violation of court orders.

Tehreek-e-Insaf contends that, despite court directives, the Election Commission has not issued the bat mark certificate to PTI, constituting contempt of court.

Simultaneously, the Election Commission of Pakistan has appealed to the Supreme Court against

granting the bat symbol to Tehreek-e-Insaf. The appeal challenges the Peshawar High Court's decision, arguing that PTI did not conduct inter-party elections under the Election Act. The Election Commission asserts that the Peshawar High Court's decision goes against the Constitution and the law, urging the annulment of the ruling.

Meanwhile ECP officials convened an important meeting in which four commission members and the special secretary in attendance. The Law Wing of the Election Commission briefed the commission on legal aspects related to the Peshawar High Court decision.

Court orders MD SNGPL for submission of reply in Gas load shedding, low pressure case: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered Managing Director (MD) Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) for submission of reply in writ plea against gas load shedding as well as low pressure in the suburbs of Peshawar, on Friday.

The writ petition filed seven elected chairmen for Local Governments of different village councils while Farhan Tariq, Mohsin Kamran Sadiq and

Muhammad Attique advocates appeared before PHC while arguing that Sui Northern Gas authorities are shutdown the provision of gas to Lala Zar, Kalakhel along with other suburbs on daily basis which had created multiple issues to the residents.

The first right on utilization of resources belongs to locals as per Article 158 of the Constitution of Pakistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is providing more gas than its consumption, the writ pleaded. Moreover, the government had closed Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) stations till 31st January but Sui Northern Gas closing in the name of load shedding and management which had compelled residents to send children to school without breakfast, the petition argued.

The counsel argued that concerned authorities are providing gas to industries at the expense of residents blatantly to create problems for domestic consumers.

The counsel Mohsin Kamran Sadiq advocate argued that PHC had declared first of all the need of consumers should be fulfilled as constitutional obligation. He argued that several applications are made before competent authorities but to no avail as well as residents load shedding and low pressure.

Achakzai withdraws from NA-265, backs Fazl

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Chairman Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) Mehmood Khan Achakzai has officially withdrawn his nomination papers from the National Assembly Constituency NA-265 on Friday. The move, made on the final day for candidate withdrawals, signals a strategic decision in favor of Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

January 12 marks the deadline for candidates to retract their nomination papers in anticipation of the general elections scheduled for February 8, as per the Election Commission's revised schedule. The Election Commission of Pakistan is set to release the final list of candidates today, following the withdrawal process.

Candidates who have submitted their papers retain the option to withdraw from the election, influencing the composition of the final candidate list. Tomorrow, the Election Commission is slated to allocate election symbols to participating candidates.

Additionally, the Election Commission has made changes to the election schedule for specific seats, particularly those reserved for women and minorities in the National and Provincial Assemblies. A recent notification stipulates the scrutiny of nomination papers for these seats until January 13, while political parties and independent candidates nationwide have until February 6 to submit their nomination papers. General elections are scheduled to take place on February 8.

Fawad remand extended

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Accountability Court of Islamabad on Friday approved a further three-day physical remand for Fawad Chaudhry, extending his custody in the ongoing case. Fawad Chaudhry was presented before judge Shahrukh Arjamand upon the completion of his initial three-day physical remand.

During the hearing, NAB (National Accountability Bureau) sought an extension for Fawad Chaudhry's physical remand, a request that the court reserved its decision on before ultimately granting the additional three days. At the previous hearing, NAB revealed that Fawad Chaudhry had already undergone a 20-day physical remand. The prosecutor further requested an additional 10 days for further investigations.

Fawad Chaudhry's lawyer raised objections during the proceedings, emphasizing that the determination of whether a case would be filed against him remains uncertain. The lawyer requested an adjournment until Accountability Court judge Muhammad Bashir, currently in Adiala Jail, becomes available.

