

Nawaz leaves for Islamabad
F.P. Report

LAHORE: PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif left for Islamabad on Saturday to meet the party leaders. Sources divulged that Nawaz Sharif will meet the PML-N leaders to discuss the matters in line with the country's political situation. Nawaz Sharif is also expected to discuss the strategy in connection with the election campaign with the party leaders.



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PTI to run elections sans 'bat' symbol

Supreme Court annuls Peshawar High Court order

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) took a major blow on Saturday after the Supreme Court annulled the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) January 10 order, depriving the former ruling party of its 'iconic' electoral symbol — bat — just days ahead of the general elections.

A three-member bench — headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali — announced the verdict after a day-long hearing.

The apex court's unanimous verdict came after hours of wait as Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa-led three-member bench decided to uphold the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) plea. The election governing body had assailed the PHC verdict declaring the commission's order "illegal, without any lawful authority and of no legal effect".

The contention started with the December 22, 2023, decision of the election commission, barring the PTI party from keeping its electoral symbol for the upcoming February 8 elections, citing irregularities in their internal polls that did not comply with the party's own constitution and election laws.

This prompted the Imran Khan-led party to challenge the revocation of their symbol in the PHC. A single-member judge granted temporary relief, reinstated the bat symbol, and referred the case to a larger bench for a hearing on January 9.

Then, on December 30, the polling body challenged the PHC's jurisdiction over the matter. However, in a dramatic turn of events, the PHC reversed its earlier decision and upheld the ECP's order. Facing the prospect of losing its iconic cricket bat symbol for the upcoming elections, the PTI took its fight to the highest court in the land — the

Supreme Court. However, in a strategic move, they later withdrew their appeal, hoping for a favourable outcome from the PHC. And the PTI did get what it wanted with PHC's nullification of the ECP decision, but not for long as today's verdict took away the much-sought-after electoral symbol.

At the outset of the hearing, CJP Isa said that the detailed order of the PHC restoring the PTI's symbol has been issued, at which the party counsel termed it an "excellent decision". Hamid then came to the rostrum, noting that today was the last day to submit the party tickets to the ECP so he would try to wrap up his arguments soon. "We also have less time as we also have to write the order," the chief justice said indicating that the court would announce its verdict today.

Here, Justice Mazhar noted that there were two questions: whether the court had jurisdiction or not and whether the ECP has the authority to investigate intra-party polls. Zafar then argued that neither the Constitution nor the Elections Act 2017 granted the electoral watchdog the right to review a party's intra-party elections.

Citing Article 17 of the Constitution, he asserted that contesting the elections with an electoral symbol was among a political party's rights and that depriving a party of the same would be in violation of the Constitution. "The election commission has discriminated against the PTI. The ECP has apparently been mala fide by taking away the 'bat' symbol," he alleged, contending that the watchdog was "not a court that could grant the right to a fair trial".

Zafar claimed that none of the PTI members had challenged the intra-party polls, asserting that they were held according to the PTI's constitution. He highlighted that the ECP had given 20 days to hold the intra-party elections, which the PTI complied with due to the fear of the party being

"excluded from the elections". The PTI lawyer said his basic argument was that those challenging the intra-party polls were not party members. He added that the PTI had responded in writing to the ECP's 32 questions, following which it set aside the intra-party elections.

Zafar contended that the election commission had not mentioned "any irregularity" in its Dec 22 order but said that the "reasons given were strange". He said that the ECP had said it would not accept the intra-party polls as the appointment of the party CEC was not done correctly. However, he added, that a day ago the ECP counsel had raised technical objections and talked about "democracy within the party".

Here, CJP Isa, reiterating his remarks from yesterday, noted, "There should be democracy within political parties as well as within the country. The basic question is of democracy, not of complete implementation of the party constitution." "It should at least be seen that [intra-party] elections were conducted," he said, adding that Akbar S. Babar was also a party member "even if disliked" by the party.

At one point during the hearing, Justice Isa told the PTI counsel to either "give the whole context" for its allegations of mala fide against the ECP or "keep it (the arguments) legal". "Did we appoint them? You all appoint these people. We don't appoint them," he remarked, adding that the apex court could "force" the commission to perform its duties but "not take on their responsibilities". The CJP told the PTI counsel: "Substantiate if you are taking the angle of mala fide."

"If they're mala fide then we look at them with very suspect eyes or you take away this allegation. I am not saying 'take it away'. It's your call," he added. At this, Hamid said he would keep his arguments non-political.

PTI Chairman Gohar Khan's family attacked

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan Saturday claimed his family was attacked as he was present in the Supreme Court.

The PTI chief immediately left the Supreme Court premises after getting the update during the hearing of the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) plea challenging the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) verdict favouring the PTI in bat symbol and intra-party polls case. In conversation with his colleague and party member Barrister Ali Zafar, the PTI chief said his sons and nephews have been beaten up. "The news has just come from home. People came in four double cabins and took the computer," he said.

Gaza ministry says dozens killed in Israel strikes

GAZA (AFP): Health officials in Hamas-ruled Gaza said Saturday that Israeli strikes killed at least 60 people in the besieged territory, 99 days into the war.

Fears of the conflict widening intensified after US and British forces struck pro-Hamas Houthi rebels in Yemen following attacks on Red Sea shipping, with the US military announcing a fresh air strike on Saturday, a day after the initial barrage.

Witnesses in the Gaza Strip reported early-morning Israeli bombardment. An AFP correspondent said intense shelling and air strikes hit the south of Gaza overnight. Nimma Al-Akhras, 80, described the strike that destroyed her home. "It was very

powerful," she said. "We started to scream and I couldn't move but someone pulled me out and put me on a cart."

The Israeli army said its forces had struck dozens of rocket launchers that were "ready to be used" in central Gaza, and eliminated four "terrorists" in air strikes on Khan Yunis, Gaza's main southern city. The military also reported that its engineers had destroyed a Hamas "command center" and weapons found there, after a raid in central Gaza. Health ministry spokesman Ashraf Al-Qudra reported "more than 60 martyrs" in Israeli air strikes and artillery fire overnight, with dozens more wounded.

Israel's relentless bombardment of Gaza since

Hamas's October 7 attack has killed at least 23,843 people, mostly women and children, according to the latest ministry toll. The war, in which Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas, began when the militants launched their unprecedented attack that resulted in about 1,140 deaths in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures. At Rafah's Al-Najjar hospital, mourners gathered and prayed around the bodies of slain relatives. One man stroked the body of a child, wrapped up like a white parcel. He kissed it, then placed it gently among others. Another man, Bassem Araf, held up a photo of another child. "She died hungry with bread in her hand."



BAHAWALPUR: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing during public gathering.

Five soldiers embraced Shahadat

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: During an operation conducted by the security forces in general area Buleda, Kech District, terrorists exploded an Improvised Explosive Device on a security forces' vehicle, which was followed by an intense fire exchange.

Own troops immediately responded and effectively engaged the terrorists' location, as a result of which three terrorists were sent to hell.

However, during the operation, five brave soldiers, having fought gallantly, sacrificed their lives and embraced Shahadat. The Shuhada include: Sepoy Tipu Razzaq (age: 23 years, resident of District Sahiwal), Sepoy Sunny Shaukat (age: 24 years, resident of District Karachi), Sepoy Shafi Ullah (age: 23 years, resident of District Lasbela), Lance Naik Tariq Ali (age: 25 years, resident of District Orakzai) and Sepoy Muhammad Tariq Khan (age: 25 years, resident of District Mianwali).

Sanitization operation is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. Security Forces of Pakistan, in step with the Nation, remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan, and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve.

Meanwhile, Four terrorists were sent to hell by security forces in two separate operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

An intelligence based operation was conducted in general area Mir Ali, North Waziristan district. During the conduct of operation, after an intense exchange of fire, HVT Terrorist Comd Tabassum @ Qadarmat along with Terrorist Sajid @Sarkandi, were sent to hell by the security forces.

US launches new missile strike on Sana

RIYADH: US forces conducted a fresh strike against a Houthi radar site in Yemen, the American military and the Iran-backed militia's official media both announced on Saturday. In a statement, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said the strike targeted the radar site to degrade the militia's ability to attack maritime vessels. "This strike was conducted by the USS Carney (DDG 64) using Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles and was a follow-on action on a specific military target associated with strikes taken on Jan. 12 designed to degrade the Houthi's ability to attack maritime vessels, including commercial vessels," the CENTCOM said in a statement on X, formerly Twitter.

The latest strike occurred early on Saturday local time in Yemen. The Houthi movement's television channel Al-Masirah also reported that the strike targeted the Al-Dailami base in Sana'a, Yemen's rebel-held capital. "The American-British enemy is targeting the capital, Sana'a, with a number of raids," Al-Masirah TV posted on X, formerly Twitter, citing its correspondent in Sanaa. "The American-British aggression targeted the Al-Dailami base in the capital, Sanaa," it added.

An official of Yemen's Houthi group Ansarullah said on Saturday that there were no injuries in US latest strike against Houthi forces in Sanaa, and vowed a "strong and effective" response. "There were no injuries, no material nor human losses," Nasrudeen Amer told Al Jazeera. The fresh strike came a day after US and British warplanes, ships and submarines launched dozens of air strikes across Yemen overnight in retaliation against Houthi forces for months of attacks on Red Sea shipping. Even as Houthi leaders swore retaliation, US President Joe Biden warned earlier on Friday that he could order more strikes if they do not stop their attacks on merchant and military vessels in one of the world's most economically vital waterways. "We will make sure that we respond to the Houthis if they continue this outrageous behavior," Biden told reporters during a stop in Pennsylvania on Friday.

Witnesses confirmed explosions early on Friday, Yemen time, at military bases near airports in the capital Sanaa and Yemen's third city Taiz, a naval base at Yemen's main Red Sea port Hodeidah and military sites in the coastal Hajjah governorate. White House spokesperson John Kirby said the strikes had targeted the Houthis' ability to store, launch and guide missiles or drones, which the group has used in recent months to threaten Red Sea shipping.

Three Covid cases detected

KARACHI (INP): The authorities in Karachi have detected the JN.1 Covid-19 variant in three more air passengers coming from abroad. The rapid antigen tests of three out of several air travelers conducted at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport have come back positive. The three passengers found positive of JN.1 variant, currently a cause of concern in several countries, belonged to Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



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LGH takes special measures to treat children affected by harsh weathern

LAHORE (APP): In response to the severe cold weather and heightened pollution in Lahore, the Lahore General Hospital (LGH) has implemented special arrangements for the treatment of children on the direction of Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi.

According to LGH sources on Saturday, Professor Dr. Muhammad Shahid and Professor Dr. Faheem Afzal of the pediatric unit will oversee the management of children's healthcare, particularly focusing on pneumonia cases. Principal Ameer Uddin Medical College, Professor Muhammad Al-Fareed Zafar, said that the hospital was well-equipped with sufficient quantities of pneumonia vaccines, available free of charge in line with the government policy. Emphasizing the importance of awareness, he urged the administration to utilize social media and other platforms to educate parents about pneumonia prevention.

Highlighting LGH's commitment to public service, the principal PGMI underscored the hospital's role as a comprehensive healthcare force. He encouraged parents to monitor their children closely, ensuring they are warmly dressed to fend off cold-related illnesses, including pneumonia. He urged immediate consultation with qualified doctors at government hospitals if children exhibit symptoms such as high fever or difficulty in breathing.

In an effort to bolster healthcare services, administrative doctors and the deputy chief nursing superintendent have been directed to remain vigilant round the clock, paying special attention to the treatment of all patients, particularly infants. The LGH aims to play a crucial role in protecting the community from diseases during this challenging period.

18th Youth Parliament 2nd session held

LAHORE (APP): The 18th batch of Youth Parliament Pakistan (YPP) in partnership with TikTok convened its second session marking a pivotal moment in the digital engagement of Pakistan's youth, here Saturday.

This session featured around 300 primary members representing all National Assembly constituencies of Pakistan, in addition to Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and overseas Pakistanis, along with approximately 300 alternate members. Supported by TikTok, the 18th YPP is the most extensive and diverse youth representation in Pakistan to date. President of PILDAT and founder of Youth Parliament Pakistan Ahmed Bilal Mehboob commenced the event with a warm welcome.

Acknowledging the partnership with TikTok, Mehboob highlighted how this collaboration not only enriches the YPP experience but also serves as a vital link to connect with the youth through modern digital platforms. He emphasized the significance of such alliances for empowering young leaders, enabling them to actively participate in crucial national and global discussions.

CM inspects development work on new Ravi Bridge project

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspected the new Ravi Bridge project in a severe cold weather late night.

Mohsin Naqvi inspected the construction work of the new Ravi Bridge project. He shook hands with the labourers busy doing piling, drilling work and commended them on working diligently on the public welfare project in a severe cold weather even late night, said a handout issued here on Saturday.

The CM directed to utilise all the necessary resources for early construction of the bridge, saying that piling work should be moved forward swiftly along with accelerating pace of work on the new bridge. He issued directions to the contrac-

tor to further expedite construction.

He emphasized that the project should be completed at the earliest for the facilitation of people. The bridge would greatly ease traffic, he added.

The Commissioner/DG LDA and the contractor gave a detailed briefing about progress on the bridge. The piling and boring process continues for 24 hours and two new machines have been installed for the piling work. The bridge will consist of 4 lanes and it would be 540 meters long.

Provincial ministers Amir Mir, Azfar Ali Nasir, Secretary Communication & Works, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Engineer LDA, NESPAK, Officials of C&W, Irrigation, district administration and other departments were also present.

Baqar launches NICVD's Stroke Intervention Programme

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Rtd) Maqbool Baqar on Saturday stressed that great efforts were needed to improve stroke care and acute stroke centers in Pakistan's second-largest province.

While virtually inaugurating the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases' (NICVD) 'Stroke Intervention Programme' launched in Tando Muhammad Khan, the chief minister said that the estimated population of Pakistan was 225 million with a median age of 22.5 years and to cater to such a large population, the increasing incidence of stroke and lack of infrastructure in both urban and rural areas require immediate attention in Pakistan.

While addressing the guests at the ceremony, Baqar said through a video link that there was a high proportion of young stroke with poor stroke outcomes. Acute stroke care is scarce in Pakistan due to few stroke units, and limited availability of alteplase (clot buster

treatment) and thrombectomy services in the country, he said.

He further emphasised that the stroke burden remained high in Pakistan with limited available facilities for stroke care in the country. He commented that after the availability of alteplase (r-tPA) in Pakistan, efforts to improve facilities and centers were need of the hour.

Lauding the NICVD's work, the CM recalled that in 2021, the hospital took up the initiative to provide comprehensive stroke services including clot buster treatment and advanced treatment of clot removal (thrombectomy).

"During the last 2 years, it has treated more than 4000 stroke patients providing acute stroke care services," Baqar maintained. The CM disclosed that the NICVD had trained 8 cardiologists to carry out clot removal procedures and were now moving forward to start stroke services in SICVD Tando Muhammad Khan and SICVD Sukkur to extend the service throughout Sindh.

Minister living in container to monitor Bund Road project

LAHORE (APP): On the specific directive of Punjab's Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Provincial Housing Minister Azfar Ali Nasir has adopted a temporary residence in a container placed at the Bund Road Controlled Access Corridor project site.

Azfar Ali Nasir has been assigned the task to undertake 24 hours monitoring

for the completion of Bund Road Controlled Access Corridor project. Under the mission to accomplish public welfare projects before the stipulated deadline in Punjab, he is busy in overseeing the project from morning till night. He will continue living in the container till the completion of the project. Azfar Ali Nasir visited the project late at night and inspected the

ongoing construction activities. He issued necessary directions to the contractor for timely completion of the project. The minister also chaired a container meeting and directed to utilise all necessary resources to expedite pace of work on the project. He stated that on the direction of the CM, he would remain in the container till the completion of the project.

Sindh decides to appoint tourist guides to elevate visitor experiences at historical sites

F.P. Report

KARACHI: 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. Arshad Wali Muhammad, Provincial Minister for Tourism, Environment, Climate Change, and Coastal Development, 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 in Sindh, 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: People selecting books from a Book Fair at Al-Hamra.

Gov't of Sindh initiated a program Strengthening social protection Delivery System in Sindh

F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: The Sindh caretaker Minister for Information, Social protection and minorities Mohammad Ahmed Shah said that Government of Sindh has initiated a program "Strengthening social protection Delivery System in Sindh" in 15 districts of Sindh with collaboration of World bank to improve the mother child health. This he said while talking to media men at Shehbaz Hall, Shehbaz Building Hyderabad today.

The minister informed that initially this program started in three districts of Sindh Tando Mohammad Khan, Tando Alahyar and Matari and will be extended in other districts soon. He further said that this program will benefit 1.3 million women and children in Sindh. This program of social protection will give 30000 cash to mother for the safe life of child because there is



problem of malnutrition identified in different districts.

On replying a question regarding elections the minister said that Government of Sindh is ready for the general elections on 8th February and this program will benefit 1.3 million women and children in Sindh. This program of social protection will give 30000 cash to mother for the safe life of child because there is

polling stations.

He further said that a strong communication awareness campaign will be launched to spread awareness regarding this program to benefit more women and children in this program.

Later a meeting was presided over by the minister at Shehbaz Hall, where he directed to commissioner Hyderabad to issue directions to Deputy commissioners

and Health professional for registration of more benefifishries in districts.

The Commissioner Hyderabad Syed Khalid Hyder Shah assured to minister that he will soon conduct a meeting with deputy commissioners to discuss the mentioned program.

Later, The Minister Information Sindh inaugurated the tow days 9th Hyderabad Literature festival at Sindh Museum along with DG culture Munawar Mahesar and ex- secretary Information Mehatab Akbar Rashidi and MD Sindh Education foundation Abdul Kabir Qazi.

The tablos and beautiful cultural performances were performed by the students. Earlier to this the minister inaugurated first Health center of Strengthening social protection delivery system program at PPHI Tando Soomro district tando Alahyar.

KMC, PLSP to train people for providing emergency aid to citizens: Murtaza Wahab

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that the KMC in collaboration with Pakistan Life Savers Program (PLSP) will train the citizens of Karachi to provide immediate emergency aid in case of heart attacks and injuries so that precious lives can be saved.

It will be started by the department of City Warden and we will train thousands of citizens of Karachi especially the youth so that we can proudly call Karachi the city of life savers. According to the statement, the Mayor said every year thousands of people in Karachi lose their lives due to heart attacks and after suffering serious injuries, precious lives are lost in these incidents, so consider-

ing the importance of this issue, KMC has decided to pay immediate attention so that by providing awareness to the citizens in this regard, the family members and the nearest people can give immediate medical assistance to the patient in the most crucial and critical moments.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that the efforts of Pakistan Life Saver Program in this regard are commendable and that is the reason why we have settled the preliminary matters with them.

The scope of this program will be gradually extended to the entire city to save the lives of citizens by providing immediate medical assistance after fatal accidents and

heart attacks.

Mayor Karachi said that Karachi is among the seven largest cities in the world and training of citizens is organised in all international cities of this level around the world. With this training in the event of a fire, accident, heart attack, stroke, or serious injury, people can help each other immediately and most of the patients get better before reaching the hospital and their lives are saved.

He said that KMC hospitals are also being improved and made functional where a large number of citizens come for treatment every day, but now citizens will also be trained in this regard to make this city better in this aspect of civic life.



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LAHORE: Children enjoying car riding at Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park.

General election 2024

59.322m registered female voters to decide fate of 175 parties

PESHAWAR (APP): Despite cold weather conditions, the electioneering campaign have started gearing up in the country including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where over 128.585 million registered voters includes 59.322 million female and 69.263 million male would decide fate of 175 political parties in general election 2024.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a total of 21.928 million voters including 11.437 million male and 9.983 million female would exercise their right of franchise in favour of their political parties and independent candidates for next five years. Prof Dr. A.H. Hilali, former Chairman, Political Science Department, University of Peshawar told APP on Saturday that female voters' role during election 2024 would be crucial and any political party that get women voters' attention would get an edge over others on February 8 polling day.

He said the low turnout among female voters remains a persistent challenge especially in merged tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, southern districts of Punjab, rural Sindh and Baloch belt in Balochistan. He said in case of rainfall, rains and harsh weather, bringing voters in Chitral, Dir, Swat, North Waziristan and Parachinar districts would be a big challenge for political parties.

"I eagerly await to poll my first vote on February 8, 2024 election," said Sidra Qaiser, a young voter/school teacher of Nowshera district while talking to APP. She said casting of vote was a national obligation and she would vote a political party's candidate after seeing its manifestio.

Professor Dr. Hilali said all eyes would be on voters turnout in 2024 election after the overall turnout rates for the elections in 2008, 2013, and 2018 were 45 percent, 54 percent, and 50 percent, respectively.

He said the women voters turnout in the 2018 general elections stood at 40 percent with 21 of 46 million registered women voters participating in polling. "The political parties need a lot of work to mobilize women voters as about 40% of female vote on the average which is considerably low as per international standards."

Besides political parties, he said ECP, civil society and caretaker governments require to strengthen coordination to mobilize voters for election 2024. He said people of Pakistan have seen the performance of almost all mainstream political parties including PPP, PML-N, JUIF, ANP, Jumate Islami, PTI and MQM in last two decades and voters are now closely seeing what are new in its election manifestos.

He said PPP leadership was taking credit of BISP, 1973 constitution, development works in Sindh and 18th constitutional amendment besides a new slogan of constructing three million houses for poor.

He said PML-N was advocating for constructing motorways, lawari tunnel, restoration of peace in KP, Karachi and atomic tests at Chagai in 1998. Similarly, ANP was trying to attract voters about renaming NWFP as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and construction of universities in the province while PTI leadership was highlighting Sehat Card and BRT.

Dr Zilakat Malik, former Chairman, Economics Department, University of

Peshawar said that 2024 election would be totally different from others because no political party was favorite and people would decide the fate of all 175 parties on the basis of their past Govt performances and implementation of election manifestos. He claimed that Istehkam e Pakistan Party and PTI Parliamentarians were the new parties whose leaders were in the field informing masses about their programs and development initiatives if voted to power.

Dr Malik said that free and transparent elections are very important for continuity of democracy and addressing the country's challenges like economy, climate change issues besides controlling price hike and inflation that adversely affected the common man. He said women were about 50pc of the country's population and without their active participation, elections and democracy has no meaning.

He said women participation in elections provide the citizens with uniformity managed way to voice their opinions and chose who and what is best for them. Dr. Malik said the citizens are the ultimate authority in any democracy and they can voice their opinion and reject a political party if they do not like its performance while in Govt in the past.

The regular holding of general elections ensures better check on the performance of political parties and accountability. The experts said that a strong participation of women voters would play a key role especially in rural areas of Pakistan and any candidate get their support would get an advantage over others on February 8, 2024 election.

KP PPP not issue party tickets

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan People's Party could not issue election tickets for 21 constituencies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

There are no candidates in 7 constituencies of National Assembly, including two important constituencies of Peshawar. The PPP did not field candidates for 14 constituencies of the provincial assembly so far.

NA 30 and 32 Peshawar and NA 4 Swat tickets have not been issued while NA 11 Shangla and NA 23 Mardan are also deprived of candidates. Candidates from NA 35 Kohat and NA 41 Lakki Marwat are also not present in the field. According to information available 4 provincial assembly constituencies from Mardan, 2 constituencies vacant in Peshawar and Lakki Marwat with one constituency each in Bitgram, Mardan, Khyber, Nowshera, Kohat and Bannu are without any contesting candidates.

Hashish recovered

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a successful operation, the Excise Police Station Mardan have recovered 6000 grams of hashish from a without number plate Rickshaw on main Ring Road in Mardan, a spokesman of the Excise told media men here on Saturday.

It was another major operation of Police Station Excise Mardan region wherein they foiled an attempt of smuggling a large quantity of drugs to Punjab, the Spokesman said. He disclosed that during the search, 6000 grams of hashish was recovered from an unmarked rickshaw on Ring Road Mardan.

He said the accused driver Muhammad Saeed, son of Syed Faqir, resident of Wah Cantt, Asifabad Street No. 3, Hasan Abdal, was arrested on the spot. In another operation was carried out by Excise Police Station Peshawar near Hayatabad Toll Plaza and during the search, 4800 grams of hashish was recovered from the motorcyclist, spokesperson said.

The accused Mohsin Shah, son of Zahir Shah, resident of Siddiqabad, Arbab Road, Peshawar, arrested on the spot and cases against all the drug smugglers registered in respective Police stations with further investigation underway, spokesperson.



SWABI: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah giving away trophy to a student during annual parents day at Col Sher Khan Cadet College.

Chief Secretary reviews arrangements for polling

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary (CS) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry here Saturday chaired a video-link meeting to discuss security arrangements and review preparation for upcoming general elections.

The meeting was also attended by Inspector General Police, Akhtar Hayat Khan, administrative secretaries, Additional Chief Secretary, Divisional Commissioners, Regional Police Officers and other concerned officials.

The meeting was told that appropriate police force would be deployed on Election Day while volunteers and workers of other relevant departments including forests, wildlife, excise, anti-corruption, social welfare and civil defense would assist the police force.

It was said that CCTV cameras would be installed in sensitive polling station and funds have been provided for provision of needed facilities in polling stations. Addressing the meeting CS expressed satisfaction over the arrangements and directed necessary arrangements for holding polling in remote and snowy areas according to code of conduct issued by election commission.

He also directed utilization of available resources to timely procure election material in snowy areas and

that transparent election is first priority of government. He also directed tourism, local government, communication department and Pakhtunkhwa Highway Authority to liaise and coordinate for elections in remote and snowy areas.

He also directed police force and district administrations to timely complete the arrangements and enhance security measures to avoid any untoward incident on polling day. Earlier, CS and IGP visited polling stations in Charbagh Swat and reviewed security arrangements. They were also briefed about security arrangements being finalized to monitor egress and ingress points of polling stations.

PML-N KP's candidates for general election finalized

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has completed the issuance of tickets to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) candidates, said party's officials on Saturday. According to officials, PML-N supremo and former PM Nawaz Sharif has been issued ticket from Mansehra NA-15 and PML-N provincial president Ameer Muqam has been given ticket from

NA-2, NA-11 and PK-5.

They said that tickets have been issued for 13 provincial and 5 National Assembly seats in Peshawar. From PK-72 ticket has been issued to Azmat Khan, from PK-73 to Fazlullah, from PK-74 to Arbab Afzal, from PK-75 to Arbab Ghulam Fariq, from PK-76 to Subia Shahid, from PK-78 to Zahir Khan, from PK-79 to Jalal Khan and from PK-80 to Hyder Shah from 80, they

added.

They disclosed that tickets were issued to Waqas Buland from PK 81, Mohammad Nadeem from PK 82 and Sher Rehman from PK 84. According to the officials, the PML-N has also issued tickets for the five National Assembly seats in Peshawar including NA-28 to Arbab Khizer Hayat, NA-29 to Subia Shahid, NA-30 to Rais Khan, NA-31 to Subia Shahid and NA-32 to Sher Rehman.

JUI-F announce candidates for election

PESHAWAR: Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (F) has finalized national and provincial candidates for Peshawar district with Noor Alam Khan will be the candidate for NA-28, Akhonzada Irfanullah will be the candidate for NA-29.

According to details, Nasir Khan Musazai will be

the candidate for NA-30, Maulana Saeedullah for NA-31 and Maulana Hussain Madani for NA-32. Azan Khan will be the candidate for Provincial Assembly Constituency PK 72, Maulana Abdul Haseeb for PK 73 and Ejaz Khan for PK 74, Shehryar Khan on PK 75, Niaz Muhammad on PK 76 and Haji Safatullah on PK 77.

Zahir Shah will be the candidate for PK-78, Maulana Ata-ul-Haq Darwish for PK-79 and Maulana Amanullah Haqqani for PK-80. Likewise, Arbab Farooq will be the candidate for PK 81, Siddiqur Rahman Paracha for PK 82, Haji Mohammad Umar for PK 83 and Malik Naushad Khan for PK 84.

M Adnan Khan

IT was a pleasant surprise to receive an invitation by Chief of the Air staff (CAS), PAF, for attending the "50 years' celebrations of services of the Mirage aircraft in PAF". Interestingly the present CAS, Air Chief Marshal Zaeem Ahmed Babar is also a pilot of Mirage aircraft. The ceremony was awesome with breathtaking supersonic maneuvers of the Mirage aircraft.

The audience was mesmerized with the potential and capabilities of this aircraft and appreciated the selectors of this aircraft who had the vision (in 1966), the aircraft could serve PAF for many coming years. Among these pioneers, was the then Wing Commander Syed Abid Raza who earned Mechanical Engineering degree from Aligarh university, India (1945-1948). He graduated with honors by securing 2nd Position & 1st Division. Not only an excellent student, he also captained the football (soccer) team of Aligarh Muslim University (1947-1948).

Born on November 11, 1927, Syed Abid Raza sahib belonged to a literary family of Khujwa, Siwan District, Bihar, India. His father's name was Syed Shahid Raza who was the elder brother of the distinguished historian and eminent scholar, Professor Syed Hasan Askari. Askari Sahib, was a literary laureate recognized internationally, who worked extensively on Indian medieval history, Sufism, Delhi Sultanate & Mughals, Persian manuscripts and original sources. Decorated by successive presidents of India with the "Ghalib Award" in 1974, "President's Certificate of Honor" in 1979 and "Padmashree Award" in 1985, he also received several other national, state, provincial and local awards in India. The History Department of Quaid-e-Azam University (Islamabad, Pakistan) has also announced "Professor Syed Hasan Askari Post Graduate Research Fellow Endowment" for the scholars of M(Phil) and PhD.

Syed Abid Raza sahib joins the family tree of prophet Muhammad (Sallalho Alaeihi-wasallum) in the 40th generation. His family is also linked to Syed Jalaluddin Surkhposh a Sufi Saint of 13th century AD and follower of Baha-ud-din Zakariya.

Abid Raza sahib had met Quaid-i-Azam, Mohammad Ali Jinnah during Quaid's political campaign/rallies when he was a student at Aligarh Muslim University. Impressed by his thoughts and inspired by his vision for an independent state for the Muslims of Hindustan, young Raza sahib decided to migrate to Pakistan leaving his family behind in India. Raza sahib arrived at the seaport of Karachi via Bombay (Mumbai), India, on Sunday, September 12, 1948, and was grieved to see thousands of mourners attending the funeral of Quaid-i-Azam, Mohammad Ali in Karachi the same day.

Syed Abid Raza sahib decided to join the Royal Pakistan Air force (RPAF) as an engineer to serve the newly earned homeland. He was commissioned in November 1948 and was immediately selected for a two year's course in "Aeronautical Engineering for Technical Officers" at Britain's Air University AST Hamble Southampton, UK (January 1949 - March 1951), where he topped the program with flying colors (March 2, 1951). During this training course, Pilot Officer Raza had an opportunity to meet His Excellency Habib Ibrahim Reheematoallah, at the Pakistan High Commission, London and came to know expression of the newly created state's image in accordance with diplomatic norms.

After the successful completion of this course, Raza sahib was posted at Royal Pakistan Air Force Academy, (Now Pakistan Air Force Academy Asghar Khan) Risalpur, for "Technical administration and first line servicing" of training aircraft. Seeing his engineering enthusi-

asm, Flying Officer Abid Raza was selected as staff officer to the Engineering branch's head. Judging his brilliance, Flying Officer was detailed for "Officers Aircraft Electrical & Instrument Engineering Diploma Course" at the Royal Air Force Technical College, Henlow, United Kingdom, from where he graduated with honors.

After the successful completion of the course in March 1954, Raza sahib's skills were then utilized at an Engineering depot. Here he was employed for repair and overhaul of aircraft and general, purpose electrical components and instruments. In April 1955, he was posted as "Chief Technical Officer" at RPAF Base Korangi Creek for technical management and maintenance of fleet, ground equipment and training aids. The same year he got married to Sanjida Fatima, daughter of Professor Syed Hasan Askari. They were blessed with their first son, Syed Nasir Raza in 1956. (Nasir has a Masters in Civil Engineering is married to Dr. Sakina Fatima and has two sons, Dr. Ali Raza and Ammar Raza, an aerospace engineer by profession).

In April 1957, Raza sahib was posted to the "School of Aeronautics" as "Senior Trade Technical Officer", at the same base. Here an important task of training the airmen of different technical trades was assigned to him.

Seeing his performance in a training set up, Syed Abid Raza sahib was elevated to higher office of training headquarters at RPAF Base Drigh Road (now PAF Base Faisal) in August 1957. He was made responsible for the overall training of PAF airmen in this assignment. The family was blessed with their second son, Syed Mansur Raza in 1958. Dr. Mansur Raza is married to the former foreign secretary, Mrs. Tehmina Janjua.

In March 1959, Raza sahib was posted at RPAF Base Mauripur (now PAF Base Masroor) for second line service

of all types of aircraft, aero-engines their components and ground support equipment. In May, 1958, Squadron Leader Syed Abid Raza attended the "Personnel Management Course", conducted by the "Personnel Management Mobile Training Team", Headquarters Army Element, United States Military Advisory Group - Pakistan in Rawalpindi. After this training, the coveted appointment of "Officer Commanding Maintenance Wing" was the next career milestone at PAF Base Peshawar (January 1961 - March 1963). As an Officer Commanding, Squadron Leader Raza attended the "Resources Management Advanced Course" by Headquarters, USAF and C130B Maintenance Officers Familiarization Course AMF by USAF in May 24, 1963. Raza sahib was able to create a team of dedicated engineers which ensured serviceability and operational capability of PAF aircraft during the war which erupted just after six months of his departure from this seat.

In March 1965 he was posted at the Air Headquarters (AHQ) as Assistant Director of "Aircraft Engineering", from where he and his team regulated all the engineering activities of war operations. He was awarded the War Star, (Sitara-e-Harb) 1965, and the War Medal (Tamgha-e-Harb) the same year. Seeing his professional acumen, Raza sahib was elevated as Director General (Engineering) at the AHQ in March, 1966. He was responsible for maintenance policies and directives, innovations and evaluation for induction of new equipment for the PAF. By now, he was considered an authority on maintenance, training, evaluation, and modifications.

Utilizing his credentials, S. A. Raza was posted as Deputy Director of Projects at the AHQ in December 1966. Key task was to technically evaluate induction of the "Mirage" aircraft system in PAF. This new weapon system was being used by the leading air

forces of the world that time, PAF wanted to evaluate its' efficacy considering own tactical and operational requirements. After thorough evaluation, Raza sahib recommended the induction of "Mirage" aircraft owing to its' endurance, reliability, speed, structure, and multi-role functions that were much needed by PAF. He was also appointed the first Technical Attaché at Embassy of Pakistan, in France. Wing Commander Raza and his dedicated team ensured the delivery of six Mirages to Pakistan in 1967, which were flown to PAF Base Mauripur (now Masroor) Karachi on March 18, 1968. No. 5 Squadron of Pakistan Air Force had the honor to receive this new system. During their stay in France, Allah blessed the Razas, with their first daughter (Shazia Fatima Raza) in 1968.

On return from France, Wing Commander Syed Abid Raza was posted at the AHQ as Deputy Director Aircraft Engineering in June 1970. He diligently formulated maintenance policies and upgrading of PAF aircraft and aeroengines. Due to consistent engineering support by the engineers of PAF, Mirage aircraft were fully operational by the 1971 War, and flew over 200 day and night sorties from PAF Base Sargodha (now Mushaff) and PAF Base Mianwali (now Alam). He ensured availability of engineering facilities for all types of aircraft during the 1971 war. After the war of 1971, he was awarded the War Star (Sitara-e-Harb) 1971, and War Medal (Tamgha-e-Jang) 1971.

On being promoted to the rank of Group Captain, Syed Abid Raza was honored to command the biggest aircraft engineering depot/maintenance unit at PAF Base Faisal in February 1972. Here his team, completed overhaul/modifications to aircraft, aero-engines and other components. His team was also successful in manufacturing some spare parts, tools, test equipment and ground support

equipment. Being the only aerospace repair unit, it attained the status of the engineering backbone of PAF in his tenure. During the same posting, Allah tested him by recalling his beloved daughter back to heavenly abode, who encountered a tragic death, in 1972. Finding Raza sahib and family submitting to Allah's will, he was blessed with another son Syed Ahmer Raza in 1974. Ahmer, who has engineering and management background, is married to Sara, currently spear heading Professor Syed Hasan Askari Historiography Project.

Group Captain Syed Abid Raza also remained a member of executive managing committee of Pakistan Defense Officers Co-operative Housing Authority (PDOCHS) Karachi (1976), now known as Defense Housing Authority (DHA), Karachi.

On completion of his tenure at this engineering depot, he was promoted to the rank of Air Commodore and was hand-picked for "Deputy Director P-721 Project" at Kamra in July 1976. This strategic project was conceived for an "Aeronautical Overhaul Factory" in 1972, where facilities for repair and overhaul of jet aircraft, manufacturing of aircraft parts and drop tanks were to be established. Being the first of its' nature, the project was placed directly under the Ministry of Defense. Raza managed to speedily steer this strategic asset of Pakistan in a speedy manner. Later he was appointed as the Project Director in September for this appointment. In September 1977, Raza sahib was elected as member of The Royal Aeronautical Society established for the General Advancement of Aeronautical Art, Science & Engineering. In 1978, Raza sahib attended the "Joint Services Defense Resource Management Course" given for the Ministry of Defence by US Department of Defence.

For meritorious services, Air Commodore Syed Abid Raza was awarded the coveted medal

of "Sitar-e-Basalat (Star of Good Conduct)" by then President of Pakistan, Fazal Ilahi Chaudhry in 1978.

Air Commodore Raza was the last Project Director P-721 (till June 1979), which was upgraded as F-6 Rebuild Factory in June 1979. He was the first Managing Director (MD), which he continued till December 1980. Air Commodore Syed Abid Raza honorably retired from active military service on November 11, 1980.

Air Commodore Raza sahib continued his innings in Shaheen Foundation (subsidiary of PAF) as Director Shaheen Builders (November 1980 - October 1987) and Project Manager/Managing Director/General Manager SWE-PAK Pharmaceutical (November 1987 - April 1991). He completed mega projects (incorporating Italian & Swedish resources and technologies). He also oversaw completion of Shaheen Complex, with the first "Revolving Restaurant" in Karachi, Bini-Shells for warehouses & storage facilities, PTDC Restaurant at Daman-E-Koh, Islamabad, and the Cadets' Mess, PAF Asghar Khan Academy Risalpur. He later established the SWE-PAK Pharmaceutical Plant in Hub Baluchistan (October 1987 - April 1991). Air Commodore Raza left Shaheen Foundation, PAF due to his deteriorating health in April 1991. He passed away in PNS Shifa Hospital, Karachi on April 4, 2000, at the age of 73 after a courageous battle with serious medical conditions, surrounded by loved ones who will continue to honor his legacy by living their lives to the fullest.

Famous poet John Aelia, had sarcastically, termed creation of Pakistan as the "Mischief of kids of Aligarh". Proudly this mischief not only led to independence but also laid the foundations of sound engineering support of aerial defense of Pakistan by a team of engineers. Syed Abid Raza from Aligarh was one of them. May Air Commodore Syed Abid Raza rest in eternal peace!



In brief

Families join JI in Bajaur F.P. Report

KHAR: The public is continuously joining Jammāt-e-Islami (JI) to support Siraj-u-Din Khan on PK 22 for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly in upcoming general elections scheduled on 8th February. In this regard Rooh Ullah Khan of Loy Sam joined JI along with his family and friends. He claimed that they will support Siraj-u-Din Khan during election campaign. During the gathering Khalid Khan and Maulana Sana Ullah along with others addressed JI workers while providing their narrative for upcoming general election. They claimed that JI government will change power dynamics in Pakistan which ultimately impact geopolitics.

Bodies of two 'lovebirds' found

GUJRAT (INP): Two dead bodies of a man and a woman were recovered from a canal in a village of Gujrat, police said on Saturday. The deceased man was identified as Qamar Warraich who was killed by firing. His body bore bullet marks. The dead woman was identified as Ansar Bibi. She was a widow and was strangled to death. The murderers after killing them, threw their bodies into the canal. As per details, Qamar Warraich had been missing since last week and a case of his disappearance was registered at Mangowal police station. According to police, Ansar Bibi, a resident of Kot Matta, also went missing last week. The bodies of both Qamar and Ansar Bibi were found when the Upper Jehlum Canal in Gujrat was closed. Police said that the killers shot dead Qamar who died after receiving four bullets while the woman was strangled. They said that the deceased couple was having an affair. Police nominated one accused in the case and booked another six unknown accused.

Families deprived of jewelry, cash

GUJRANWALA (INP): Armed robbers deprived two families of over 100 tola gold jewelry, precious wrist watches and two million rupees cash in two major robberies in different localities, police said on Saturday. According to details, the robbery incidents took place in a housing society in Aroop police station jurisdiction in Gujranwala. The robbers barged into two house houses and took the residents hostage at gun point. The robbers harassed the residents by holding guns to heads of children and woman. They took away over 100 tola of gold jewelry, precious wrist watches, Rs 2 million cash and other valuables from both houses. The police collected the evidences from crime scenes and after registered separate cases in both incidents started investigations.

Operation to recover hostages

KASHMIRE (INP): The law enforcement agencies have launched operation in katcha area to recover an abducted truck driver and other hostages from bandit gangs on Saturday. The anti-bandit operation being led by the police chief of Kashmir and the rangers wing commander, has been launched in katcha area of Ghelpur police station jurisdiction. SSP Bashir Brohi has said that the district police have launched the operation with armoured carriers. "Over 10 police pickets have been established in katcha area and all entry and exit points of the area have been completely sealed," police officer said.

PML-N's Rana Mehmoodul Hassan joins PPP

MULTAN (INP): Senator Rana Mehmoodul Hassan and former provincial minister Chaudhry Abdul Waheed Arain on Saturday announced joining Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). Former PML-N leaders announce their official joining while addressing a presser along with PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Rana Mehmoodul Hassan will contest election on the party ticket of PPP from NA-150. Yesterday, Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visited Multan and met with the former PML-N leaders. During the meeting, Chaudhry Abdul Waheed Arain and others had announced their decision in the presence of PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Yesterday, the Pakistan People's Party-Parliamentarian (PPP-P) has announced names of its ticket-holders for national and provincial assembly seats in central Punjab. In Rawalpindi division, NA-49 (Attock) Khurram Shahzad, NA-52 (Gujjar Khan) former prime minister Raja Parvez Ashraf, NA-54 Syed Qamar Abbas, NA-55 Babar Sultan Jadoon, NA-56 Sameera Gul, NA-57 Mukhtar Abbas, NA-58 (Chakwal) Raja Muhammad Rizwan, NA-59 (Tala Gang) Qazi Altaf Hussain, NA-60 (Jhelum) Tasnim Nasir Gujjar, and NA-61 Syed Ameer Hamza Pirzada.

In Gujranwala division, NA-64 (Gujrat) Mubeen Arshad, NA-65 (Lalamusa) ex-federal minister Qamar Zaman Kaira, NA-66 (Wazirabad) Ijaz Samma, NA-67 (Hafizabad) Waseemul Hasan Naqvi, NA-70 Sialkot Syed Ishaq-ul-Hasan, NA-71 Khwaja Owais Mushatq, NA-72 Malik Nadeem Awan, NA-73 Rana Mahmood Ashraf, NA-74 Ijaz Ahmad Cheema, NA-75 (Narowal) Tariq Javed Manzoor, NA-76 Sakhawat Masih, NA-77 (ex-Gujranwala division president) Imtiaz Safdar Warraich, NA-78 Haris Meeran, NA-79 Malik Shakeelur Rehman, NA-80 Dr Imran Rahmani, and NA-81

Muhammad Maalik Virk.

In Sargodha division, NA-82 ex-federal minister Nadeem Afzal Chan, NA-83 Rao Abdul Ghaffar, NA-84 ex-minister of state Tasneem Qureshi, NA-85 Tariq Mehmood Gujjar, NA-86 Sahibzada Naemuddin Sialvi, NA-87 Muhammad Ali Sanwal Awan, NA-89, Nawab Malik Amir Muhammad Khan, and NA-90 Rana Azizur Rahman.