Addressing the court, Fawad Chaudhry expressed his concerns about the ongoing proceedings, pointing out the unusual circumstance of appearing before a duty judge despite Judge Muhammad Bashir being present but not presiding over the case. The NAB prosecutor clarified that Judge Muhammad Bashir is currently in Adiala Jail and not in the office. Fawad Chaudhry contended that presenting arguments at this stage could lead to a case of discharge.

Dozens die in Israeli bombardment on Gaza

GAZA STRIP (AFP): Israeli strikes killed dozens in Gaza overnight Thursday-Friday, sources on both sides said on the 98th day of the war between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas.

An AFP journalist reported strikes and artillery shelling hit areas between the southern cities of Khan Yunis and Rafah, which is crowded with people who fled from the north. The bombardment killed at least 59 people and wounded dozens more across the besieged territory, the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said.

The Israeli army said it had killed seven "terrorists" in a strike in Khan Yunis and a further 20 in the Maghazi area to the north. AFP photographers witnessed black smoke billowing Friday morning above Rafah, where Palestinians gathered beside white body bags of the latest casualties. "Does anyone care about us? Why is everyone silent?" asked one mourner at the hospital.

Elsewhere in Rafah, resident Fayad Abu Rjeila surveyed the wreckage of a building after an Israeli strike he said had killed civilians in their homes. "They had nothing to do with anything. People who just wanted to live," he told AFP. "Why did they target them?" Israel's bombardment of Gaza has killed at least 23,469 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry.

Vowing to eliminate Hamas, Israel has carried out a relentless bombardment, alongside a ground invasion, since Hamas fighters attacked Israel on October 7. Their unprecedented attack resulted in the death of about 1,140 people in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures. The charity Oxfam International said on Thursday that the daily death toll in Gaza was higher than any other major conflict this century.

Oxfam's Sally Abi Khalil said it is "unimaginable" that the international community stands by as the killing unfolds. In northern Gaza, the World Health Organization said it had reached Gaza's largest hospital on Thursday, delivering desperately needed fuel and medical supplies.

"The team reported that Al-Shifa, previously Gaza's premier hospital, has (partially) re-established services," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X, formerly Twitter.

Meanwhile, Israel on Friday rejected as false and "grossly distorted" accusations brought by South Africa at the UN's top court that its military operation in Gaza is a state-led genocide campaign against the Palestinian population. It called on judges to dismiss South Africa's request to halt its offensive, saying to do so would leave it defenseless.

South Africa, which filed the lawsuit at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in December, asked judges in The Hague on Thursday to impose emergency measures ordering Israel to immediately halt the offensive. It said Israel's aerial and ground offensive — which has laid waste to much of the enclave and killed more than 23,000 people, according to Gaza health authorities — aimed to bring about "the destruction of the population" of Gaza.

The Israeli foreign ministry's legal adviser, Tal Becker, told the court that South Africa's interpretation of events was "grossly distorted." "If there were acts of genocide, they have been perpetrated against Israel," he said. "Hamas seeks genocide against Israel." The 1948 Genocide Convention, enacted in the wake of the mass murder of Jews in the Nazi Holocaust, defines genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."

Israel launched its war in Gaza after a cross-border rampage on Oct. 7 by militants from Hamas, which is sworn to Israel's destruction. Israeli officials said 1,200 people were killed, mainly civilians, and 240 taken hostage back to Gaza. "The appalling suffering of civilians, both Israeli and Palestinian, is first and foremost the result of Hamas' strategy," Becker said, saying that Israel had a right to defend itself.

Hamas denies Israeli allegations that its militants hide among civilians, who account for most of the casualties in Gaza. "Israel is in a war of defense against Hamas, not against

the Palestinian people," Becker said. "The key component of genocide, the intent to destroy a people in whole or in part, is totally lacking." Israel argued that this meant the court has no jurisdiction under the Genocide Convention to order it to halt its military actions in Gaza.