In Faisalabad division, NA-106 (Toba Tek Singh) Zulfiqar Ali, NA-107 Amjad Yaqoob, NA-94 (Chiniot) Inayat Ali Shah, NA-95 (Chak Jhumra) Usman Nawaz, NA-96 (Jaranwala) Rai Shah Jahan Khari, NA-97 (Tandlianwala) Mohammad Khan Nadeem Baloch, NA-98 (Samundari) Rana Farooq Saeed Khan, NA-99 Neha Javed, NA-100 Sidra Saeed Bandisha, NA-101 Muhammad Afzal, NA-102 Rana Naeem Dastgir, from NA-103 Rana Mubasher Ali, and NA-104 Basharat Ali.

In Lahore division, NA-111 (Nankana) Muhammad Waqas, NA-112 Shah Jahan Bhatti, NA-114 (Sheikhupura) Sardar Ali, NA-115 Altaf Hussain Virk, NA-116 Rai Ijaz Ahmad, NA-117 Syed Asif Hashmi, NA-118 Shahid Abbas, NA-119 Iftikhar Shahid, NA-120 Munir Ahmed, NA-121 Iftikhar Shahid, NA-122 Chaudhry Atif Rafique, NA-123 Rana Ziaul Haque, NA-125 Chaudhry Abdul Ghafoor Mayo, NA-126 Amjad Ali Jatt, NA-127 Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, NA-128 Adeel Ghulam Mohiuddin, NA-129 Aurangzeb Barki, NA-130 Iqbal Ahmed Khan, NA-131 (Kasur) Chaudhry Manzoor, NA-132 Shaheen Safdar, NA-133 Muhammad Irshad Khan, and NA-134 Syed Raza Abbas.

In Sahiwal division, NA-135 (Okara) Ghulam Mujtabi, NA-136 Chaudhry Sajjad Ali Hasan, NA-139 (Pakpattan) Humayun Sarwar Bodla, NA-141 (Sahiwal) Muhammad Zaki Chaudhry, NA-142 Maher Ghulam Farid Kathia, and NA-143 Ali Javed.

AWKUM employees postpone strike

F.P. Report

MARDAN All Employees Association Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) here has announced to postpone the protest till the appointment of Vice Chancellor. In Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, continuous protest continued for more than two months.

Chairman Muzamil Khan, President Adnan Saeed, General Secretary Inam Afridi, Senior Vice President Jawad Sanger, Media Incharge Ali Khan, Focal Person Umeer Ali Shah, Vice President Abid Ali, Ashfaq Habib, Mumtaz Khan, Papo Khan and Ajmal Shah while speaking said that the appointment of Vice Chancellor and Pro-Chancellor has not been done yet and we have decided to postpone the strike due to the semester exams and new admissions next week.

President of All Employees Association Adnan Saeed while addressing said that the university administration should accept our problems and demands seriously. Currently, we announce to postpone the protest until the appointment of the Vice Chancellor and the Pro Vice Chancellor. The semester exams are starting

from next week and the admissions have been announced, so for the development and prosperity of the university, we have decided to postpone the strike. From tomorrow, transport will run as normal and classes and exams will also continue as normal.

PM Youth League Female trials concluded at Women varsity: Prime Minister Youth Sports League Handball Female Trials were held at Women University Mardan. The purpose of the trials was to give an opportunity to young female students in the Mardan region to showcase their talents in sports, on Saturday.

Organizing Secretary Syed Khalid Jalal Shah was also present on this occasion. He said that sports increase our positive activities. While appreciating the HEC team, he said that this league is a youth league, the youth will win based on determination and courage. This activity was done with the support of Directorate of Sports Women University Mardan, Directorate of Sports Hazara University Mansehra and Higher Education Commission, Mardan Women University Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Ghazala Yasmin inaugurated the first day of sports handball trial event, addressing the young players on this occasion.

Vice Chancellor Professor Ghazala Yasmin said that we will try to make this event a success as well. should be organized and the best facilities should be provided to the female students coming from Mardan region. She further said that those nations develop where sports fields are settled, on the first day. More than 45 female students registered and gave trials on the spot. The program was successful due to the strong participation and interest of the students.

The second day's trial was inaugurated by Miss Asia, who is associated with the women's wing of the Mardan Board. On the second day also a large number of female students were present and more than 30 female students participated in the trials. On the second day of the event held at the Mardan Board Hall, selected talented players also participated in the trials of the first day. 12 players from Mardan region were selected in the two-day trials. These selected players will now participate in the provincial level competitions.

AJK PM seeks world's role to help resolve IOK issue

MIRPUR (INP): Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq, while voicing his serious concern over the worsening political and human rights situation in the Indian-illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) state, urged upon the international community to play its due role to help resolve the lingering dispute without further loss of time.

"The much-delayed global Kashmir conflict has been the main cause and consequence of rights violations in the region," the AJK Prime Minister said while talking to the AJK Muslim Conference chief former Prime Minister of AJ&K Sardar Atique Ahmed Khan, who called on him at Jammu Kashmir House in the Federal metropolis late Friday.

Speaking on the occasion, the PM said that the situation in IOJK has further deteriorated since the Modi government stripped the region of its special status. The Indian government's unilateral move, he said, was in violation of the UNSC resolutions. He said that the Indian Supreme Court's verdict on 370 has further compounded the

issue of Kashmir.

The PM said that the Kashmiri people have neither accepted India's beligerent military occupation nor do they accept the biased verdict of the Indian Supreme Court. He said that the government of Azad Kashmir would utilize all available resources to promote the Kashmiris' just cause at the international level, besides sensitizing the world about the early resolution of the Kashmir issue in line with the UNSC resolutions.

Referring to the recently held conference in Kotli, the PM said that the massive gathering held in support of Kashmiris' right to self-determination was organized against the backdrop of the All Parties Kashmir Conference, which was attended by the representatives of all the political parties of Azad Kashmir and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC). Anwar said that besides highlighting the Kashmir cause, the government had stepped up its efforts to establish good governance and rule of law in the state. He said that the welfare of people was among the government's top priorities. Former

Prime Minister Sardar Atique Ahmed Khan assured the PM of his party's full support to strengthen Kashmir's ongoing freedom struggle. He also appreciated the good governance initiatives taken by the Prime Minister.

Police diesel, gasoline F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Dera Police seized 11075 liters of diesel and gasoline on Saturday as it intensified crackdown against illegal fuel agencies across the district.

A spokesman of district police said that in line with directions of DPO Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, crackdown was launched against illegal fuel agencies across the district. Cases were registered against 10 persons involved in the business of illegal fuel in different areas of the Dera Ismail Khan.

The police also recovered two fuel units, six plastic tanks, and 98 plastic canes and bottles during the crackdown.



SWABI: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah offering fateha at the mausoleum of Capt. Col. Sher Khan Shaheed.

Mangla Dam's water outflow reduces to 100 cusecs

MIRPUR (AJK) (INP): Outflows of water from Mangla Dam, the country's 2nd largest reservoir reduced to only 100 cusecs following continual decline of water level in the reservoir because of ongoing reported heavy snowfall on upper reaches of the Himalayan state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Water reserve in Mangla Dam found constantly dries following continual reduction of inflows due to intermittent snowfall on the upper reaches of the Himalayan belt and consequent unprecedented decrease in flow of water in the rivers, falling in the reservoir – where the water level has reduced to greater extent so far.

According to official sources, the water level in Mangla dam, located in Mirpur district of AJK, was reported as 1156.80 feet on Wednesday against maximum conservation level of 1242 feet with the live storage capacity of 2.061 MAF in the reservoir.

The water level in the dam was gradually reducing furthermore, the official sources said. As a result of continual due inflow of water during ongoing season, the water level in Mangla Dam reservoir was recorded as 1156.80 feet after discharge of 85.20 feet of water from the reservoir by Friday Jan 12, 2024. Mangla Dam stands largest reservoir in terms of water storage in the country, was filled to its maximum conservation capacity of 1242 feet, on August 17, this year as seasonal impounding of the reservoir.

Farid Khan kicks off election drive F.P. Report

BANNU: Former Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission (KPPSC) and retired senior bureaucrat Faridullah Khan, who gained fame from the famous TV drama Angar Wadi and Log, has started an election campaign to try his luck from National Assembly Constituency NA-39 of Bannu, the people of Bannu and the new generation.

To create better opportunities in every sector including employment, it has been decided to put the manifesto in front of the people on important points like health, education, electricity and gas. He has played an active role in solving the problems and now he is contesting the elections in the spirit of serving the backward native district I in the real field. He added that as Public Service Commission Chairman and Federal Secretary, he had taken steps to solve the problems faced by the people of his district and to solve the public projects here. He said that we are not convinced of the politics of pressure pumps and streets, nor the love of wealth and positions in politics.

I have only come out in the field for a better future of our young generation and the mission of ending traditional politics and will give priority to the people of Bannu to solve the basic problems at their doorsteps.

General elections

Polling stations in Swabi, Mardan declared sensitive

Anees Takar

MARDAN: Out of the total 1056 polling stations in Mardan district 39% are highly sensitive (416 polling stations), 37% are sensitive (390 polling stations) and 24% are normal (250 polling stations) while in Swabi district, among the 763 polling stations, 10% are highly sensitive (80 polling stations), 44% are sensitive (333 polling stations) and 46% are normal (350 polling stations).

In preparation for the upcoming general elections in Mardan, the district has diligently completed all arrangements to ensure peaceful and transparent conduct. Among the 1056 polling stations in the district, 416 are declared highly sensitive, 390 sensitive, and 250 normal. In Swabi district, out of 763 polling stations, 80 are highly sensitive, 333 sensitive, and 350 normal.

Authorities are meticulously considering the sensitivity of various polling stations on the election day. The logistical plan for delivering election materi-

als to polling stations has been established by administrative and police authorities. Control rooms at the regional level are actively monitoring election-related affairs. To address shortages in staffing for polling stations, relevant authorities have been contacted. Regional Police Officer for Mardan, Muhammad Suleman, emphasized that comprehensive security measures have been implemented in the districts of Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda, Nowshera, and Mohmand to ensure safe elections. The five districts have a total of 3388 polling stations for the 10 National Assembly and 25 Provincial Assembly seats. Among 3388 polling stations, 1081 are declared highly sensitive, 1288 sensitive and 1019 are considered normal in these five districts.

Each polling station's sensitivity will guide the security provided, aiming to safeguard the electoral process. Though challenges persist, collaborative efforts at various levels are underway to address any

shortcomings. Suleman highlighted that a control room is coordinating with law enforcement agencies, WAPDA, PTCL, Rescue 1122, Health Department, and other relevant institutions. Their representatives will be present in the control room to play their roles effectively in any emergency situation.

There is an acknowledged shortage of personnel, ongoing efforts aim to rectify this situation. Coordination with agencies involved in enforcing law and order, as well as WAPDA, PTCL, Rescue 1122, Health, and other relevant departments, is critical during the elections. Ensuring continuous power supply during and around the election period is crucial, and every effort is being made to meet this requirement. The importance of reliable information reaching the public cannot be overstated. Authorities urged the media to play a pivotal role in disseminating accurate information, contributing to the success of peaceful and secure elections.

QWP opposes elections postponement

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Opposing the calls for delaying the polls, Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Saturday said that the general election must be held on its scheduled date to enable the people to elect their representatives.

Speaking at a gathering of party workers in Sherpao village in Charsadda district, he opposed postponing the elections on the pretext of deteriorating law and order and harsh weather, adding that this would further complicate the situation.

He maintained that elections were the only way to bring political and economic stability to the country.

Aftab Sherpao said the political parties should join hands to help steer the country out of the prevailing crises.

He said after the polls, the political parties should work together to revive the economy and improve the worsening law and order. Aftab Sherpao urged the people to use their right to vote in order to send their representatives to the assemblies so that they could work for the uplift of their areas. "We will spare no effort to serve the people," he vowed. He said his party had always served the people as it believed in working for the development of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Aftab Sherpao said the voters must not fall for

catchy slogans and empty pledges as opportunists were once again out to deceive them. He advised the voters to check the track record of the candidates before voting for them.

He said that nobody cared to raise voice for the rights of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa facing financial crunch. He said all uplift projects in KP were placed on the backburner. The QWP leader said the PTI ruled KP for almost a decade, but left the province in dire financial straits. He said the province was buried under huge loan. He said that experiments with the political system caused colossal loss to the economy therefore such practices should be stopped.

ROs issue names of 226 eligible candidates for polls

F.P. Report

KHYBER: List of validly nominated candidates for one seat of National Assembly and three Provincial Assembly slots in Khyber have been publicized for public notice.

According to the Returning Officer (RO) for National Assembly seat (NA-27) Additional Deputy Commissioner, Haseeb-ur-Rehman, 14 candidates stayed in run for the contest while eight candidates withdrew their candidatures. In the same way as per RO, Landi Kotal for Provincial

Assembly seat (PK-69, Khyber1) Irshad Mohmand 28 candidates will contest for the slot while in PK-70, Khyber 2,26 candidates will compete in the upcoming general election, RO, Jamrud Aamer Zeb said.

Similarly, 25 candidates for PK-71, Khyber 3, have been confirmed by the RO, Bara. All mainstream political parties including Pakistan Muslim League, Nawaz (PML-N), Awami National Party (ANP), Pakistan People Party (PPP), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F),

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Mazloom Ullasi Tehreek (MUT) scores of independent candidates have fielded their candidates to contest the upcoming general election to be scheduled on 08, February, 2024.

It is to be stated here that winner of NA seat in 2018 election, former Federal Minister for Religious Affairs in PTI government Noor-Ul-Haq Qadri has withdrawn his candidature and the party ticket has been issued to ex-parliamentarian Iqbal Afridi of Bara.

One robber killed, another injured held

HYDERABAD (INP): One robber was killed; another injured and held after exchange of fire with police here on Saturday.

According to details, on a tip-off the police approached a two-member

gang of robbers engaged in looting citizens near Pakka Qila area of Hyderabad. Upon sight of police, the robbers started firing and attempted to flee from the scene.

In retaliatory firing of

police, one robber was killed and another injured and held by police. The body and injured robber were shifted to hospital. The detainee and killed robber were wanted in various criminal cases.



Zelenskiy more positive on US financial aid than last month

KYIV (Reuters): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said he was more positive now than he was last month that his country will secure new financial aid from the United States.

But there was no indication in Washington that Congressional approval for an aid package proposed by the White House would be forthcoming anytime soon. "I am viewing this with more positivity than in December, I think we will (get it)," Zelenskiy told a news conference in Kyiv.

Zelenskiy later referred again to the need for Congressional approval to meet the needs of Ukraine's war against Russia, saying the issue had been discussed with the visiting US representative for Ukraine's economic recovery, Penny Pritzker. "We discussed in detail the steps needed for financial stability," Zelenskiy said in his nightly video address.

"We eagerly await the decisions of the Congress regarding further support for Ukraine -- support that is not only significant for us, but also for every state whose stability depends on the strength of international law." White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said that US assistance for Ukraine had stopped, as negotiations continued over an aid package that could be tied to an overhaul of border security measures. US President Joe Biden's request for more military aid for Ukraine has been stalled in the Congress for months, as opposition Republicans have refused to consider

any legislation unless it is tied to the immigration issue. There has been no indication that the Senate or House of Representatives will vote on assistance for Kyiv any time soon, despite weeks of talks trying to break the impasse.

Zelenskiy visited Washington last month with the hope of persuading Congress to proceed quickly with approval, but came away with no such commitment.

Meanwhile, rows of white concrete barricades and coils of razor wire stretch across an open field for more than a kilometre. Trenches with rudimentary living quarters are being dug under cover of darkness. Artillery rumbles not far away.

New defensive lines visited by Reuters near the northeastern city of Kupiansk on Dec. 28 show how Ukraine has stepped up construction of fortifications in recent months as it shifts its military operations against Russia to a more defensive footing. The defences, which bear some similarities to those rolled out in the Russian-occupied south and east, aim to help Ukraine weather assaults while regenerating its forces as Moscow takes the battlefield initiative, military analysts said.

"As soon as the troops are moving, traversing fields, you can do without fortifications. But when the troops stop, you need to immediately dig into the ground," a Ukrainian army engineer with the call sign Lynx told Reuters near Kupiansk. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy announced that Ukraine was "significantly enhancing" fortifications on Nov. 28 after a

counteroffensive that it launched in June was unable to rapidly punch through Russian lines.

Kyiv says it is unswayed in its ambition to retake all remaining occupied territory, but for now is focused on politically sensitive conscription reforms to replenish manpower and on addressing artillery shortages at the front. Russia has been ramping up offensive pressure around eastern towns such as Kupiansk, Lyman and Avdiivka, and no longer needs to hold back its reserve troops for fear of a possible Ukrainian breakthrough, the military analysts said.

Zelenskiy said Ukraine's defensive constructions needed to be boosted and work on them accelerated around the three towns, in eastern parts of the Donetsk region, and in the regions of Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Kyiv, Rivne and Volyn. Those regions stretch all the way up from Ukraine's east, along the border with Russia and Belarus, to its western ally Poland. Zelenskiy said the southern Kherson region, a swathe of which is still occupied, would also be reinforced.

There is no publicly available data for the intensity or scale of the fortification construction. Ukraine has had defensive lines in some areas of the eastern Donbas region since 2014, when Russia backed militants who seized territory. It has been heavily dug in at places such as Avdiivka throughout the full-scale invasion.

Stronger fortifications would slow down Russian troops and suck fewer Ukrainian forces into defence, freeing

them up from the front so they could, for instance, receive more training, said Jack Watling, senior research fellow for land warfare at the Royal United Services Institute. "The Ukrainians are now shifting onto a defensive posture because their offensive has culminated," he said in a telephone interview, adding that Russia had retaken the initiative on the battlefield and was able to choose where to attack.

With Ukrainian artillery ammunition stocks declining, the rate of Russian casualties was falling, making it easier for Moscow to generate new units, which in time could allow them to open up new lines of attack, he added. "On the Ukrainian side, they are trying to minimise their own casualties, but also regenerate offensive combat power," said Watling.

He said fortifications could also be used to defend Ukraine's flanks when it goes back on the offensive. Reuters reporters visited trenches being dug with an excavator and shovels at an undisclosed location in the Chernihiv region near the Russian border.

"When the civilians have done their job (building the positions), we will densely mine it," Serhiy Nayevev, Ukraine's joint forces commander who oversees the northern military sector, told reporters at the site. The military has expanded its defensive fortifications in the north by 63% in the last few months, Ukraine's joint forces quoted Nayevev as saying.

Last month, Reuters reporters visited newly built Ukrainian trenches in Chernobyl near the border with



Belarus, a Russian ally used by Moscow as a staging ground for the February 2022 invasion. A large military engineering vehicle churned through the snowy ground as it carved out a wide anti-tank ditch.

"(The works are ongoing) along the whole Northern Operational Zone. These works are currently underway in Sumy region, Chernihiv region, here in the Kyiv direction," Nayevev said at the site. "Concrete structures, barbed wire, ... 'dragon's teeth' (concrete barricades)...; they will be mined and barbed wire will be put on them. This will be a continuous concrete obstacle for armoured vehicles," he said.

Near Kupiansk, Ukraine's military showed Reuters reporters newly built defensive lines, but said the exact location could not be disclosed pub-

licly for security reasons. A military engineer using the call sign "Lizard" said they typically put down the "dragon's teeth" first, followed by coils of razor wire and then mines, if they use them.

"I believe most of these barriers should have been built much earlier, probably in the spring. It takes too much time," he said. Several hundred metres behind the "dragon's teeth", work was underway to expand a network of personnel trenches reinforced with wooden beams where there were also living quarters and wooden bunk beds. Lynx, the other serviceman, said Ukraine was trying to minimise the use of mines for its fortifications to avoid leaving dangerous munitions on its territory. "This is our land. We wouldn't want to litter it so much," he said.

Syria extends aid deliveries via Turkey for six months

BEIRUT (Reuters): The Syrian government has extended its approval for humanitarian aid to be delivered to rebel-held parts of the country's northwest through a border crossing with Turkey for another six months.

The United Nations had been using the Bab al-Hawa crossing from Turkey to deliver aid to millions in northwest Syria since 2014 with authorization from the UN Security Council. That expired in mid-2023 after the 15-member body failed to reach an agreement to extend it, and the Syrian

government then said the UN could continue using the Bab al-Hawa crossing for another six months.

In a diplomatic note seen by Reuters and dated, Syria's mission to the United Nations said Damascus would "extend its permission granted to the United Nations (UN) to use Bab al-Hawa crossing to deliver humanitarian assistance to the North-West of Syria for an additional period of six months until 13 July 2024". Damascus has also allowed the UN to send aid through two other Turkish crossings after an earthquake killed

more than 50,000 people in Turkey and Syria last year. That authorization is set to expire on Feb. 13.

Turkey has been seeking renewals to both sets of authorizations as interest levels and funding priorities have hampered the aid response. Millions of people in the rebel-held northwest rely on aid deliveries through Turkey for access to food, medicine and other basic needs. After nearly 13 years of conflict, many across the country are living in their most dire economic conditions yet, with nine out of 10 Syrians living under the poverty line.

Vietnam jails two ex-ministers

HANOI (Reuters): A court in Vietnam jailed two former cabinet ministers and found dozens of officials guilty of bribery and mismanagement for their roles in a coronavirus test kit scandal, the ministry of public security said.

Former Health Minister Nguyen Thanh Long was sentenced to 18 years in prison for taking bribes worth \$2.25 million, while Chu Ngoc Anh, former science and technology minister, was jailed for three years for mismanagement, the security ministry said in a statement. At the heart of the scandal was a private medical firm called Viet A Technology Corp, which was accused of colluding with officials to produce coronavirus test kits for the state health system that were sold at inflated prices.