"This is no genocide, South Africa tells us only half the story," lawyer Malcolm Shaw said. The court is expected to rule on possible emergency measures later this month but will not rule at that time on the genocide allegations. Those proceedings could take years. The ICJ's decisions are final and without appeal, but the court has no way to enforce them. Palestinian backers with flags marched through The Hague and watched proceedings on a giant screen in front of the Peace Palace. As the Israeli delegation spoke in court, they chanted: "Liar! Liar!"

Asked what she thought of Israel's arguments that the Gaza campaign was a matter of self-defense, Neen Haijawi, a Palestinian who recently came to Netherlands said: "How can an occupier that's been oppressing people for 75 years say it's self-defense?" Israeli supporters were holding a separate gathering of family members of hostages taken by Hamas.

Israel has said South Africa was acting as a mouthpiece for Islamist Hamas, which is designated as a terrorist group by the United States, the European Union, Britain and several other nations. South Africa has rejected that accusation. Since Israeli forces started their offensive, nearly all of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been driven from their homes at least once, leading to a humanitarian catastrophe.

Post-apartheid South Africa has long advocated the Palestinian cause, a relationship forged when the African National Congress' struggle against white-minority rule was supported by Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization. "My grandfather always regarded the Palestinian struggle as the greatest moral issue of our time," Mandela Mandela, a grandson of the late South Africa president Nelson Mandela, said at a rally in support of the Palestinians in Cape Town.

Terrorist who was planning to attack Fazl, Aimal held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Friday claimed to have apprehended two terrorists of the banned organization Daesh from Peshawar, says in media reports.

The SSP operations CTD, Najam Husnain Liaquat, during the presser, claimed that the arrested terrorists were planning to target the leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Fazlur Rahman and Awami

National Party (ANP) leader Aimal Wali Khan. The SSP further revealed that the suicide bomber was identified as Adil, who allegedly took his training from the Paktia province of Afghanistan.

The police arrested a suicide bomber and a facilitator meanwhile, two suicide jackets, three hand grenades, and a pistol were recovered from the location pointed out by the arrested accused. Last year, CTD of

Punjab claimed to have arrested five women terrorists in intelligence-based operations (IBOs) from Lahore and Sheikhpura. The arrested women were said to be a part of IS.

The CTD officials arrested three of the women belonged to Lahore and two to Sheikhpura. They further said that banned books, mobile phones, weapons and cash were seized from the arrested terrorists.

Toshakhana reference against Imran, Bushra Bibi adjourned

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Accountability court Judge Muhammad Bashir on Friday conducted the hearing of Toshakhana reference against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Imran Khan and his wife Bushra bibi in Adiala Jail Rawalpindi and adjourned the hearing till Saturday.

During the hearing, PTI's lawyer requested the court to adjourn the hearing till tomorrow (Saturday) due to unavailability PTI lawyer Latif Khosa, wherein the court accepted the plea and adjourned the hearing till today without proceeding. Earlier, former premier and his wife Bushra Bibi Tuesday were indicted in the Toshakhana by

Accountability court judge Muhammad Bashir.

National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Deputy Prosecutor General Muzaffar Abbasi and Amjad Parvez appeared with seven witnesses before the court. The witnesses were Qaiser Mehmood, Binyamin, Nida Rehman, Mohammad Fahim, Azim Manzoo, Rabia Samad and Zahid Sarfaraz Azam.

Every citizen

(Continued from Page 1)

legal institution. The two judgments you referred to are regarding legal entities," CJP Isa told Advocate Khan. The PTI counsel maintained that every constitutional institution operates under the law and the Election Commission operates in accordance with the law of the Election Act.

"We have noted your objection," the CJP added. After the court met again following the break, ECP counsel Makhdoom Ali resumed his arguments. The ECP counsel contended that PTI intra-party elections were kept secret and documents submitted by the party regarding the polls were not consistent with facts.

The CJP inquired ECP counsel about the former PTI secretary general Asad Umar who quit the party following the May 9 events. "Is there any resignation of Asad Umar? Has he been expelled from PTI?" the CJP asked. However, the ECP counsel expressed ignorance saying the electoral body does not have any information regarding Umar's resignation and added that incumbent PTI's secretary general Umar Ayub signed the notification related to the PTI intra-party elections.