"I was wrong, I am sorry," Long was quoted by Phap Luat Online newspaper as saying at the trial. Reuters could not immediately reach Long's lawyers for comment. The verdicts comes as Vietnam intensifies its years-long anti-graft campaign that has seen hundreds of senior officials investigated for corruption, with many forced to quit, including former president and premier Nguyen Xuan Phuc and two deputy prime ministers. Viet A founder and chief executive Phan Quoc Viet was given a 29-year sentence at the week-long trial, in addition to a 25-year term handed down in a separate trial in late December, it added. Viet A had sold 4.5 million COVID-19 test kits in Vietnam during the pandemic at prices three times higher than their real cost and had illegally generated 1.23 trillion dong (\$50.25 million), the ministry said. The court also handed down sentences ranging from 18 months of probation to 15 years in prison term to 35 others, mostly disease control officials in cities and provinces for their involvement in the scandal, the ministry said.

Danish appeals court upholds prison sentences for separatists

COPENHAGEN (AP): A Danish appeals court upheld the sentences of three members of an Iranian separatist group convicted of promoting terror in Iran and gathering information for an unnamed Saudi intelligence service.

The three had been convicted and sentenced in a lower court in 2022 to six, seven and eight years in prison, respectively. They will be expelled from Denmark for good, the Eastern High Court in Copenhagen ruled. The appeals court did not release the men's names. They will serve their time in Danish prisons but it was unclear when they would be expelled.

The three were arrested in February 2020 in the town of Ringsted, 60 kilometers (40 miles) southwest of the Danish capital of Copenhagen, and subsequently convicted of promoting terror for their roles in a deadly attack on a military parade in the southwestern Iranian city of Ahvaz in September 2018. The Eastern Court found that the men belonged to the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahvaz, and had been gathering information about individuals and organizations in Denmark and abroad, as well as on Iranian military affairs, and passing it on to Saudi intelligence.

Flooding in Congo

BRAZZAVILLE, Republic of Congo (AP): Widespread floods in the Republic of Congo have pushed hundreds of thousands of people to be in urgent need of assistance, said the United Nations.

Unusually heavy rainfall has caused nine of the country's 12 departments to be affected with floods damaging health facilities and schools and submerging farmland, said the World Health Organization in a statement. More than 330,000 people have been impacted. "WHO is committed to supporting the government to ramp up emergency response to save lives and ensure access to critical basic services," said Lucien Manga, a representative in the Republic of Congo for the organization. The rainfall is twice the average of what was recorded between 2022 and 2023 and the floods have destroyed or damaged 34 health facilities, 120 schools and more than 64, 000 houses, it said.

North Korea to welcome Russian tourists in February

SEOUL (AP): Russian tourists reportedly going on a ski trip to North Korea will be the first international travelers to visit the country since border closings in January 2020 amid the global pandemic lockdown.

The tour, published by the Russian state-run Tass news agency and advertised by a Russian tour agency this week, underscores deepening cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang. It follows the meeting last September between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin at a cosmodrome in Russia's Far East. The trip scheduled for February was a surprise to Asia observers, who had expected the first post-pandemic tourists to North Korea to come from China, the North's biggest diplomatic ally and economic pipeline.

The webpage of the tour agency, Vostok Intur, says the four-day trip is to start on Feb. 9. According to a Tass report, an unspecified number of tourists from Russia's far eastern region of Primorye will first fly to the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, where they will visit monuments such as the "Tower of Juche Idea," named after the North's guiding philosophy of "juche" or self-reliance. The tourists will then travel on to the North's Masik Pass on the east coast, where the country's most modern ski resort is located, Tass said.

"In (Masik Pass), you will find yourself in a real paradise for winter sports lovers!" the blurb of the tour agency gushes. "Here you will find incredible slopes with different levels of difficulty that will satisfy the needs of both experienced skiers and beginners." Tass said the trip was arranged under an agreement reached between

Oleg Kozhemyako, governor of the Primorye region, and North Korean authorities.

Kozhemyako traveled to Pyongyang in December for talks on boosting economic ties as part of a flurry of bilateral exchanges since the Kim-Putin summit. Ahead of the trip, he told Russian media he expected to discuss tourism, agriculture and trade cooperation. The expanding ties between North Korea and Russia come as they are locked in separate confrontations with the United States and its allies — North Korea for its advancing nuclear program and Russia for its protracted war with Ukraine. The Kim-Putin summit deepened outside belief that North Korea is supplying conventional arms to Russia for its war in Ukraine, in return for high-tech Russian weapons technologies and other support.

North Korea has been slowly easing pandemic-era curbs and opening its international borders as part of its efforts to revive its economy devastated by the lockdown and persistent US-led sanctions.

In August, South Korea's spy service told lawmakers that North Korea's economy shrank each year from 2020 to 2022 and that its gross domestic product last year was 12% less than in 2016. "For North Korea, tourism is the easiest way to earn foreign currency under the international sanctions regime," said Koh Yu-hwan, former president of Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification. He said he expects Pyongyang to eventually also open North Korea to Chinese tourists.

Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University's Institute for Far Eastern Studies in Seoul, said that North Korea's receiving Russian

tourists before Chinese ones proves again Kim Jong Un is focusing on bolstering partnerships with Russia. He said North Korea and Russia are expected to expand their cooperation in other sectors.

But the resumption of Chinese travels will still likely serve as a much bigger source of revenues as they accounted for about 90% of the total international tourists to North Korea before the pandemic. In 2019, a record number of about 300,000 foreign tourists visited North Korea, resulting in North Korea earning between \$90 million and \$150 million, experts say.

"Visitors from Russia are unlikely to be as financially lucrative for North Korea as the return of more numerous visitors from China," Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said. "But the domestic political risk is relatively low while providing symbolism of revitalized relations with Moscow in line with Pyongyang's current geopolitical narrative." The package for the upcoming Russian tour costs \$750 per person, according to Tass and the tour agency.

It's still unclear how fast North Korea will expand its international tourism as Kim is tightening control of his 26 million people in the face of economic hardships and security tensions with the United States. North Korea, a country with poor public health infrastructure, likely remains wary of infectious diseases as well, observers say. Lim said North Korea will likely further open its borders in "a considerably limited and gradual manner." "For the Kim regime, international tourists risk ideological pollution as much as they promise economic benefits," Easley added.

Trucker involved in crash wants license back while awaiting deportation

CONCORD, N.H. (AP): A commercial truck driver from Ukraine who faces a deportation order is trying to get his driving privileges back now that he's been acquitted of causing the deaths of seven motorcyclists in New Hampshire.

"I would like to request a hearing to get my license back," Volodymyr Zhukovskyy, 28, wrote to the New Hampshire Department of Safety in September, according to records obtained by The Associated Press under the state's open records law.

Zhukovskyy awaits a state administrative hearing on the license request as he deals with an unresolved drunken driving charge in Connecticut, where he was arrested a month before the crash in New Hampshire. He rejected a plea deal in that case, according to court records. The 2022 manslaughter acquittal drew strong comments from Gov. Chris Sununu, who said the seven bikers "did not receive justice," and from Attorney General John Formella, who said he believed the state proved its case.

Prosecutors argued that Zhukovskyy — who had taken heroin, fentanyl and cocaine on the day of the crash — repeatedly swerved back and forth before the collision and told police he caused it. But a judge dismissed eight impairment charges and his attorneys said the lead biker was drunk and not looking where he was going when he lost control of his motorcycle and slid in front of Zhukovskyy's truck. The jury found him not guilty of multiple manslaughter and negligent homicide counts stemming from the June 21, 2019, collision in Randolph, New Hampshire. The crash killed seven members of the Jarheads Motorcycle Club, an organization of Marine Corps veterans and their spouses in

New England.

Zhukovskyy's license was suspended automatically following his arrest, and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained him after the verdict, citing previous convictions of drug possession, driving with a suspended license, furnishing false information and larceny. Zhukovskyy was taken from a New Hampshire county jail to a federal detention facility in Pennsylvania. Zhukovskyy's immigration attorney asked for asylum for his client, who came to the US from Ukraine when he was 10 years old and had permanent residency status. A judge ordered Zhukovskyy's deportation last February and there is no record of an appeal in the case, according to the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

But it's unclear under how he could be sent to a country at war with Russia. The US has paused repatriation flights to Ukraine and authorized Temporary Protected Status for qualified Ukrainians. Details of the judge's decision have not been made public. Zhukovskyy was released from the Pennsylvania facility in April under an order of supervision, according to detention and immigration officials. That type of order allows immigrants to live and work in the US, so long as they meet regularly with ICE representatives and agree to follow specific conditions.

Zhukovskyy, who has pleaded not guilty to Connecticut charge, has not responded to requests from The Associated Press for an interview. The administrative hearing on his driving privileges has been postponed at least twice. Restoration would depend largely on whether Zhukovskyy "materially contributed" to the crash, said Earle Wingate, the lawyer representing him. He said he

wanted Zhukovskyy to appear in person, but the prosecutor was granted a request for Zhukovskyy to appear by video, citing safety concerns.

"The motor vehicle crash has been high-profile and has affected an inordinate number of family and friends of the victims and stands to reason to be at the root of elevated emotions for all," prosecutor Stephen Kace said in his motion. Wingate agreed that "the emotions could run high," but noted that security was maintained during Zhukovskyy's trial.

Russian opposition activist placed in custody

MOSCOW (AP): A Russian left-wing opposition activist who criticized the Kremlin but backed the war in Ukraine was ordered to remain in custody pending his trial on charges linked to his online comment.

Moscow's Basmanov District Court ruled to keep Sergei Udaltsov in custody until Feb. 15 on charges of "justifying terrorism" as the probe is continuing. Udaltsov said the accusations relate to his posts in support of members of a Marxist group who were arrested for creating a "terrorist community" in the city of Ufa, about 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) east of Moscow. He could face five years in prison if convicted. Speaking during hearing, Udaltsov rejected the charges as "ravings" before the judge closed the hearings to the public at the request of prosecutors who argued the case materials were sensitive, according to the state Tass and RIA-Novosti news agencies.

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Is the Gaza war turning global?

THE US and UK militaries carried out over a dozen strikes on Houthi targets in mainland Yemen late Thursday, marking the second response to attacks carried out by the Iran-backed group in the Red Sea. The US military used fighter jets, warships and a submarine for conducting the retaliatory attacks on multiple targets, associated with the Houthis' unmanned aerial vehicle, ballistic and cruise missile, and coastal radar and air surveillance capabilities. US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin defined this comprehensive invasion against a foreign state as the US's right to self-defense and vowed to take follow-on actions to protect US forces if necessary. According to the details, the attack was conducted with crucial support from several countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands.

After the Tel Aviv unjust and unparallel assault on Gaza following the October 7 attacks, there were widening apprehensions among the global community, about a possible spill over of the Israel's brutal actions in Gaza and the West Bank. The global community feared that the Gaza conflict could spread into wider Middle East and North African region (MENA) because regional Arab states, and the armed militant groups can respond to Israeli shelling and indiscriminate bombardment against innocent Palestinian that could spark a global conflict in the region. The Gaza war shortly inflamed the Israel-Lebanon border while several pro-Hamas several militant groups started targeting Israeli and western interests in the region and beyond while Yemen Houthis launched a flurry of missile and drone attacks on merchant vessels with Israeli flag. Weeks ago, the US-led pro-Israel western alliance set up a multinational naval task force aimed at protecting sea lines of communication in the Red Sea and adjoining waters while multiple encounters between Houthi fighters and US Navy occurred in the Red Sea in recent days that resulted in killings of several Houthi fighters and boats wreackages. Over the past weeks, the tension remained high in the Middle East and the adjoining waters including the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean because dozens of warships, aircraft carriers and submarines from regional and extra regional countries amassed in the area, turning this region into a most militarized zone in the world.

The recent strikes of the US-led coalition violated the sovereignty of an independent and free state, caused grave violation of the international law and the UN Charter. That unilateral and unlawful action seriously disturbed the global order and attracted a worldwide outrage against the United States and allies. The US again targeted Houthis' military installations on Saturday while Houthis leadership sworned a befitting retaliation against the enemies. The geopolitical and security situation sharply deteriorating in the Middle East while a huge and surprise attack likely to be launched against western interests by the Houthi militia any time that could escalate a widescale conflict in the area.

It is high time that Israel and its western allies pause their hostility, give a chance to diplomacy and move toward a ceasefire and permanent truce in Gaza otherwise the ongoing conflict will turn into a global war that will destroy the world peace and equally effect all competing nations. The United Nations and the global community must not spare a moment in initiating negotiations and striking a peace deal to restore peace and stability, until it gets late, the war, fire and hostility destroy each and every thing.

KP's digital dashboard

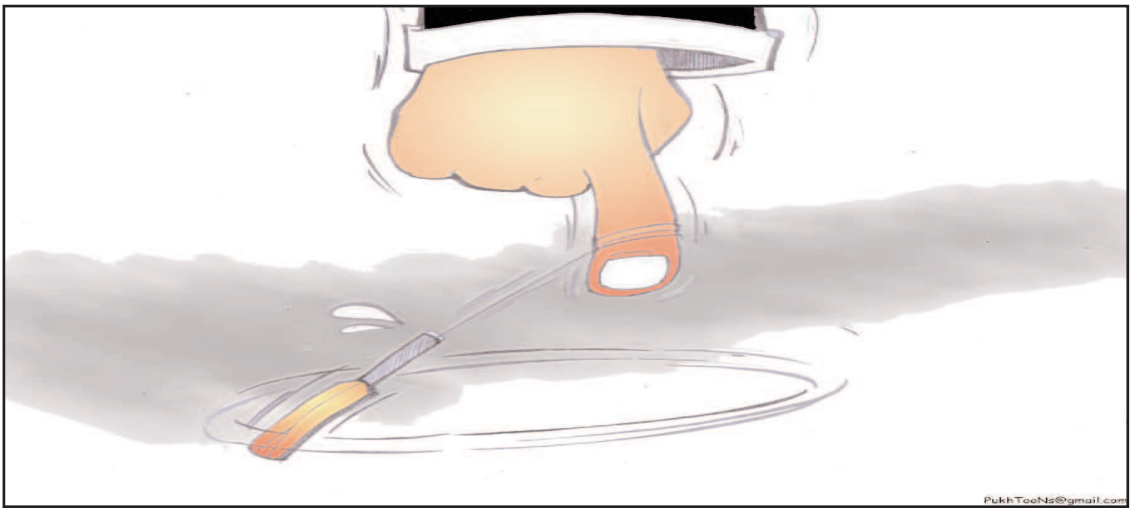
THE caretaker Chief Minister KP, Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah inaugurated the KP Digital Dashboard under the Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Initiative for real time monitoring of provincial departments functioning, and public service delivery at district and divisional levels. According to the details, the Digital Dashboard will enable the provincial authorities to monitor public service delivery and the performance of provincial departments in realtime situation through various centres spread across the province along with assessing district administrations and police department through Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa dashboard on daily basis.

The KP government is making concerted efforts to improve governance, to expedite public service delivery and establish a strict monitoring and accountability mechanism for the provincial departments to enhance their performance and curb menace of corruption in government departments including Police, Revenue, Health and Education sectors, local administration and works department. So, people get their rights without any delay and extra charges, all basic services be provided at their doorsteps unhinderedly. The provincial government has identified 27 key performance indicators (KPIS) including Blocked Khewats, Demarcation Cases, Pending Mutation cases, revenue collection and retrieval of state land in administration sector while nine KPIS including actions against drug peddlers, street crimes, murders and theft cases have been identified for Police Department to set standards and resolve issues at the initial stage. Departmental and social problems, realguation of professions and jobs categories will be address in the second phase to streamline governance, curb corruption and improve service delivery of the government entities.

Historically, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province always took a lead among the all federating units in the field of public service delivery, the rule of the law and social well-being of the masses throughout the past. Whilst, the incumbent provincial government maintained this tradition in achieving another milestone by launching Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Digital Dashboard that will bring a revolution in the province if implemented in true letter and spirit. Unfortunately, the things get worst and face unproductiveness after change of political government or senior hierarchy that lost national resources, futile efforts and hardwork of the leaders. Therefore, the provincial government must set up such a mechanism that ensures continuation of political oversight and involvement of the top level bureaucracy to keep this mechanism efficient, viable and productive throughout in the long run.

Important Notice

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



Israel's legal illegality

Dr Mazen Masri

THE International Court of Justice (ICJ) is holding its first hearing in the proceedings brought by South Africa against Israel on January 11 and 12. In the application submitted on December 29, the South African government argued that the way Israel is conducting its war in Gaza is genocidal in nature, and therefore it is in violation of its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The Statute of the ICJ allows state parties to choose a person to sit as judge ad hoc if the state does not have a judge of its nationality when the court is dealing with a case to which they are a party. Both states chose to appoint their own judge ad hoc. South Africa selected former Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke, while Israel went for its former Supreme Court President Aharon Barak. It comes as no surprise that the decision to appoint Barak attracted praise from many quarters. The 87-year-old sat as a judge at the Supreme Court for 28 years, 11 of which as its president. His career as a judge was preceded by a three-year stint as the attorney general of Israel (1975-78) and a distinguished academic career at the Hebrew University.

A prolific writer with an international reputation, he has been a sought-after speaker at prestigious Western universities and international forums. Part of his attraction is that, throughout his career, he successfully built a reputation as a Western liberal jurist trying to promote the rule of law and human rights despite the challenges of being in a "rough part of the world". This carefully cultivated image and his academic pedigree, in combination with his history as a Holocaust survivor, have bestowed on him the air of a larger-than-life figure, a sort of fearless human rights champion.

Barak will be sitting as a judge in a case in which South Africa will contest the legality of the way Israel is waging its brutal war against the Palestinians, an area in which he has ample experience. After all, the Supreme Court of Israel was the final arbiter of the legality of Israeli practices since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967. His appointment as judge ad hoc is a good opportunity to revisit his and the court's record and how it shaped Israel's application of international law. One of the thorniest issues that Barak dealt with as attorney general and Supreme Court judge was Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. Despite the almost wall-to-wall consensus on the illegality of Israeli settlements, and the long list of international law authorities, which include United Nations Security Council resolu-

tions, UN General Assembly resolutions and one ICJ opinion, the Supreme Court ruled in 1993 that settlements are "non-justiciable". This means that the court refused to discuss their legality under international law.

The court tempered some of the excesses of the settlement project, mainly to avoid a situation of total lawlessness and chaos, which could undermine government policy and make it harder to defend settlements internationally. However, the rules that the court set out served more than anything to legitimate the whole settlement project. The result is that the settler population ballooned from a few thousand in 1975 to 700,000 in 2023. A similar pattern could be identified in the cases related to the wall that Israel built in the West Bank. In 2004, the ICJ issued an advisory opinion declaring that the wall was illegal because it violated the human rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination. But Barak begged to differ.

Under his leadership, the court provided the legal stamp of approval despite the fact that the wall snakes throughout the West Bank, cutting off Palestinians from their lands and significantly restricting their movement. While a few legal challenges were successful in bringing about minor changes to the route because their violation of the rights of the local population was disproportionate, these rulings ignored some important principles of international law. The result is that the whole project of the wall, which slices through villages and neighbourhoods, was legitimated by the court. Under Barak, the Supreme Court also continued rubber-stamping the savage practice of punitive home demolition. First introduced by the British in the Second Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa, this practice was imported by the British Mandate authorities in an effort to subdue the Arab Revolt in Palestine (1936-39).

The legal basis for this practice was abrogated when Jordan controlled the West Bank between 1948 and 1967, but after it occupied the territories, Israel resurrected the colonial legislation and has used it extensively against the families of Palestinians suspected of being active in resisting the occupation. The Supreme Court repeatedly rejected the argument that this practice is illegal under international law because it violates the Geneva Convention prohibition on collective punishment. While there were some dissenting views in the court because of the draconian nature of this practice, under Barak's leadership, it was approved, denying that it was punitive and presenting it as an administrative meas-

ure intended to promote security through deterrence. In a small number of cases, the court decided that demolition is disproportionate and opted for sealing part of the house, but in principle, it never challenged this practice despite its manifest illegality under international law. Again, Barak's role was to make legal what went against legal norms. The ruling on the use of torture is probably the case that best exemplifies Barak's approach of controlling the excesses in order to legitimate and save what is manifestly illegal under international law. The prohibition of torture under international law is absolute. It has attained the status of jus cogens - a fundamental principle of international law that applies in times of war and peace and under all circumstances. Not so according to Barak.

In a 1999 ruling, the Supreme Court upheld the principle of the prohibition of torture, but this prohibition was not absolute. Under Barak's guidance, it left the door open for the use of torture, or as it was euphuistically called "physical investigation means", in situations of a "ticking time-bomb". In such cases, the interrogators would not be held liable. He effectively introduced the prohibition and the loophole to circumvent it at the same time. While there was a marked decrease in cases of torture following this case, the backdoor that Barak introduced turned into a gate. Cases of torture increased significantly within a few years, and it was a widespread practice against Palestinian political prisoners even before the October 7 attacks. Human rights organisations documented cases of sexual violence as torture and torture that led to death. None of those who practised torture was ever prosecuted.

Another example of Barak's cavalier approach to international law is the case of Mubarak Awad. Like other Palestinians in Jerusalem, Awad was given a permanent resident status according to Israeli law after 1967. After spending some years in the United States, he returned home and started the Palestinian Centre for the Study of Nonviolence in 1983 to promote nonviolent resistance to the occupation. Awad's activism drew the ire of the Israeli government, which decided in 1988 to deport him despite the fact that he was born in Jerusalem and held a permanent resident status before travelling to study in the US. The Supreme Court dismissed Awad's legal challenge and rejected the relevance of international law which clearly prohibits the deportation of the population of an occupied territory. Barak wrote the decision of the court in which the two other judges concurred. Applying Israeli law, he stated that Awad's resident

status had expired and he had no right to remain in his homeland. The Israeli government used this precedent to invalidate the Jerusalem resident status of thousands of Palestinians in Jerusalem. This legal framework, which treats the native Palestinian population as migrants, is still being used today, and it severely curtails the ability of Palestinians to travel, seek education and work abroad.

These examples - and they are not the only ones - demonstrate Barak's approach to international law: ignore it when it does not suit your goals or apply a distorted version of it that creates the image of compliance with the rule of law and human rights while allowing the wrongful practice to continue with some constraints. It is the approach of enjoying the image of a liberal human rights-loving judge without confronting Israel's human rights violations directly. For Palestinians, however, the consequences have been dire. We can see this very clearly in the increasing number of settlers and settlements, the normalisation of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, the children and families who have become homeless because their homes have been demolished, and the tens of thousands of Palestinians who cannot return to Jerusalem because Israel sees them as alien immigrants who lost their residential status and not as a native population protected by international law.

Some may argue that this balancing approach is the best one could expect in the circumstances. But this argument means that we should ignore the big picture and the suffering of those who were on the receiving end of Barak's rulings. No legal analysis or political justification can hide or excuse the fact that on Barak's watch, a sophisticated system of apartheid emerged, as documented by human rights organisations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Al-Haq and B'tselem and several UN special rapporteurs.

No one who is truly committed to human rights and the rule of law would have allowed such a brutal system to emerge under their watch, let alone be the main legal enabler. For a long time, Barak's approach and reputation helped Israel avoid legal reckoning in international tribunals and courts. His appointment as judge ad hoc to the ICJ is another iteration of his role as Israel's legal "bulletproof vest". There will be no surprises about what he will decide as it seems that he has already made up his mind that the attacks of October 7 could be described as a genocide, but not Israeli attacks and practices, which Barak asserts are in line with international law. Luckily, at The Hague, he will be only one judge out of 17.

Aljazeera

Why Europe must double down on its support for Ukraine

Andrew Hammond

LATE 2023 and early 2024 have seen growing European concern that Russia could yet prevail in the most serious conflict on the continent since the Second World War. Far from being the time to take its foot off the gas pedal, Europe must instead double down on its efforts to help Ukraine.

The stakes in play are massive and growing. Europe and the wider West still have a significant strategic interest in ensuring the best possible outcome for Kyiv. A potential Russian victory would only embolden Moscow and its allies across the world. Only last month, for instance, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius warned of the possibility of further Russian aggression in Europe this decade, including against Georgia, Moldova and/or the Baltic states.

And it is not just security-related stakeholders making such comments. Also last month, International Monetary Fund Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath warned that the world is heading toward "cold war two" as a result of its geopolitical and geoeconomic fragmentation into two blocs: one in the West and a Russia and China-led grouping in the East.

One measure of the consequences of a Russian victory is that Moscow would move closer to controlling a quarter of global wheat exports. So, it is time for Europe to step up to the plate in what may be a very difficult year ahead.

Much of the first two years of the war has seen Kyiv, unexpectedly, on the counteroffensive. Moreover, Ukraine recaptured about half of its previously occupied territory in the period up to autumn last year. With both sides digging in for the cold winter months, making breakthroughs may become increasingly difficult - and it is Moscow that has reportedly made some recent territorial gains.

This will do little to ease the "fatigue" that Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said, in an unguarded moment late last year, is being experienced by some European leaders. She added: "We (are) near the moment in which everybody understands that we need a way out."

Another factor that will do little to ease this fatigue is that sanctions may be doing as much damage to the West as they are to Russia. In 2023, the Russian economy is expected to have expanded by 2.8 percent, while some Western nations flatlined.

It is perhaps unsurprising, in that context, that freshly committed Western aid to Ukraine dropped nearly 90 percent from a year earlier, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. This is even before last month, when the US and EU were unable to approve significant new funds for Kyiv because of Republican opposition in the US Congress and Hungary's disagreements with Brussels.

Yet another challenge is

the possible splintering of the political consensus behind President Volodymyr Zelensky's leadership. While his approval rating remains high by international standards, trust in him fell to 76 percent in October from 91 percent in May, according to the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. This comes in a context in which Moscow continues to put huge resources into its war effort. This includes massive military manpower. A total of 617,000 Russian troops are currently fighting, with some 244,000 of them being soldiers called up to fight alongside professional military troops.

All in all, this has given rise to Western speculation that Kyiv will not achieve all of its strategic war objectives. Take the example of Lord Ricketts, a former UK national security adviser. He believes there is a growing possibility of a Korea-style scenario, with Russia keeping control of about a fifth of prewar Ukraine and the remainder moving in a pro-Western direction in the years to come. This is why it is now so important that Europe redoubles its commitment, especially amid election uncertainty in the US that may see Donald Trump win out in November. The ex-president's apparent disdain for Ukraine may leave a critical gap that only Europe and its Western allies, including Japan and Canada, can try to fill - at least partially.

What the EU has already done is to start to move forward with about half the previously promised aid of 50 billion (\$54 billion) over the next four years. This is to give Kyiv more predictability for its strained budget.

However, much more thinking is needed about how the 27-member bloc and non-EU allies like the UK can best contribute to the resilience of Ukraine in the medium to long term. This includes military assistance, security guarantees and wider economic support, such as access to the EU's massive single market.

A starting point for this future commitment, beyond the unprecedented support that Europe has provided so far, is Brussels moving forward with accession talks to allow Ukraine to potentially join the EU. Beyond that, the West can also put Kyiv onto a pathway to possible NATO membership. Moreover, important commitments can be made on reconstruction. The rebuilding of Ukraine may approximate that of Western Europe after the Second World War, Eastern Europe after the Cold War and the Western Balkans after the breakup of Yugoslavia. It will cost many hundreds of billions of euros and will be the most ambitious postwar reconstruction effort in the 21st century. This year is therefore the moment for Europe to double down on its commitment to Ukraine. The EU and other European powers such as the UK have huge incentives to support Kyiv in a difficult 2024, which may see yet more troubling news for Zelensky's leadership.

East Asia's 'old' challenges need innovative solutions

Park Dan-bee

DEMOGRAPHIC changes, such as aging populations and declining birth rates, pose challenges as well as offer opportunities for industries and economies. To overcome the challenges and seize the opportunities, especially to achieve long-term economic sustainability, economies need to implement policies promoting innovations.

An aging population creates various macroeconomic challenges, including a potential decrease in productivity due to the declining working-age population. As the old-age dependency ratio rises, the burden of healthcare expenses and pension systems increases. And as the uncertainty over income increases, consumption and economic growth decline. In East Asia, the Republic of Korea, China and Japan face significant challenges due to popula-

tion aging. Compared with other advanced economies, Japan encountered the population aging problem at a slightly earlier stage, starting in the mid-1990s. As Japan's percentage of elderly population to the total population increased, it impacted the country's economy, leading to a contraction in domestic demand and decline in both production and consumption, and hence economic growth.

Japanese enterprises expanded their outward FDI in China and some Southeast Asian countries, and used overseas labor to boost production and maintain their competitiveness when the country's working-age population began to decline. Charles Goodhart and Manoj Pradhan write in their The Great Demographic Reversal that innovative Japanese companies have actively increased outward FDI, leveraging cost

advantages from inexpensive overseas labor to maintain their cost competitiveness and expand their market share, as outward foreign direct investment and intra-regional cooperation were important to stimulating production and maintaining competitiveness. During the same period, China integrated into the international trade market and emerged as a key hub of the global manufacturing network, supported by the availability of abundant labor, thus providing a cost-effective workforce. Recognizing the potential benefits, Japanese companies increased their outward FDI in China. The increase in Japanese companies' outward FDI was aimed at mitigating the negative impact of the decline in Japan's working-age population.

Now China faces the

aging population and declining working-age population problem. And the global economy faces the challenge of declining trade since protectionism practiced by certain economies is fragmenting global trade and global supply chains. Given the current global economic situation, therefore, the chances of boosting growth through outward FDI may be limited. Yet it is important to promote regional economic integration and strengthen collaboration with countries that have significant growth potential.

Employing automation and developing artificial intelligence are necessary to offset the negative impacts of the demographic changes. According to a study by Daron Acemoglu and Pascual Restrepo, published in the Review of Economic Studies in 2021,

the impact of declining demographic dividends can be offset by adopting automation technologies, including robots. Countries with rapidly aging populations such as the ROK and Japan are leading the way in using robots to address the shortage of labor. Companies in the ROK, and Japan, such as Hyundai Motor, Samsung and Toyota have a technological advantage in the field of industrial robots and hold many patents in robotics, according to a Statista report in 2023. In China, enterprises such as Baidu, Tencent and the State Grid Corporation lead the AI and machine learning process as they hold the largest number of patents in these fields. In fact, the ROK, China and Japan are taking steps to boost their competitiveness in the field of AI and robotics.

AI and robotics will play a crucial role in stim-

ulating productivity and innovation by compensating for the decline in the working-age population, and the subsequent increase in productivity will in turn raise the demand for labor by creating new employment opportunities. AI, robotics and other advanced technologies give rise to new tasks within their realms and across other sectors. Therefore, it is necessary to implement cooperation policies to support enterprises that promote innovations by increasing investment in research and development, facilitating startup incubation, and building a foolproof system to protect intellectual properties. And since AI and robotics may replace certain jobs, it is essential to address the potential challenges they may create in the labor market and work out strategies to ensure a balanced and inclusive transition.

Putin says Ukraine’s Odesa is historically Russian. Reality more complicated

ON Dec. 29, 2022, a monumental statue of Russian Empress Catherine II in the center of Odesa was dismantled, marking the end of more than two decades of local and national debate. This trend of removing monuments to Russian imperialism following Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is taking place as the Kremlin increasingly utilizes past narratives to justify its present military action. This is particularly evident in southern Ukraine, a region President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly asserted was not historically part of Ukraine.

This argument, rooted in imperial terminology like Novorossiya (New Russia), refuses to acknowledge the region's historical and present connections to the Ukrainian Republic. Instead, it ties southern and eastern Ukraine to the chronology of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and subsequently, the Russian Federation.

In December 2023, during Putin's annual press conference, he affirmed that Odesa "is a Russian city." This statement raises concerns about the next stages of the war, especially given the frequent missile strikes on Odesa and the importance of the port for exporting grain. Despite Odesa's relative distance from the current frontlines, the ongoing discourse about the port city's supposed Russian identity suggests a possible expansion of Russia's territorial ambitions. Exploring the historical roots of this debate and considering the roles of language and identity provides insights into the complex understanding of Odesa and its surrounding region.

The debate over Odesa's identity is not a recent development. Rather, it is intricately linked to the mythmaking that accompanied the Russian Empire's conquest of southern Ukraine in the late 18th century and the subsequent consolidation of Russia's colonial control. During this period, the Black Sea steppes served both as a target of colonization and as a strategic tool for Tsarist expansion toward the Caucasus, and were renamed "New Russia." This terminology served to validate the military conquest and has been revived by contemporary Russian imperial apologists to construct a narrative of territorial loss. However, it is important to note that the label "New Russia" was never intended to accurately describe the social and cultural landscape of the northern Black Sea. Instead, it was primarily an

administrative term, often used interchangeably with "southern Ukraine" and the "wild fields" throughout much of the pre-revolutionary era.

The demographics of the southern provinces presented a challenge for classification. Despite the ideological portrayal of the steppes as a Russian frontier territory, they were increasingly inhabited by non-Russians. The process of settlement transformed the northern shores of the Black Sea into a hybrid society, where villages of foreign cultivators coexisted with the steppe populations of Tatars and Cossacks. The settler colonial nature of Southern Ukraine's population was characterized by a demographic diversity that included more foreign colonists than internal Russian migrants, partly because the mobility of the Russian peasantry was limited by the institution of serfdom. This multinational composition was particularly evident in populations concentrated in port cities founded after Russia's conquest including Kherson, Mariupol, Mykolaiv and Odesa.

Odesa quickly emerged as the dominant Black Sea port and primary hub for settlement, evolving into the economic and political center of Southern Russia. The city's rapid boom was comparable to the growth observed in the American West during the same century. Within 50 years, it became the third-largest city in the Russian Empire. The city's population was diverse, drawing people from maritime nations of the Mediterranean and western Europe. Odesa housed substantial Greek and Italian merchant communities, Mennonite Germans, French expatriates, Poles in exile, and emerged as the main urban hub in the Pale of Settlement where Russian Jews were permitted to settle.

The substantial presence of non-Russian residents raised questions about the contested "Russianness" of New Russia, and especially of Odesa, which made imperial authorities uneasy. Some officials expressed concerns that the port city was "completely foreign, outside of the great Russian unity." Local authorities had a vested interest in downplaying the number of foreign nationals in Odesa - since the main urban center of Novorossiya was the least Russian city of all. A century after Odesa's establishment, the first comprehensive census of the Russian Empire in

Olivia Durand

1897 recorded that non-Russian nationals made up just 7% of the city's 400,000 residents. However, when using native language as a measure of nationality, the figure rose to 58% - including 49% Russian, 31% Yiddish, 10% Ukrainian, 4% Polish, and 2.5% German speaking.

Throughout the Russian imperial period, Odesa stood as a Russian city made of foreigners and embodied a divergence from Russianness rather than its colonial reproduction. Instead of continuity, the historical discourse about the northern Black Sea emphasized an enduring binary: the territory was constructed as Russian, while its maritime ports were seen as cosmopolitan and foreign hubs. Emphasizing this division between Russians and a broadly defined category of "foreigners" leaves little room for examining the Ukrainian presence. At first glance, Ukrainian speakers appeared to constitute a relatively small linguistic group, representing less than one-tenth of Odesa's population. Contemporary Kremlin discourses tend to reinforce this perspective, dismissing any connection between the Black Sea and Ukraine.

The argument faces several challenges. First, by the time of the 1897 census, the practice and teaching of Ukrainian had been significantly restricted due to intensified Russification policies since 1874, meaning that using language as a measure of nationality is unreliable. With Ukrainian publications banned, the language's revival was primarily driven by the cultural efforts of secret societies such as the Odessa Hromada. In the urban context alone, the share of ethnic Ukrainians could thus encompass some Russian speakers, meaning ethnic Ukrainians may have been more numerous than language or official nationality-based statistics might suggest. Furthermore, the traditional distinction between urban and rural life in Ukrainian society meant that until the 20th century, most Ukrainians resided in rural areas. Cities functioned as "Russifying machines" through the efforts of Russia's imperial administration and universities.

Examining the demographic composition of the three southern provinces of "Novorossiya" based on the 1897 census data presents a markedly different perspective. Across each province, a Ukrainian presence endured at an

average of 55%. The census results therefore indicate that across the territories of "New Russia" self-identifying Ukrainians remained the majority, even after more than a century of imperial rule. Over the centuries, Russian authorities, including the Tsars, harbored distrust toward Odesa's deep connection to transnational networks, dubbing it a "nest of conspirators." The shift from this perceiving Odesa as a city of Russians and foreigners to one of Russians and Ukrainians emphasizes the strategic position of Odesa and its surrounding region for Russian military ambitions on the Black Sea. This reframing portrays the area as a lost imperial core, fostering a narrative of yearning for reunification with Russia.

The debate surrounding the statue of Catherine II in the heart of Odesa shows how far-fetched the prospect of a seamless reunification with Russia is. After the first removal by the Bolsheviks in 1920, the statue was re-inaugurated amid protests in 2007, and faced removal once again 15 years later. As a symbol of a crucial moment in Ukrainian history, marked by the introduction of serfdom and the end of Cossack autonomy, parallels between Catherine II's conquest of the Black Sea steppe and Putin's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and 2022's full-scale invasion are easy to draw. Putin's frequent references to the Russian Empire have evolved into potent political tools, surpassing the significance of allusions to a shared Soviet past. This positioning places Odesa on the geopolitical map as a part of an expanded Greater Russia.

The Kremlin's revival of Russia's Tsarist past has faced resistance in Odesa. From an initial public ambivalence toward the statue, with Odesites taking pride in their city's commercial and cosmopolitan history from the imperial era, the dynamics shifted dramatically after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Contrary to what the Russian narrative would have one expect, Catherine's legacy in Odesa was not embraced as a justification for annexation. Online petitions in 2022 overwhelmingly called for the statue's removal. In contrast to Vladimir Putin's simplistic assertion that Odesa is a Russian city, the attitudes of the residents of Odesa show how the city values its Ukrainian identity despite the complex legacies of Russian settler colonialism.

The Moscow Times

Will Manila stop creating trouble in 2024?

THE Ferdinand Marcos Jr government in the Philippines veered away from the previous Rodrigo Duterte administration's South China Sea policy in 2023, by making provocative moves that have raised tensions in the region.

True, Philippine President Marcos Jr, acknowledging the souring of Sino-Philippine relations, has said that his government will "solve that problem of Ren'ai Reef" itself, raising hopes that Manila might navigate a different course and appropriately handle the South China Sea disputes. But the shift in the Marcos Jr government's South China Sea policy is not merely a result of inexperience or wrong policies; it is the result of a confluence of internal and external factors.

First, the imminent deterioration and disintegration of the vessel, BRP Sierra Madre, is the direct reason behind the Philippines' frequent attempts to create troubles in the region. In May 1999, just one day after a US missile dropped on the Chinese embassy in what was then Yugoslavia, the Philippine authorities intentionally ran aground the dilapidated tank landing ship on Ren'ai Reef. Using the excuse of a leaking hull, they refused to tow it away later. For quite some time, Manila had been transporting construction materials to the reef to reinforce the stranded vessel. Due to continuous erosion caused by sea waves and winds, BRP Sierra Madre seems to be on the verge of disintegrating, prompting Manila to accelerate the large-scale transportation of construction materials to repair the stranded ship and turn it into a permanent structure with the aim of unlawfully occupying Ren'ai Reef. Second, the escalating domestic political strife is a key reason why the Philippines has changed its South China Sea policy with the tacit help of the United States. The situation became increasingly clear last year due to an imminent rupture in the political alliance between the Marcos and Duterte families.

Particularly noteworthy is the intensifying dispute between Martin Romualdez, a cousin of

Chen Qinghong

Marcos Jr and the current speaker of the House, and Rodrigo Duterte and his daughter Sara Duterte. The dispute stems from the Marcos Jr camp's attempt to break free of the influence of the Duterte family, establish its own authority and expand the Marcos family's influence. As a result, either driven by Marcos Jr himself or by his camp, there has been a shift in the Philippines' domestic and foreign policies. It is now "leaning towards the US and opposing China". This move serves two purposes: garnering the support of the military and police, as they can benefit

Guidelines in 2024, asserting that "an armed attack in the Pacific, including anywhere in the South China Sea, on either of their public vessels, aircraft, or armed forces - which includes their Coast Guards - would invoke mutual defense commitments under Articles IV and V of the 1951 US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty". This has emboldened the Philippines to test the reliability of the US' commitment, by frequently creating trouble in the South China Sea. The three factors mentioned above do not seem to have diminished this year, when the erosion of Sierra Madre could accelerate, widening

Over the past decade, the US, identifying China as its primary competitor, has been meddling in the South China Sea, the East China Sea and other regional issues to sow discord between China and its neighbors, and build a unified front to counter China. The US has been using the Philippines, a treaty ally and a crucial link in the "first island chain", as a key lever to interfere in the South China Sea issue, consolidate its military presence in the region, and trigger regional confrontations.

significantly from appropriations; and securing the support of the US to weaken the power and influence of the political rivals. And third, the US' intensifying efforts to contain China is an external factor prompting the Philippines to take risky actions. Over the past decade, the US, identifying China as its primary competitor, has been meddling in the South China Sea, the East China Sea and other regional issues to sow discord between China and its neighbors, and build a unified front to counter China. The US has been using the Philippines, a treaty ally and a crucial link in the "first island chain", as a key lever to interfere in the South China Sea issue, consolidate its military presence in the region, and trigger regional confrontations.

After encouraging the Philippines to stir up trouble in the South China Sea, the US said that its Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines is applicable to the South China Sea issue. The two countries also released the US-Philippines Bilateral Defense

the cracks between the different political camps in the Philippines.

Moreover, in the past year, while transporting construction materials to Ren'ai Reef, the Philippine authorities invited a large number of journalists to visit the reef in the name of "transparency". In reality, Manila fabricated false information and edited video clips to arouse public anger against China. The frequent provocative moves of the Philippines in the South China Sea last year have further damaged Sino-Philippine ties and undermined regional stability, forcing knowledgeable individuals and businesspeople, both in the Philippines and other countries, to criticize the Philippine government's moves.

In short, the prospects of the Philippines changing course, exercising restraint and appropriately handling the South China Sea issues in 2024, are not high. But it is clear that Manila's wrong approach will create more troubles not only for the region, but also itself.

The China Daily

The implications of Myanmar junta’s surprise setback

IN a stunning turn of events, the Myanmar military's Regional Operations Command in Laukkai last week surrendered to the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, marking a significant and unexpected shift in the ongoing conflict. The implications of this surrender, coupled with the Three Brotherhood Alliance's rapid gains across northern Shan state, pose a major problem for the military in the northern region and present a formidable challenge for junta chief Gen. Min Aung Hlaing.

The fall of the Laukkai command to the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, a prominent ethnic armed group, underscores the volatile nature of the military's hold on power. Laukkai, a key strategic outpost, was considered a stronghold for the Tatmadaw, Myanmar's military. The surrender means not only a loss of territory, but it also lands a blow on the military's morale and is an assertion of the rebels' resilience.

The Three Brotherhood Alliance, consisting of the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Arakan Army, has capitalized on this momentum, making rapid gains across northern Shan. Their coordinated efforts have seen them overrun hundreds of military outposts, seize key towns and take

control of crucial border crossings with China. The rebels' success not only demonstrates their military capabilities but also showcases the fragility of the military's control over the northern territories. This strategic setback is a major concern for Hlaing. The northern region has been a historically challenging battleground due to its complex ethnic composition and long-standing grievances against the central government. The Three Brotherhood Alliance's gains have emboldened not only these ethnic armed groups but also other dissident factions, creating a domino effect that could destabilize the junta's grip on power.

One of the key reasons behind the rebels' success is the support they receive from local communities. The military's heavy-handed approach, characterized by human rights abuses and indiscriminate violence, has fueled resentment among the population. The people of northern Shan, long marginalized and oppressed, see the rebels as a force that represents their aspirations for autonomy and self-determination.

The junta's inability to win hearts and minds in the region has turned the conflict into a battle for legitimacy, in which the Three Brotherhood Alliance holds a distinct advantage. China's role in the conflict cannot be overlooked. The

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

rebels' control of key border crossings with China is a significant development. Beijing, which is traditionally hesitant to intervene in Myanmar's internal affairs, may find itself compelled to act to protect its economic interests and maintain stability along its southwestern border. The junta's loss of control over these border areas threatens to disrupt trade and create a security vacuum that could have far-reaching consequences for regional stability.