However, he said it's not known how Ayub became the party's secretary general. After hearing the ECP's counsel arguments, the CJP observed: "It means PTI has violated its constitution." He further asked: "Where did the intra-party elections take place? In a hotel or a cricket ground?"

The PTI counsel told the bench that the party's intra-party polls were held in a small village near Peshawar. "Why were intra-party elections held in this small village?" Justice Hilali inquired. The CJP remarked during the hearing that the members of every political party have the right to cast their vote. "If this right is taken away, it would be considered a dictatorship on a national level and would be a violation of rights," he added.

The top judge asked if the ECP is investigating all political parties like it is doing in PTI's case. At this, ECP's lawyer Makhdoom Ali maintained that all political parties have been inquired about their intra-party polls as per his knowledge.

The top judge stated that the PHC did not give any declaration that PTI's intra-party polls were in line with the laws. It just ruled that the 'bat' symbol

should be given to PTI, he added "What is the validity of the December 2 intra-party polls," CJP Isa asked. The lawyer of Babar complained that PHC didn't hear him nor make him a party in the case.

The counsel said that Babar is a founding member of PTI and has been a member instead of joining another political party, but he wasn't allowed to participate in the intra-party polls. At this, the court asked for evidence of Babar being a founding member of PTI and sought a copy of the PHC's written order. Meanwhile, the ECP lawyer said that the PHC didn't issue notice to the attorney general, which is a mandatory practice in case of a constitutional matter. The high court didn't hear several parties, he added.

At this point, ECP lawyer wrapped up his arguments. Then, the CJP remarked: "Whether anyone wants or not, but we want elections conducted in the country." "PTI will have to face consequences if intra-party polls are not correct," CJP Isa said before adjourning the hearing till 10am tomorrow (Saturday). PTI lawyer Hamid will begin his arguments upon the resumption of hearing on Saturday morning.

Q-League, PML-N fail to reach deal

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The PML (Q), also known as Q-League, has abruptly called off seat adjustment talks with the PML-N, throwing a wrench into preparations for the upcoming elections. The decision stems from Q-League's discontent with the proposed arrangements, primarily centered around perceived unfairness in ticket allocation and a lack of consideration for their candidates.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain, a key figure in Q-League, voiced the party's grievance, openly criticizing the seat adjustments as "unacceptable" due to their limitations. He specifically pointed out the disparity in ticket distribution, alleging that PML-N prioritized its own candidates over those from Q-League. Additionally, Hussain, along with his brother Chaudhry Shafi Hussain, highlighted their disappointment with PML-N fielding candidates in constituencies Q-League had intended to contest. This blatant disregard for their claims to certain seats, according to Hussain, prompted the party leadership to draw a line and refuse to tolerate such "double standards."

The breakdown of the seat adjustment agreement throws the fate of several constituencies into uncertainty. These were the very areas where, as per earlier reports, both parties had kept seats vacant in anticipation of an alliance with Q-League and the Independent Pakistan Party (IPP). With the negotiations falling apart, these constituencies are now likely to witness direct competition between PML-N and Q-League.

Meanwhile, the initial seat allocation details, although now rendered irrelevant, shed light on the potential plans of both parties. IPP, for instance, was expected to secure 7 seats in the National Assembly and 11 in the Punjab Provincial Assembly. Notably, Jahangir Tareen was slated to contest from NA-155 Lodhran on an IPP ticket, while Ghulam Sarwar Khan was to represent PML-N in NA-54 Rawalpindi.

Further discussions, now defunct, had revealed a tentative seat distribution within PML-N itself. Q-League was reportedly willing to concede NA-64 to PML-N in exchange for PP-32 for Salik Hussain and PP-31 for Shafi Hussain. Additionally, Saud Majeed, the PML-N candidate from NA-165, was seen as a potential Senate candidate if denied a National Assembly ticket, while his nephew, Saad Masood, had already secured a ticket from PP-248.