The international community's response to the escalating crisis will also play a crucial role. The UN and major world powers must address the root causes of the conflict, emphasizing a diplomatic resolution that respects the rights and aspirations of Myanmar's diverse ethnic groups. Sanctions and condemnations alone may not be sufficient. A concerted effort to engage all stakeholders in meaningful dialogue is essential to laying the groundwork for a lasting peace. For Hlaing, the situation in the north presents a significant strategic problem.

The loss of Laukkai and the broader gains made by the Three Brotherhood Alliance underscore the junta's vulnerability. It is no longer just a matter of quelling dissent but a complex and multifaceted challenge that requires a nuanced and inclusive approach.

The junta's refusal to engage in dialogue with ethnic minorities and address their legitimate grievances has created a power vacuum that the rebels are keen to fill.

The military's response to this setback will be closely watched. Will it intensify its campaign, further alienating local communities, or will it reconsider its approach and seek a negotiated settlement? The junta's stubbornness could exacerbate the crisis, leading to more bloodshed and instability. Alternatively, a shift toward a more inclusive and conciliatory stance could pave the way for a sustainable solution to the long-standing ethnic conflicts that have plagued Myanmar for decades. The surrender of the Myanmar military's Regional Operations Command in Laukkai, coupled with the Three Brotherhood Alliance's rapid gains across Shan, represents a major defeat for the junta in the northern region.

The implications of this setback extend beyond the military sphere, affecting the junta's legitimacy, regional stability and international relations. The conflict in northern Myanmar demands a comprehensive and inclusive approach that addresses the root causes of ethnic tensions and promotes a sustainable path to peace. The ball is now in Hlaing's court and the decisions he makes in the coming days and weeks will shape the trajectory of Myanmar's future.

Half the world to vote in 2024, with global ramifications

2024 will pose a major test of democratic rule as an estimated 4 billion people in more than 50 nations - almost half the world's population - are set to vote in national elections, with the outcomes likely to shape global politics for years or decades to come.

Bangladesh began 2024 with the first major election of the year as Sheikh Hasina won a fourth consecutive term as prime minister Sunday. Opposition parties boycotted the vote over complaints that it was neither free nor fair.

A crucial presidential election is due to take place on the self-governing island of Taiwan on January 13. China's threat to retake the island by force looms over the vote, with political parties divided on how to approach Beijing. "We are not only choosing Taiwan's future leaders to decide on the country's future but also deciding on the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region," William Lai, the presidential candidate for the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, told supporters at a campaign rally earlier this month. Lai is ahead in the polls.

In February, Indonesia is set to choose a new president to rule the nation of 277 million people, making it one of the world's biggest votes held on a single day. Pakistan will hold parliamentary elections in February; opposition leader and former Prime Minister Imran Khan remains jailed on charges of leaking state secrets, which he denies.

Russians will vote in presidential elections in March - although observers predict incumbent Vladimir Putin is all but certain to win as he is able to control the electoral process and state media. "Putin is not going to have any genuine opponents," said Ian Bond of the Center for European Reform. "He has control of all the administrative machinery required to make sure that a crushing vote in favor of him is delivered and we get another

Henry Ridgwell

er six years of Putin up to at least 2030."

India - the world's biggest democracy - will hold parliamentary elections in April and May, with the Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, ahead in the polls. Veteran Indian political journalist Pushp Saraf believes the opposition will struggle to make headway.

"It all depends how united they are," Saraf said. "Otherwise, if they stay divided, as they appear to be many times, they have little chance of succeeding against BJP, which is organizationally very strong, and with Narendra Modi, who is riding high on the popularity wave, at least in the Hindi heartland." "These are very significant elections because there are clearly two opinions in the country at the moment. One is that BJP is polarizing society along the communal lines. And on the other hand, there is the opinion that BJP is focusing more on national security," Saraf told The Associated Press.

On June 2, Mexico is due to hold its presidential election, which could herald a new milestone for the country, "because of the possibility that, for the first time, a woman will govern Mexico," according to Mexican pollster Patricio Morelos. Mexico's ruling party has selected Claudia Sheinbaum, a former mayor of Mexico City, as its candidate. The European Union, representing more than half-a-billion people, is set to hold parliamentary elections in June. Polls suggest a resurgence in support for right-wing populist parties in many countries, including France, Germany and Italy.

"There is a real possibility, I think, that the far right will do well in European elections. Not to the point of running the European Parliament, but conceivably to the point where anyone who wants to run the European Parliament has to

take account of what they're saying and doing," Anand Menon, professor of international politics at Kings College London, told VOA. Britain is scheduled to hold elections before the end of the year, with polls suggesting opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer is on course to end a tumultuous 14 years of Conservative rule, with five different prime ministers.

"We had the Brexit wars that dominated everything, then we had COVID-19, now we've got the cost-of-living crisis. We've had government instability... the instability itself has become a political issue," Menon said. On November 5, the United States is due to hold a highly anticipated presidential election as Americans decide whether to give Democrat Joe Biden a second term as US president or choose a Republican alternative, with Donald Trump seemingly his most likely opponent - although the challenger faces numerous legal hurdles in the run up to the vote.

The impact of many of these elections in 2024 will likely be felt around the world, said analyst Menon. "Yes, all politics is local - but there are global trends. Immigration is going to figure a lot in many elections around the world. It will figure in the US election, it will figure in the European elections, it will figure in the U.K. election," Memon said.

"Insecurity will be a major factor. One of the things we're living with in the West now is an increased sense of insecurity, both economic - but also in security terms, given the war that's going on in Ukraine and given the doubts about what the Taiwanese election later this month might mean for Taiwan-Chinese relations. "So, there are common factors, but those are refracted through the prism of the local and domestic in each country, so they play out in different ways," Menon said.

VOA

Pro-EU fanatics are silent on Poland’s new illiberal turn

IMAGINE a scenario in which Sir Keir Starmer wins the next election, and immediately sacks the chairman and board of the BBC, sits by as former ministers are arrested on charges of abuses of power, says he will depose Andrew Bailey, and makes the courts subservient to the EU. The public response, surely, would be one of outrage. Yet similar developments are taking place in Poland, and there has barely been a whimper, not least from Britain's pro-EU fanatics.

The reason appears to be simple: the man in charge there is a former president of the European Council. He is viewed as a liberal committed to restoring the rule of law which, so the narrative goes, was eroded by the previous "far Right" Law and Justice Party (PiS). And, under the PiS, Poland's Supreme Court had the temerity to rule that

it had primacy over the European Court of Justice. (Germany's top court maintains the same, but few criticise the Germans.)

Because the PiS government faced accusations of muzzling the press and attempting to silence social media, it was widely rumoured that a victory for Donald Tusk at the 2023 general election was inconceivable.

Yet triumph Donald Tusk did. How odd that, in a supposedly "liberal" nation, the government left office after losing an election. There was a 75 per cent turnout. Female voters mobilised, in objection to a 2020 court ruling which almost outlawed abortion. Younger people in big towns and cities threw their support behind Tusk and his Civic Coalition, galvanised by the economic strides the country had taken under the EU,

Alan Sked

and fears that previous clashes with Brussels might lead to Poland being forced out of the bloc. Political scientists seemed stumped. Poland - with Hungary and Slovakia - had been placed in their category of "illiberal democracies", after all.

But Tusk did indeed become prime minister in December, promising to overturn the court ruling on abortion, protect the rights of LGBT people and restore relations with the EU (let us not forget his proclamation, as EU Council president, that there was a special place in Hell reserved for Brexiteers). He has faced difficulties, the main ones being that the Constitutional Court is dominated by PiS appointees and that the Polish president, Andrzej Duda, is pro-PiS. Yet it would hardly be ridiculous to expect a degree of disquiet in



SECP issues proposed amendments to NBFC Rules 2003

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Saturday notified draft of proposed amendments to the Non-Banking Finance Companies (Establishment & Regulations) Rules, 2003, to solicit public comments. Through these amendments SECP aims to provide a more conducive regulatory framework for the non-banking finance sector. The proposed

changes are based on a comprehensive review of the regulation, considering the advancements in the NBFC ecosystem and the effectiveness of mandatory approval requirements. The modifications include removal of approval processes for the rate of profit on subordinated loans and the repayment of subordinated loans. Additionally, the provision mandating the application for a license within six

months of the Rules' notification has been omitted being obsolete. Furthermore, the necessity for the submission of an undertaking by the company's promoters or majority shareholders for the sale or transfer of shares without prior approval from the Commission has been eliminated as it was no longer deemed necessary.

The requirement for furnishing evidence of qualifications and experience for indi-

viduals occupying "executive positions, research, or other related functions" within both existing and new companies was considered excessive and has been omitted.

Acknowledging the technological advancements within the financial services digital specific licensing requirements have been introduced for lending and micro-finance services through digital channels including mobile applications.

NUML campus to be set up near Ghulam Muhammad Abad

FAISALABAD (APP): A purpose-built campus of National University of Modern Languages sprawling over 25 acres of land would be constructed near Ghulam Muhammad Abad, said Brigadier (Retd) Waseem Uddin, Regional Director NUML Faisalabad. During his visit to the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that the boundary wall of the campus was being completed while construction work of the main structure was also expected to be started during this month.

He said that the Faisalabad campus had been established in 2006

with four major degree programmes. "Currently, 1300 students are enrolled out of which 600 are studying in the IT department. The Faisalabad campus had introduced a 2-year associate degree programme in computer science but it received a lukewarm response from the student's community. I wanted to start an Artificial Intelligence programme while special emphasis is being laid on the training and grooming of the students," he added.

He said that the campus was also offering courses in Chinese and Korean languages as these have demand in the market.

About industry-academia linkages, he said that the Faisalabad campus had already inked an MOU with the FCCI which would be reactivated through regular meetings and consultation.

He quoted a meeting of President FCCI Dr Khurram Tariq with the Rector NUML in Islamabad and said that he would invite them along with other leading business tycoons to deliver motivational lectures and sensitize students to start their own businesses instead of seeking jobs. He further said that NUML had full focus on the training of its faculty members and in this connection, he

had introduced a 4-module grooming programme.

He further said that internship had been declared mandatory for all passed-out students even in languages. He requested the FCCI to help this campus by offering maximum internships to its students.

Earlier, Acting President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad welcomed the guests and said that universities should introduce market-driven programmes to ensure the employment for their passed-out students.

He also stressed the need for the practical training of students so that they could perform well during their practical life.



MULTAN: A young vendor selling charcoal-roasted sweet potatoes to attract customers at his roadside setup.

FPCCI terms financial, digital literacy vital to empower women

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh said that IWCCI was one of the most effective women's chambers in the country which was playing a laudable role in empowering women through entrepreneurship and that the FPCCI will extend all possible help towards this noble cause.

He was talking to a delegation of the Islamabad Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IWCCI) led by its Founder President Ms. Samina Fazil which visited FPCCI to meet him and all UBG

penal for felicitation on their historic victory in the recent elections of FPCCI.

Atif Ikram Sheikh said that IWCCI was one of the most effective women's chambers in the country which was playing a laudable role in empowering women through entrepreneurship and that the FPCCI will extend all possible help towards this noble cause. He said that financial and digital literacy was very important to empower women as we have one of the lowest rates of female

entrepreneurship in the world, with only one per cent of women owning a business.

Chairman FPCCI Capital Office Mr. Karim Aziz Malik & Chairman Coordination FPCCI Malik Sohail Hussain said that women empowerment was a challenge in Pakistan but it was necessary to improve the economic landscape in the country. They urged the government to simplify policies and provide an enabling environment for small Medium businesses run by women.

Founder President IWCCI Samina Fazil, President IWCCI Rizwana Asif, Senior Vice President Dr. Sonia Saleem, Former President Naima Ansari, Former SVPs Sadaf Asim Abbasi & Rozina Lahooti, Dr. Afshan Malik expressed that current women's economic empowerment interventions were not enough to overcome all obstacles facing women entrepreneurs. Female entrepreneurs were often lacking in access to financial and human capital which impedes business growth.

Need to focus on entrepreneurship to transform economy: President ICCI

ISLAMABAD (INP): President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has said that Pakistan needs more entrepreneurs to create new jobs, introduce innovations and new technologies, increase productivity, enhance exports, and put the economy into fast gear to transform Pakistan into a rising country. Therefore, the students should focus on entrepreneurship that offers them a prosperous career.

This was stated by him on Saturday while addressing the Pakistan National Finals of the

Global Student Entrepreneur Awards (GSEA) organized by Entrepreneurs Organization Islamabad in collaboration with ICCI at Chamber House.

Ahsan Bakhtawari called upon the government to make more conducive policies for promoting entrepreneurship in youth that will enhance their self-employment and pave the way for sustainable economic growth of the country. He stressed that commercial banks should also come up with low-cost business loan schemes for youth to facilitate them in launching business start-ups.

He said that the population of

Pakistan is increasing rapidly and the government can't provide jobs to all youngsters. However, fostering entrepreneurship in youth is the best option to enable them to achieve a prosperous career, create jobs for others, and play an effective role in the economic development of the country. The ICCI President lauded the role of the Entrepreneurs Organization Islamabad for promoting student entrepreneurs, providing them with mentorship and networking opportunities, and unlocking their entrepreneurship potential for the country.

China's CPI down 0.3 pct in December 2023

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): China's consumer price index (CPI), a main gauge of inflation, edged down 0.3 percent year on year in December 2023, official data showed Friday.

The decline narrowed from a 0.5-percent year-on-year dip registered in November last year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). NBS statistician Dong Lijuan attributed the narrowing decline to the cold wave and stronger consumer demand ahead of the New Year holiday.

Food prices fell 3.7 percent year on year in December. The price of pork, a staple meat in China, dropped 26.1 percent from a year earlier, and dragged the CPI down by 0.43 percentage points.

Non-food prices rose 0.5 percent year on year, lifting the CPI by 0.38 percentage points.

The core CPI, deducting food and energy prices, went up 0.6 percent year on year last month, maintaining a moderate increase.

On a monthly basis, the CPI went up 0.1 percent in December from the previous month, reversing a 0.5-percent decline registered in November last year.

In 2023, the country's CPI went up 0.2 percent, said the NBS.

Friday's data also revealed that China's producer price index (PPI), which measures costs for goods at the factory gate, went down 2.7 percent year on year in December.

On a yearly basis, the PPI in 2023 dropped by 3 percent compared with 2022.

Pakistan-origin UK national Mahnaz becomes member of WB IFC Sanctions Board

ISLAMABAD (APP): The World Bank (WB) has appointed Mahnaz Malik, a Pakistan-origin British national, as a Sanctions Board Member of the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

She is a Barrister and Arbitrator at Twenty Essex, specializing in representing governments and corporations in investment and commercial disputes.

Mahnaz is also a Fellow and Trustee of Hughes Hall College at the University of Cambridge, according to details posted by the WB on its official website on Saturday. The newly appointed IFC board member has over 23 years of experience advising governments, corporations, and international organizations on complex cross-border disputes. She has acted as counsel on behalf of investors, organizations and states in several invest-

ment and commercial disputes, including the Court of Sport Arbitration (CAS), UNCITRAL, ICC, ICSID, LCIA and PCA-administered arbitrations.

Sector specialists include mining, energy, steel, construction, banking, and infrastructure projects. She is particularly adept at dispute resolution relating to natural resources, sporting events, joint venture partners, shareholders, international organizations, institutional lenders, foreign investment laws, and state entities.

Her appointment as an arbitrator in EuroGas Inc. and Belmont Resources Inc. v. Republic of Slovakia makes her one of the youngest ever appointed to an ICSID Annulment Committee (the final level of review at ICSID) since records began.

She has served twice as an ICSID Annulment

Committee member and served on the ICSID Panel of Arbitrators and leading arbitration panels globally.

According to the WB, Mahnaz publishes, teaches, and speaks extensively, and her writings are frequently cited in academic journals, arbitration awards, and examination papers and appear on syllabi. Her professional awards include the prestigious UK Financial Times Legal Innovator of the Year Award 2007 and the Law Society of England's national award for Trainee Solicitor of the Year 2001. She has also served as a member of the ICC Commissions on Arbitration and Anti-Corruption.

After graduating with an MA in Law from Cambridge University, Mahnaz Malik qualified as a Barrister in England and Wales, Attorney at Law in New York, and an Advocate in Pakistan.

Vendors Conference of Millat Tractors Ltd

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Millat Tractors Ltd., Pakistan's trailblazer in localization, continues to shape the country's automotive vendor industry. As the OEM boasting the highest localization level, Millat has paved the way for cost-effective mass production

across volumes, embraced cutting-edge technologies, and generated substantial foreign exchange savings.

Embracing the ever-growing demands of both local and international markets while maintaining unwavering quality, Millat proudly invites its 200+ valued vendor associates to the "Vendors

Conference" on January 16th, 2024, at local Hotel, Lahore.

Themed "60 Years of Growing Together," this conference serves as a platform to solidify partnerships, chart a strategic course for the future, and celebrate the collaborative success story of Millat and its vendors.

Gold rates increase by Rs.950 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.950 and was sold at Rs.217,450 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs. 216,500 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 814 to Rs.186,428 from Rs.185,614 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.170,893 from Rs.170,146 the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs.2,650 and 2,271.94 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$12 to \$2,068 from \$2,056, the Association reported.

P&D Board chief visits Safari Zoo, Ring Road project

LAHORE (APP): Planning and Development Board (P&D Board) Chairman Iftikhar Ali Sahoo visited Safari Zoo and Lahore Ring Road to review the ongoing development works here Saturday.

At Safari Park, Secretary Forest Mudassar Waheed Malik and DG Wildlife Mubin Elahi briefed the chairman about the Lahore Safari Zoo Project. They said that for the timely completion of the project, work continued 24 hours a week and within few days its main gate, parking, reception area, play area, camping area, special places for animals and other under-construction works would be completed.

P&D Board Chairman Iftikhar Ali Sahoo said

that a wide range of trees, such as bamboo, amaltas, and neem, should be planted to maintain the natural beauty of the park. He added that to maintain the natural beauty of the Safari Park, civil work should be kept to a minimum and the construction work should be completed by January 31 in any case. Sahoo said that the establishment of this modern safari zoo of its kind will provide citizens with the best entertainment facility.

Later, the P&D Board Chairman visited the Southern Loop of Lahore Ring Road (LRR) projects, and inspected the development work there. He was updated on the LRR's progress by the FWO and Nespak team. While giving a briefing about the ongoing devel-

opment projects, they informed him that all the relevant departments and contractors were trying hard to complete the Lahore Ring Road project by January 31.

On this occasion, the P&D Board chairman highlighted the importance of the LRR project and said that it would shorten travel times, reduce traffic, and offer a quicker and more comfortable way to travel around the city. He said that no compromise on quality was acceptable in the construction work. Nespak being consultant should ensure quality work on the project and keep the stakeholders informed by conducting timely compaction tests of the project so that quality work could be ensured, he added.

Oil prices rise on Red Sea escalation

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Oil prices climbed Friday after US and UK forces launched strikes against Iran-backed Huthi rebels, while global stocks were mixed following the kickoff of corporate earnings season.

Crude prices spiked more than four percent before ebbing somewhat after the allies launched deadly strikes following weeks of disruptive rebel attacks on Red Sea shipping.

"The fear in the oil market is that the region is on an unpredictable escalating path, where at some point down the road, supply of oil will indeed in the end be lost," noted Bjarne Schieldrop, chief commodities analyst at SEB bank.

He noted that if the US-UK attacks were unsuccessful in destroying Huthi weapons, and oil tankers need to go around Africa, then up to 80 million barrels will be locked in transit -- sending prices up as much

as \$5-10 per barrel. The Huthis have carried out a growing number of strikes on vessels in the Red Sea, a key international shipping route, since the Gaza war erupted in October. The attacks have affected trade flows at a time when supply strains are putting upward pressure on inflation globally.

In Friday trade, the Dow dipped while the S&P 500 edged higher as investors digested corporate earnings and a surprise drop in whole-sale inflation.

Leading banks were mostly lower following a deluge of quarterly results, while airlines were hammered after Delta's forecast disappointed investors. "The market is optimistic as it can be about (interest) rate cuts," said Steve Sosnick of Interactive Brokers, adding that investors want to see solid earnings.

Tokyo and European stock markets ended the

week with strong gains. The luxury sector was in focus after British fashion brand Burberry posted a profit warning, sending its share price sliding more than nine percent at one stage in London.

Investors are keenly waiting for a drop in interest rates, which central banks hiked in 2022 and 2023 in a bid to cool decades-high inflation.

While rates of price rises have slowed, inflation remains above target for the US Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank and the Bank of England.

Brent North Sea Crude: UP 1.3 percent at \$78.29 per barrel

West Texas Intermediate: UP 0.9 percent at \$72.68 per barrel

New York - Dow: DOWN 0.3 percent at 37,592.98 (close)

New York - S&P 500: UP 0.1 percent at 4,783.83 (close)

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Dagar.Appeal.No.8/13, institution 17/1/2023. Date of hearing. 12/2/2024. Umren etc VS Karem Jan etc. Notice to no. 14.Mst Husna d/o Ambarena d/o Rhamaty. 25.Mohmad Razaq s/o Nor Mohamad late resident of Hashim Sar Elai theseld Daggar 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 12/2/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



MULTAN: Farmers are busy packing carrots after collecting from the field to deliver the market.



In brief

Women's Tour Down Under results
A D E L A I D E (AFP/APP): Results from the second stage of the women's Tour Down Under on Saturday, a 104.2km ride from Glenelg to Stirling: 1. Cecilie Uttrup Ludwig (DEN/FDJ-Suez) 2hr 54min 28sec, 2. Soraya Paladini (ITA/Canyon Sram Racing) at 0sec, 3. Sofia Bertizzolo (ITA/UAE Team-ADQ), 4. Francesca Barale (ITA/Team d s m - f i r m e n i c h PostNL), 5. Heidi Franz (USA/Lifeplus-Wahoo). Overall standings: 1. Cecilie Uttrup-Ludwig (DEN/FDJ-Suez) 5hr 26min 55sec, 2. Sofia Bertizzolo (ITA/UAE Team-ADQ) at 2sec, 3. Ruby Roseman-Gannon (AUS/Liv-UIUA-Jayco) 3sec, 4. Soraya Paladini (ITA/Canyon Sram Racing) 4sec, 5. India Grangier (FRA/Team Coop-Repsol) 8sec.

Football Championship JEDDAH (SPA/APP): The Mahd Sports Academy will launch the first edition of the Mahd World Football Championship at King Abdullah Sports City in Jeddah. The tournament will start tomorrow, Saturday, with eight teams participating in the 2008/2009 age category. Six clubs and two international academies will be represented. The tournament will feature teams from Italy, the Netherlands, Japan, Belgium, Ghana, and the Czech Republic. Juventus F.C., FC Twente, Kashiwa Reysol, PSV Eindhoven, Royal Antwerp F.C., Attram de Visser Academy, and SK Slavia Prague will compete with the Mahd Academy team as the host. The tournament will last six days and have group-stage matches, followed by knockout-system matches in the advanced rounds, leading to the final match on January 18th.

Chelsea a narrow win over Fulham
LONDON (BBC): Cole Palmer's first-half penalty gave Chelsea a narrow win over West London rivals Fulham at Stamford Bridge in the Premier League. Palmer's reverse pass set up Raheem Sterling, who was caught by Issa Diop inside the penalty area. Palmer dispatched the spot-kick, sending Fulham keeper Bernd Leno the wrong way to net his ninth goal since joining the Blues in August. Conor Gallagher almost added a late second when his sweetly struck effort using the outside of his boot cannoned off the far post. Chelsea kept Fulham at arm's length and held on for their third consecutive victory to jump to eighth in the table. The visitors stay in 13th and have lost four of their past five matches. It was not a classic but Chelsea did enough to come away with three points. Chelsea were wasteful in their 1-0 loss to Middlesbrough in the Carabao Cup semi-final first leg on Tuesday, and for much of the first half against Fulham they once again struggled in front of goal. Gallagher fired a shot over the bar after 16 minutes and Armando Broja headed Enzo Fernandez's cross wide of the near post moments later. It took the combined coolness of Sterling, who forced Diop into a tackle he did not need to make, and Palmer to break the deadlock. After the restart Chelsea looked far more assured. Fernandez crossed for Sterling in the 50th minute, with the England forward flicking his header against a post, although any finish would have been ruled out for offside.

Djokovic zeroes in on all-time record 25th Slam crown at Australian Open

M E L B O U R N E (AFP/APP): A "pain-free" Novak Djokovic begins his Australian Open defence against a teenage qualifier on Sunday as he bids for an unprecedented 25th major crown, but women's top seed Iga Swiatek faces a much trickier assignment. The opening Grand Slam of the year gets under way as a 15-day event for the first time, aimed at cutting down on late-night finishes. World number one Djokovic is an overwhelming favourite, with a sore wrist that cast a shadow over his build-up no longer troubling him. He should have few problems progressing from his evening clash on Rod Laver Arena against 18-year-old Croat Dino Prizmic, who is making his main draw Slam debut. "It's exciting to be a part of another Slam," said the 36-year-old Djokovic, who has not lost at the Australian Open since 2018. "I'm just hoping I can

start the season in a way that I have been starting my seasons, most of my seasons, throughout my career, with a win here in Australia, in Melbourne. My favourite place, no doubt." The Serbian's first real test could come in the third round, with a potential blockbuster showdown against fellow veteran Andy Murray. Scotland's Murray, a five-time Australian Open finalist, begins against Argentine 30th seed Tomas Martin Etcheverry. Djokovic surged to the title last year with a three-set victory over this year's seventh seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who faces a tough first-round test from former top 10 Italian Matteo Berrettini. If the Serb wins again, he will pass Australian Margaret Court's all-time Slam record and join Court (Australian Open) and Rafael Nadal (French Open) as the only players ever to win 11 times at a

single major. Adding to the intrigue, the number one ranking is at stake, with Djokovic, Carlos Alcaraz and Daniil Medvedev all in contention. Alcaraz, who beat Djokovic in the Wimbledon final last year, is a different player from the one who last graced the Australian hard courts as an 18-year-old ranked outside the top 30. After missing last year's event with a hamstring injury, he is now a two-time major champion and world number two. "I am looking at reaching the final and hopefully playing a final against him (Djokovic)," said the 20-year-old Spaniard, who will meet French veteran Richard Gasquet first. Russia's Medvedev, a Melbourne finalist in 2021 and 2022, kicks off against qualifier Terence Atmane, vowing to turn over a new leaf and tone down the on-court tantrums. "I want to change, I want to mature," he said.

‘Sri Lanka need fielding lift for T20 World Cup’

COLOMBO (AFP/APP): Sri Lanka needs to lift its game on fielding to have a shot at this year's T20 World Cup title, newly installed short-format captain Wanindu Hasaranga said Saturday. Hasaranga is riding high after a career-best 7-19 against Zimbabwe during Thursday's ODI decider and will be making his debut as skipper on Sunday as the 20-over leg of the tour begins. Poor fielding has been a running problem for the Sri Lankans in white-ball cricket, with 16 dropped catches at last year's one-day World Cup in India confining them to a second-last place finish on the points table. "I have told the team at the outset that fielding will be very important," he told reporters. "No matter how well you bat or bowl, if you don't field well then you'll struggle to make it to the side. Fielding is non-nego-

tiable," he added. "We have another five months for the World Cup... Fielding is the easiest way we can improve our cricket and it makes a lot of difference between winning and losing in T20 cricket." Hasaranga returned to internationals on Thursday for the first time in six months following a hamstring injury, making a splash with a new ODI bowling record for R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo. Sri Lanka have recalled veteran Angelo Mathews into the squad and he is expected to play Sunday in his first T20 since March 2021. Opening batsman Pathum Nissanka was also back at training having missed the ODI series due to illness. All three T20 matches against Zimbabwe will take place in Colombo with the series concluding on January 18. Sri Lanka will then welcome Afghanistan for a one-off Test and six white-ball matches ahead of

June's World Cup, jointly hosted by the United States and West Indies. Zimbabwe will be the sole full member of the International Cricket Council to miss this year's tournament after a shock defeat to Uganda during the qualifiers. "It's really heart-breaking not just for me and cricketers but for the whole nation as well," Zimbabwe captain Sikandar Raza told reporters. "We are desperately trying to turn things around. I think you needed that desperation to turn things around," he added. "Having said that, we have learned a lot of lessons and hopefully we will make Zimbabwe cricket great again." Zimbabwe lost the ODI series to Sri Lanka 2-0 with one game being washed out but Raza said the return of former skipper Sean Williams, 37, would improve their chances for the 20-over matches.

Dates for 2025 finals undecided amid Club World Cup clash

ABUJA (BBC): The dates for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) remain undecided amid a potential clash with the Fifa Club World Cup, according to Confederation of African Football (Caf) president Patrice Motsepe.

The 2021 finals in Cameroon and the 2023 edition of Afcon, which kicks off in Ivory Coast on Saturday, were moved to dates in January and February. Caf had made a commitment in 2017 to return to staging the tournament mid-year to avoid disputes with European clubs over releasing players in the middle of their season. But Fifa's expanded 32-team Club World Cup is scheduled to be held in the United States in June and July 2025, setting up a potential clash of dates with that year's Afcon which will be hosted by Morocco. "We want the Cup of Nations to take place when it is most favourable and convenient for the tournament," said Motsepe. "We are still engaging with Fifa about the dates." The timing of Afcon has become increasingly controversial, having been held in the first three months of the year from 1968 to 2017, but then staged mid-year in Egypt in 2019. The 2021 finals in Cameroon were scheduled for early that year to avoid the rainy season in the country, and were then put back 12 months to 2022 because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Warriors rally to beat Bulls, Spurs rout Hornets

LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): Golden State stars Klay Thompson and Stephen Curry shook off slow starts to power the Warriors to a much-needed 140-131 NBA victory over the Chicago Bulls on Friday. Coming off two blowout losses to cap a 2-5 homestand, the Warriors got off to another ugly start in Chicago.

Trailing 75-62 at half-time, the Warriors turned it around with 48 points in the third quarter.

Thompson connected on five-of-five from three-point range on the way to 17 points in the period, the shooting guard's highest-scoring quarter of the season. "I think we got off-track emotionally, spiritually, the last couple games," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said.

"Our fans could feel it. We got booed for the first time since I've been here,

and as I said both nights, we deserved it because our energy and our competitive spirit was not there.

"We found that again tonight," Kerr said. Golden State led by 15 going into the fourth, but the Bulls, who honored their 1995-96 championship team before the game, cut the deficit to four with less than three minutes to play before the Warriors pulled away again. Thompson finished with 30 points and six assists and Curry added 27 points despite another tough shooting night that saw him make just eight of 24 shots from the field.

"Klay was brilliant," Kerr said. "When he keeps it simple like that and just shoots when he's open and keeps moving the ball, that's when he's at his best." Curry added nine assists and Jonathan Kuminga added 24 points off the

bench for the Warriors, who had just five turnovers and withstood a 39-point performance from Chicago's DeMar DeRozan.

In San Antonio, rookie star Victor Wembanyama scored 26 points and pulled down 11 rebounds in the Spurs' 135-99 rout of the Charlotte Hornets.

In less than 20 minutes on the floor, French prodigy Wembanyama connected on nine of 14 shots -- including a pair of alley-oop dunks and a one-handed jam to start the second half. The Spurs spoiled the return from a 20-game injury absence of Hornets star LaMelo Ball, who had 28 points, five assists and five steals in his first game since November.

Houston guard Fred VanVleet scored 17 of his 20 points in the second half to help the Rockets edge the Pistons 112-110 in Detroit.

Ronnie O’Sullivan beats Shaun 6-2 to close on eighth title

LONDON (Agenices): Ronnie O'Sullivan beat Shaun Murphy 6-2 to reach his 14th Masters final and close in on a record-extending eighth title. The world number one took the first two frames and the fourth to lead 3-1 after Murphy compiled a superb 131 break. While another Murphy century brought him within a frame, O'Sullivan then went through the gears with runs of 90, 71 and 62 as he sealed his victory. O'Sullivan will now face either Mark Allen or Ali Carter in Sunday's final. As at the UK Championship in December, O'Sullivan, 48, now has his sights on the £250,000 top prize after a five-year absence from the showpiece match. Already the tournament's youngest winner almost 29 years ago, he could now become its oldest too, eclipsing Stuart Bingham, who won his only Masters title, aged 43, in 2020. "At the start there were a few mistakes but I cleaned it up a little bit - and I need to do that these days, because I can't pot as well as these guys but I can make breaks among



the balls and make up for it that way," O'Sullivan told BBC Sport. "I don't feel that old. I feel young in my mind. I feel a lot younger round the table when I play these younger players. They look old and their brains are quite slow. I still feel my brain is pretty quick round the snooker table, which is enough. "They need to get their acts together because I am going blind, have got a dodgy arm and they still can't beat me."

If O'Sullivan were to add a 23rd Triple Crown title to his collection, he would also become the oldest winner of all three of snooker's most prestigious events. And on this evidence, it would be hard to back against him regardless of whether he is at his best or not, with his aura also seemingly placing pressure on his opponents. While O'Sullivan dominated the concluding stages of the match, Murphy had several good opportunities earlier on.

Ayub Park Cricket Ground to host its maiden women’s match on Monday

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ayub Park Cricket Ground, also known as Ayub Park Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi is all set to host its first women's tournament match on Monday (January 15). The match will see Nida Dar-led Lahore region taking on Umm-e-Hani led Multan region in the National Women's T20 Tournament. Established in 2013, Ayub Park Cricket Stadium, besides district level trials, has hosted PCB's U16 and U19 cricket matches. The stadium has a 60-metre

boundary and three pitches designated for the upcoming women's tournament matches. Additionally, the venue features an attractive museum, showcasing autographed bats including those from the West Indies team of 1959, along with souvenirs and cricket magazines for the fans of the game. Courtesy of the Army Heritage Foundation (AHF), the facility at the stadium is diligently maintained for sporting activities, complemented by an adjacent football ground. Head of Women's Cricket Tania

Mallick: "It is heartening to witness women's cricket matches being organised at three venues in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. "Ayub Park Stadium in Rawalpindi, which is situated at the city centre, has proper infrastructure, providing the women's wing with an additional venue to hold domestic matches. With the support of the Army Heritage Foundation committed to further enhancing the ground, the PCB women's wing looks forward to organising more women's cricket matches in the future."

Pakistan become World record holder of having World Highest Teq Table

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Snow Teqball Championship 2023 and World record of Highest Teqball Table across the Globe approved by International Teqball Federation which was held from 28th December 2023 to 1 January 2024 by Pakistan Teqball Federation in collaboration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism Authority, Directorate General of Sports&KP Absar Welfare Foundation, KP Teqball Association, Merged Areas Teqball Association, Kumrat, Utror & Kalam Facilities Centre and Green Hotel Kalam. World record designation was Shahi Bagh mountain which is one of the highest and tough destination of Utror, Swat, Pakistan which the height of 12780 ft 3900 meters from Sea Level. Journey consists of 6 check

points . During this journey of 5 days team faced lots of difficulties but passion to promote and empower Teqball Across the globe kept motivated whole group to struggle to reach the peak of Utror mountains. During the journey on each check point Teqball Exhibition matches played and Teqball introduced with local village community in Ogi Gram, Matta , Kalam and Utror of Swat Region. On this occasion Snow Teqball Championship of Boys and Girls Category also took place where In Boys event final Hidayat Ur Rehman Peshawar won against Muhammad Yaseen by (2-1) and In Girls Event Safa from Peshawar beat Aiman from Khyber by (2-0). During the Journey Jamal Aziz (President Swat Teqball Association) organised exhibition matches at I TEQBALL ACADEMY at Odi Gram, Niaz Ali (Joint Secretary KP

Teqball Association) hosted team during the Durshkhel Matta swat. After that team reach Green Hotel Kalam where Aqil Shah (Senior Vice President Pakistan Olympic Association and President KP Olympic Association) hosted lunch for the Team where exhibitions matches of Teqball showcase for the tourist from different provinces. After that team reached Utror where mix doubles exhibition matches hosted by ihsan (CEO KUMRAT, Kalam and Utror Facilities Center). On the very next morning team started journey of 5 hours ahead to the final destination which was Shah Bagh mountain which is one of the highest point of Utror where competition as well as different fun activities played by all players and officials including Bismillah Khan (COO WorkReels) , Yasar Aziz (Coach on Behalf of RSO Swat) , Malik Ihsan (CEO Kalam Utror Kumrat Facilitates Center) and Akhtar Rasool (Event Organising Secretary) witnesses the World Highest Teqball table across the globe. On this occasion Mian Absar Ali Founder of Pakistan Teqball Federation stated that this event was organised to promote teqball and spread message that Pakistan is a peaceful country and Swat is one of the beautiful place across the globe hope through this event tourism will be promoted and soon international teqball players will come Pakistan to enjoy teqball at World Highest Teq Table. He also encourages the participation of Merged Districts in the said event.



Aamir Jamal, a new Gem of Pakistani cricket team

By Riaz Yusufzai

From bank loan online taxi driver to international cricket arena as a top level all rounder cricketer, Aamir Jamal, is writing history with his impressive performance & has become a heart throbt player of millions of Pakistani cricketers fans. His dream test debut match in Australia in which he took six wickets is a harbinger of his brilliant sport career ahead. He bowled very well in the whole test series. Especially his all round performance in the series last test spoke volume of his cricket talent & fighting spirit temperament. He scored an impressive 82 runs in Sydney which also featured a switch hit for six off Nathan Lyon in the ist inning at a very crucial juncture of the game & become 2nd high scorer of the inning after 88 runs of Muhammad Rizwan & also took important wickets. In his T20 debut against England he was entrusted to bowl the decisive 20th over, with England's pair of Moeen Ali & David Willey requiring 15 runs to win. He brilliantly bowled the final over & did not allow the batters to score the required runs. In a post match interview the legendary cricketer Moeen Ali held in high esteem the bowling performance of Aamir

Jamal. Now he has also been picked up for New Zealand T/20 series. In a brief chat with foreign lady sport journalist he proudly revealed that he was a taxi driver & regularly took time for practicing & playing cricket after he worked very hard & his debut dream of playing in Australia came true. More importantly he spoke english very confidently & fluently & his pronunciation accent of english words was so impressive that at a time one fails to believe that a debutant Pakistani cricketer can speak alien language so beautifully & accurately. In this context one feels ashamed to recall that when Pakistani man of the match players are called on the rostrum to receive Award & answer to the questions on such special occasion. Their Gulabi english & accent are peculiar mixture of urdu & broken english which determine their intellect & academic qualification level. Contrary to this one wonders to hear to Indian players on such special occasion. They are classic, excellent, brilliant & matchless to speak their minds & thus keep impress the audiences & listeners to the end.Especially the track record of Inzিমamul Haq with regard to english speaking on such occasion is very poor & shocking. On several such occasion Inzিমam



got so confused that he even forgot how to speak urdu. To come to his own rescue he then started to read verses of Holy Quran. His islamic touch was also not so good to justify his position. In short such happy moments often turned into difficult situation for him.The main crux of this write-up is not only the all round wonderful performance of AamirJamal but also his excellent english speaking power. We are proud on all players of all sports who are bringing laurals & good name for the country through their unparallel exceptional performance. Proud to be Pakistani.



In brief

ADCR warns against illegal construction

RAWALPINDI (APP): Nobody would be allowed to indulge in illegal construction activities in Murree, said Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue (ADCR) Capt. (retd) Qasim Ijaz on Saturday. On the special directives of the Punjab Government and Deputy Commissioner, Murree, Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi, ADCR Murree on Friday night visited different areas of Murree including Jhika Gali, Masiyari, Express Highway, Shawala and Fourth View Road and reviewed in detail the operation against illegal constructions. The Murree administration had launched a grand operation against illegal constructions and strict action in accordance with the law was being taken in different areas of Murree, he said and informed that no illegal construction would be allowed. Strict legal action was being taken against the violators, Qasim Ijaz said. There is complete ban on construction and bringing construction materials in Murree, he added. Illegal constructions were not only being demolished but the construction materials were also being seized, the ADCR said. On this occasion, Assistant Commissioner, Murree Captain (Retd) Abdul Wahab Khan along with officers of Municipalities, Police, Civil Defense and other departments were also present.

RDA lodges FIRs

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA), on the directives of the Director General (DG), Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa, has lodged FIRs against four illegal housing schemes, said RDA spokesman on Saturday. He informed that the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate of RDA had lodged FIRs against the owners of four illegal housing schemes namely Malik Tariq, Qazi Naveed, Sharif Khan, Sajid Chaudhry, Sajid Munir, Sardar Maqsood Khan, Sardar Awais, Chaudhry Seemab and Yaqub in Mandra police station, Tehsil Gujar Khan. He said that FIRs were lodged against illegal housing schemes, Kashmir View Residencia, Phase-I&II in Mouza Sanghori Satto, GB Valley in Mouza Singhori Satto, Natha Dolal, Sain Singhori in Mouza Singhori and Pak Kashmir Housing Project in Mouza Pothi Bijnyal at Mandra-Chakwal Road in Tehsil Gujar Khan. He said that the MP&TE Directorate RDA was taking legal action against all the illegal advertisements and marketing of illegal housing schemes.

Ustad Bundu Khan remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The death anniversary of famous Pakistani musician and 'Sarangi' player Ustad Bundu Khan was observed here and across the country on Saturday. He was born at Delhi in 1880, and he started receiving his training in Sarangi playing from his father Ali Jan Khan at eight years of age. Later, he also received training from his uncle Mamman Khan, a veteran Sarangi and Sursagar player, who belonged to the Patiala Gharana of classical musicians. Ustad Bundu Khan studied Sanskrit in order to have access to classical music of ancient India. He introduced what is known as 'Meendh Soot Ki Sargam' in which the musician, in the midst of recurring melody, shifts from one note to another. He had mastered more than 500 Ragas. "He had great mastery over Raga system, Taan-palta, various traditional compositions – especially Ragas such as Malkauns, Malhar, Bhairav.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Health Minister met with H.E Mr. Dr. Qalandar Ebad, Minister IEA of Afghanistan on the Sideline of the first Global Health Security Summit.

Pakistan set to initiate laying of 200,000 km optical fiber cable: Saif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr Saif on Saturday said that in order to enhance connectivity Pakistan was set to initiate a project for laying 200,000 kilometers of optical fiber cable.

"The Information Technology Ministry has exhibited outstanding performance during the tenure of the current government over the past four months," the minister said in a statement. Dr. Umar Saif, while giving credit to the Special Investment Facilitation Council, said the forum had played a significant role in obtaining timely approvals for the IT Ministry's policies and projects.

He said the IT companies were set to benefit from a new facility allowing them to keep 50% of their earnings in dollars in

their accounts.

He said a global standard training programme had been initiated for 200,000 IT graduates who had recently completed their studies from various universities.

The minister said the long-standing issue of digital payment gateways for freelancers had been successfully resolved.

Starting from February 1, a pilot project would create 10,000 accounts, allowing freelancers to receive their payments directly through them. Dr Saif said some 10,000 employment centers were being established where the freelancers would enjoy convenient facilities under one roof.

The centers would help increase annual IT exports to \$10 billion, besides employing some 100,000 freelancers, he hoped.

The minister ensured that all obstacles regard-

ing the 5G spectrum would be addressed as per the directives of the Action Advisory Committee for it auction in July-August.

He viewed that the implementation of the Right of Way Policy had resolved disputes between various institutions.

With the establishment of the Telecommunication Tribunal, a long-standing demand of the telecom sector had been fulfilled, he added.

To support young entrepreneurs, Dr Saif said, the Pakistan Startup Fund of Rs. 2 billion had been launched.

He said the Research and Development Funds were also being established to facilitate mobile phone manufacturing companies.

The minister said the approval of the Space Policy had opened the satellite internet market for global companies.

ANF seizes over 100 kg drugs in eight operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) seized over 100 kg drugs in eight operations and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Saturday.

He said that 350 grams hashish was recovered from the possession of a Dubai-bound passenger scheduled to leave by Flight No. PA-100 at Jinnah Airport.

In the second operation, 320 grams heroin was recovered from a parcel being sent to the United Kingdom at General Post Office (GPO) Lahore, and 200 grams weed from a California-bound parcel at a courier office in Rawalpindi. About 72 kg hashish was recovered near Chenab Toll Plaza G.T Road Gujarat while an accused was also arrested.

In fifth operation, 13.2 kg hashish and 1.2 kg opium were recovered from Sialkot, Sambrayal and two accused were arrested.

Likewise, 6.9 kg hashish and 20 grams ice were recovered near Jhelum and an accused was arrested while 3.6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused netted in Balochistan.

In the eighth operation, 2.3 kg ice drug was recovered from Zakhakhel area of Khyber.

Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act had been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations were under process, the spokesman said.

Police foil bid to smuggle NCP items

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) seized huge cache of non-custom paid (NCP) items worth millions of rupees, impounded a truck and arrested the driver and accomplices. The NHMP which was high alert over a tip-off searched an Islamabad bound suspected truck coming from Peshawar on M1 near Charsadda.

During search, smuggled items including cloth, steel rolls, tea and cartons of candies worth millions of rupees were recovered. The police impounded truck, arrest driver and his other accomplices. The recovered smuggled items were later handed over to authorities concerned.

PIA's Privatization: All legal formalities fulfilled: Fawad

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Minister for Privatization, Fawad Hasan Fawad has said that to privatize national flag carrier Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), all legal formalities have been fulfilled.

Interacting with a private news channel on Saturday, he outlined various stages of the process for the PIA's privatization, saying that the Privatization Commission was diligently executing the task.

Fawad Hasan said that in order to ensure transparency in the PIA's privatization, the representatives of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), besides the ministries of education, law, and finance had also been taken on board.

The caretaker government was carrying out the privatization under the constitutional amendments enacted by the previous elected government, he said adding that the decision to the effect was taken by the then government to prevent further deterioration of the economy.

The privatization minister rejected rumors of negotiations about buying of the PIA by a foreign government. Such baseless allegations were being levelled by certain elements for their vested interests, he added. To a question, he said that the caretaker federal cabinet would ensure that no employee of the PIA was unjustly deprived of their legitimate rights.

Fawad Hasan said the problems being faced by the national airline due to governance issues, financial mismanagement and appointment of individuals ill-equipped to manage the aviation industry.

He underscored the urgent need for reforms to prevent further deterioration of public institutions, including the PIA.

To a query, the minister said the general elections would be held on the scheduled date of February 8 and the caretaker government was extending fully support the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in conducting the polls.

Sindhi lauds Shaikh Ayaz's contribution for democracy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister of Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi Saturday said that the contribution of great poet and writer Shaikh Ayaz in the democratic journey of Pakistan could not be ignored.

He was addressing a special event to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Shaikh Ayaz.

The event organized by the Education Ministry in collaboration with the National Heritage and Culture Division and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, was also attended by federal ministers Murtaza Solangi and Jamal Shah.

Madad Ali Sindhi said that Shaikh Ayaz's role in the intellectual awakening of the youth of country in general and those of Sindh in particular could not be overlooked. He said that intellectuals like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Habib Jalib and Shaikh Ayaz had done great service for the country. Shaikh Ayaz continued his service to the people of Sindh and Pakistan even in the most oppressive times of dictators, he added. He said that his devotion and hardwork laid the foundation of democracy which "we have in the country today. The basic human rights that the people enjoy today stem from the sacrifices of Shaikh Ayaz."

Madad Ali said that after partition for

years the people of Sindh did not have true political representation, and that void was filled by the revolutionary poetry of Shaikh Ayaz.

Madad Ali said that Shaikh Ayaz went to prison numerous times due to his ideals.

He said After Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, Shaikh Ayaz would be the second who would be remembered for his services for democracy in Sindh.

Madad said that Shaikh Ayaz was not only a Sindhi language poet but a prose writer and former Vice Chancellor of University of Sindh.

He said that Shaikh Ayaz could be counted as one of the prominent and great Sindhi poets of Pakistan in general and Sindh in particular. He said that he had authored over 50 books on poetry, biographies, plays and short stories in both Sindhi and Urdu languages.

"His translations of Shah Jo Risalo, which was written by the 18th-century Sufi poet Shah Abdul Latif, from Sindhi to Urdu language established him as an authority in his domain".

He received Sitara-i-Imtiaz for his literary works and was regarded as a "revolutionary and romantic poet", Madad Sindhi concluded. It is worth mentioning here that in 2018, a university, Shaikh Ayaz University, was also established.

Commissioner visits different projects to inspect ongoing construction work

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chhatta here on Saturday visited Rawalpindi Gymkhana, Business Facilitation Centre, Allama Iqbal Library and Sixth Road Metro Station and reviewed the ongoing construction work.

He directed the authorities concerned to complete the construction work of all the projects by Sunday.

The commissioner said that the purpose of the visit was to check all the arrangements ahead of the inauguration of the projects by the Punjab Chief Minister.

The construction work of Sixth Road Metro Station, which would be opened for the public after the inauguration, should be completed in next couple of days, he instructed. He was

informed that 98 percent development work of Allama Iqbal Library and Business Facilitation Center had been completed.

At present, Allama Iqbal Library had 20,000 books, while 50,000 more would be arranged for it, the commissioner said.

A separate space had been allotted in the library for the students, Liaquat Ali Chhatta said.

He said the establishment of Business Facilitation Center at the Rawalpindi Development Authority would help promote economic activities in the region.

On this occasion, RDA Director General Saif Anwar Jappa, Director Development Nazia Parveen Sudhan and other officers concerned were present.

'Allegiance with PML-N surpasses personal gains'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), senior leader Talal Chaudhry on Saturday said that his allegiance with the party surpasses mere political tickets or positions.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that

party leaders agreed on seat adjustments for those who supported PML-N in times of trouble.

Although the entire party leadership supported me for the ticket, a situation emerged where withdrawing from the election ticket seemed to

be the wiser decision, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), senior leader Talal Chaudhry added.

"The decision was challenging, but in the best interest of the party, I have made this choice," he added.



ISLAMABAD : Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi addressing on ceremony organized by minister for education and professional training in collaboration with National Heritage and culture division and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Afghan Banker to invest \$10b

KABUL (Agencies): Mirwais Azizi, an Afghan banker and entrepreneur, has announced the opening of a relief settlement for earthquake victims in Herat province's Zinda Jan district. He also mentioned his intention to invest roughly 10 billion dollars in Afghanistan soon. This Afghan merchant made these remarks during the inauguration ceremony of a relief settlement in the village of Siah Ab, Zinda Jan district, Herat, on Friday, January 12th.

300 refugees arrive in Canada

KABUL (Agencies): The Canadian Immigration and Citizenship Department has announced that they have recently transferred 295 Afghan refugees from Pakistan to the city of Toronto, Canada. The department announced on Thursday, January 11, through a statement on its official social media network, stating that these refugees arrived in Toronto on a charter flight. According to the Canadian Immigration Department, these refugees will be resettled in approximately 34 cities across Canada.

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

Torkham crossing closed to transit by Pakistan



KABUL (TOLONews): The Torkham crossing was closed by the Pakistani government this morning (Saturday) for transit.

Local officials of Nangarhar said that Pakistani border guards

demand passports and visas from Afghan drivers, which is why the Torkham crossing has been closed.

Officials added that in response to this action of the Pakistani government,

they have also taken similar action against Pakistani drivers. "Those drivers who do not have passports and visas are not allowed to go to Pakistan from Torkham and they should refrain

from traveling," said Qureshi Badlon, the head of information at the Information and Culture Department of Nangarhar.

Meanwhile, drivers said that on both sides businessmen have suffered significant financial losses as a result of the closure of the Torkham crossing.

They called for a permanent solution to this problem. "This is an international route. Every time they block and open this road. This problem must be solved fundamentally, this problem is from Pakistan's side," Mohammad Anwar Sofi, a driver told TOLONews.

"Either open it properly or block it. We are lost and confused about what to do," Sur Gul, another driver told TOLONews.

This is the fifth time in the past four months that the Pakistani government has closed the Torkham crossing, sometimes to patients and passengers as well as to transit vehicles.

Over 40,000 refugees returned since start of January: Ministry



KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation reported that more than 40,000 Afghan refugees have returned to the country from Pakistan, Iran and Turkey since January 1st.

Abdul Mutalib Haqqani, a spokesman for the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, told TOLONews that most of these refugees were deported and some of them left voluntarily.

The spokesman said: "Since January 1st, 42,000 refugees have

returned to the country -- they have returned to the country in a forced and voluntary manner." Meanwhile, newly returned refugees have said that they are dealing with many challenges and the caretaker government should address these challenges as soon as possible. Eighty-year-old Shah Daraz Khan, who returned from Pakistan with 18 members of his family, said that he has no shelter and has been living under a tent in the corner of Kabul since his

return. Shah Daraz Khan, said: "I have no home, no work, no other things, and no means to work and help. No institution helped us and also the Islamic Emirate has not helped us yet." A number of newly expelled refugees from Pakistan have also asked the interim government to talk to the Pakistani authorities to stop the process of deporting refugees from Pakistan. "Our demand from Pakistan is to tolerate

Afghan refugees until the end of winter," said Basit, an expelled refugee.

"We ask the Islamic Emirate to stop the expulsion of Afghan refugees until the end of winter because there are many challenges and winter must pass," said Abdul Rahman, another expelled refugee.

According to the statistics of the ministry, more than 5 million Afghan refugees live in Iran and more than 3 million refugees live in Pakistan.

Over 110 projects launched in current solar year: Public Works Ministry

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Public Works said that it has started work on more than 110 development and maintenance projects in the current solar year that are supposed to be put into operation by the end of the year.

Ashraf Haqshenas, the spokesman of this ministry, added that so far more than 90 maintenance projects worth 2 billion Afghanis have been completed in the country.

Haqshenas said: "In the current year, the Ministry of Public Works had a plan of 110 development and maintenance projects, and has started the work of about 1,000 kilometers of roads, 30 bridge piers, and more than 1,500 check bridge piers in different parts of Afghanistan."

The construction of the Kabul-Kandahar highway, the Afghan ring road and the reconstruction of the Salang highway are among the activities of this ministry. A number of economic analysts emphasized that in order to grow the economy and find jobs for the country's



citizens, the grounds must be provided for the resumption of activities of global institutions.

"In Afghanistan, after two years of a bad political interaction, we are unfortunately experiencing the decrease of foreign investment in Afghanistan, and only the factor of domestic investments is used," said Mohammad Nabi, an economic analyst.

"International institu-

tions such as ADP, USAID have stopped the infrastructure projects they had in Afghanistan," said Sayed Massoud, an economic analyst. The Ministry of Economy assured that in order to provide opportunities for the citizens of the country, the ministry is trying to attract more investments. Latif Nazari, the Deputy Minister of Economy, said: "Infrastructure plans

such as railways, construction of highways, energy development and transparent extraction of mines and attention to job-creating programs are focused." Nearly a week ago, the Economic Commission of the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement that 24 different projects worth about 10 billion Afghanis have been approved by the National Procurement Commission.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir: We want good relations with all countries

KABUL (TOLONews): The Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, said the Islamic Emirate does not want its relations with neighboring countries and the world to be damaged in any way.

Speaking in Kabul at a gathering titled "The role of scholars and tribal elders in strengthening relations between the nation and the system" Abdul Kabir said they will not allow any foreigner to occupy Afghanistan again, and that they will stop the institutions that work against the system.

"You should not be worried that the Islamic Emirate is in confrontation with the world to cause problems for Afghanistan. No, this is not the case. It may be clear to you that we had a problem with Iran regarding the Helmand water, which was solved through understanding," he noted.

The Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs added that no resistance, including Daesh, has clear activities in Afghanistan, and all opposition and terrorist groups have been identified and suppressed in Afghanistan.

"Here [in Afghanistan] anyone, including Daesh,



made conspiracies against the Islamic system, but the Islamic Emirate strongly fought against them and defeated them. Daesh was a threat not only to Afghanistan but also to the world and the countries of the region," Mawlawi Abdul Kabir further added.

Speaking at the gathering, the acting Minister of Vice and Virtue Mohammad Khalid Hanafi criticized UNAMA's statements on the arrest of women, saying that the organization should refrain from releasing unilateral and unfounded reports

about Afghanistan. "UNAMA decides unilaterally. We tell UNAMA to take notes and refrain from this kind of unilateral decision and publication of reports in the future," Hanafi noted.

At the gathering, Khairullah Khairkhwa, the acting minister of information and culture, said that under the pretext of an inclusive government in Afghanistan, the world wants to include those who are accomplices of foreigners in the government.

"They talk of an inclusive government, I swear

that they do not care about inclusiveness.

They want their people to come. The Islamic Emirate is a people's government, and after this, this process will be strengthened, but it will never be the way they want," Khairkhwa added.

The Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, emphasized having good relations with the world, saying that war is not the solution and all issues should be resolved through dialogue and positive interaction.

Suppression of Women in Afghanistan has intensified: HRW

Hakim Bigzaad

Human Rights Watch has said that the actions of the Taliban administration towards women until 2023 indicate that the suppression is deepening. This organization added that in addition to the long-standing deprivation of women of their fundamental rights such as the right to education, work, and assembly in public spaces, the recent suppression and detention of women have increased.

Human Rights Watch has emphasized that the detention of protesting women in 2023, including Julia Parsi and Neda Parwani, along with their family members, shows

that the suppression of women is on the rise. According to this organization, there are also reports of the punishment of women in prisons.

However, Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Taliban, had previously stated that these women are receiving orders from outside.

Meanwhile, a wave of arrests of young girls for "improper veiling" has recently begun in various parts of Kabul, including the western part of the city, which has provoked significant reactions from citizens and human rights activists. Munisa Mobaraz, a women's rights activist, says that the detention of young girls without a

guardian is an illegal action carried out by the Taliban, and there is no justification for such actions by an "illegitimate" government.

It should be noted that the United Nations Deputy Mission in Afghanistan, or UNAMA, in its recent report based on the detention of girls on charges of "improper veiling," stated that they are investigating reports that claim money is demanded in exchange for the release of these girls.

Maryam, one of the girls in western Kabul, expresses concerns that the goal of these detentions is to create fear and terror among girls, forcing them into a sedentary lifestyle and the policies of the previous Taliban era. Human

Rights Watch continues to highlight the actions of the Taliban over the past two years, including the closure of women's salons and the prohibition of their presence in public places like parks and travel without a guardian.

According to this organization, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of the United Nations in Afghanistan presented a report to the United Nations Human Rights Council in June, detailing the widespread and systematic discrimination that women and girls in Afghanistan face, concluding that this is "gender-based sexual harassment and a framework of institutionalized gender apartheid."



PPP to initiate housing scheme for homeless people: Bilawal

E.P. Report

BAHAWALPUR: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing the Party's public gathering in Bahawalpur, Punjab said that the Jiyalas are running the electoral campaign nationwide. The PPP is contesting the elections not because of any personal interest, but to serve the people. Pakistan is going through a tumultuous time and is facing a historic economic crisis, with unprecedented increases in inflation, unemployment and poverty.

When Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto laid the foundation of the Party, the country was going through a financial crisis then too, the Quaid-e-Awam gave us a manifesto that helped strengthen the downtrodden masses of the country, including the poor farmers and labourers. Once again, we require a pro-people, pro-labourer, pro-farmer and pro-poor government. The rest of the political parties represent the elite while the PPP represents the common people. If the people stamp the symbol of the arrow, then the government forming resultantly will be theirs. The Pakistan People's Party, following the footsteps of Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam is contesting the elections based on a 10-point economic contract.

Chairman Bilawal said that his first aim would be to not only increase the wages, but double them within five years. The workers of Bahawalpur should apprise the people of the PPP's aims, which include providing free and quality education to the people, establishing an IT university in the city and nationwide. It is the PPP's promise to Bahawalpur that it will establish free-of-cost healthcare institutions such as the NICVD. We will begin with South Punjab, and every district of the region will get a free hospital, followed by the rest of Punjab. When Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was in office, he gave ownership to the people, and launched a '5 Marla scheme', and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto introduced a '7 Marla scheme'.

The people should support the PPP so that it can fulfil its aims of building three million homes for the peo-

ple nationwide, as it is already doing in Sindh, while giving ownership to the women of the households. Chairman Bilawal directed the Party's workers to go to every area with temporary housing, and let the people know that it is our aim to regularise the construction and give them ownership so they too can live in the serenity of their own home.

Chairman Bilawal instructed the Party workers to go to every doorstep and tell the people that the PPP plans to expand the revolutionary, internationally-acclaimed Benazir Income Support Programme to incorporate employment, education and health facilities for the poor women of the country. The PPP also aims to give interest-free loan to the poor women of the country so they can make their contribution to society while attaining independence. "Bilawal Bhutto's government will introduce the 'Benazir Mazdoor Card' and the 'Benazir Kissan Card' to provide the labourers and farmers of the country with financial assistance directly", Chairman Bilawal resolved. Subsidies will be provided directly to the growers and farmers so that their crops are insured and they do not have to bear the burden of any unforeseen catastrophe.

Addressing the youth, Chairman Bilawal said that he plans on introducing the 'Youth Card' to provide the youngsters with financial assistance as well as equip them with the necessary skills to see to it that they flourish professionally. The PPP will also establish 'Youth Centers' in every district. The PPP also aims to initiate the 'Bhook Mitao Programme' to combat with hunger on the level of union councils, and provide free lunch in schools, as well as look after the new mothers and infants for the first thousand days so that no one goes to sleep on an empty stomach in the country.

Chairman PPP said that he is contesting the elections on these 10 points, and the PPP will be victorious and a government of the people will be formed. The PPP is not competing with any other party, it is the party of martyrs. The PPP's only competition is the inflation, poverty and unemployment. When given the opportuni-

ty, the PPP will show how a government can cater to the poor, farmers and labourers. The PPP is the only party that has the skills to do this, and its history is a testimony of this. It is the season of elections and the PPP is focusing especially on Punjab, and the Party will be triumphant in all the provinces. The PPP will not only form the federal government, but also the provincial governments. A Jiyala will be the CM of Punjab, Chairman Bilawal said.

Chairman PPP said that the Jiyalas of the Party would have to struggle for their victory and work hard as if it is a matter of life and death. We have all the answers to the problems that the country is faced with. None of the other parties are interested in the crises faced by their people, they only care for power and have resorted to settling scores against each other out of personal vendettas. The PPP wishes to bury the traditional politics of hate and division, and will introduce a new form of politics, the aim of which would be to serve the poor and downtrodden. One political party is contesting the elections to avoid prison, while the other is doing so for its leader to be released from jail. The PPP is the only party that is contesting solely for the people.

Chairman PPP said that when someone is out to hunt a lion, a bat is rendered redundant, and only the arrow works. This is the season of hunting, and the people have to prove that 'Aaj Bhi Bhutto Zinda Hai', by stamping the symbol of the arrow on February 8. Chairman Bilawal said that Ali Hasan Gilani and Hafiz Hussain are the Party's representative from Bahawalpur, and they are to be made victorious. Malik Shahrukh is the Party's candidate from the provincial and National Assemblies, and he has to win so that the people can be served by the Party. Abdul Mujeeb Chanan, Naseem Shah, Amin Shah, Rifatur Rehman, Dost Muhammad Khosa, Tatheer ul Hassan and Mr. Gardezi are the Party's candidates and will be triumphant with the support of the people. Chairman Bilawal welcomed Zafar Warraich to the Party and announced that he will be contesting on its behalf in Rahimyar Khan.



LAHORE: Activists of civil society holding a protest in support of oppressed Muslims of Gaza.

All formalities completed for PIA's privatization

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Privatization Minister Fawad Hassan Fawad on Saturday said that all the legal formalities had been completed for the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA).

Talking to a private news channel, he outlined various stages of the process for the PIA's privatization, saying that the Privatization Commission was diligently executing the task. Fawad said that in order to ensure transparency in the PIA's privatization, the representatives of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), besides the ministries of education, law, and finance had also been taken on board.

Fawad said the caretaker government was carrying out the privatization under the constitutional amendments enacted by the previous elected government. The decision to the effect was taken by the then government to prevent further deterioration of the economy, he added. The minister rejected rumors of negotiations about buying of the PIA by a foreign government. Such baseless allegations were being levelled by certain elements for their vested interests, he added.

To a question, he said that the caretaker federal cabinet would ensure that no employee of the PIA was unjustly deprived of their legitimate rights. He said the problems being faced by the national airline due to governance issues, financial mismanagement and appointment of individuals ill-equipped to manage the aviation industry.

He underscored the urgent need for reforms to prevent further deterioration of public institutions, including the PIA. To a query, the minister said the general elections would be held on the scheduled date of February 8 and the caretaker government was extending fully support the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in conducting the polls.

Pak dispatches fourth aid consignment for Gaza

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has dispatched the fourth batch of 20 tons of relief goods for the oppressed people of Gaza.

The relief goods were dispatched from Noor Khan Air Base by a special flight of Pakistan Air Force. Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani, Palestinian Ambassador to Pakistan Ahmed Jawad Rabi'i, officials of NDMA and Armed Forces were also present at the airbase.

Speaking on this occasion, Jalil Abbas Jilani expressed full support to the Palestinian people. He condemned Israel's use of disproportionate and indiscriminate force against civilians, especially women and children in Gaza. The foreign minister also reiterated full support to South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice. He called for an immediate ceasefire as well as ensuring the immediate delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. On this occasion, Palestinian Ambassador thanked the government of Pakistan for providing relief goods.

PTI finalises candidates for all constituencies

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) released the list of candidates for the legislatures with several National Assembly constituencies marked as pending mainly due to the difference of opinion.

Interestingly, the PTI has fielded its candidates against its erstwhile close ally Sheikh Rashid Ahmad and his nephew Sheikh Rashid Shafiq, as the two sides reportedly developed differences over last year's May 9 mayhem. There is no nomination pending from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, whereas in the other three provinces — Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan — dozens of constituencies are still open for final nominations from the party.

PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan is a candidate from NA-10, Buner-I, and Omar Ayub Khan is contesting from NA-18, Haripur. Murad Saeed and Advocate Kamal Khan have been named candidates for NA-4, Swat-III, former NA speaker Asad Qaiser is contesting from NA-19, Swabi-I, ex-minister Ali Muhammad Khan from NA-23, Mardan-III, Sher Afzal Marwat from NA-41, Lakki Marwat, Ali Amin Gandapur from NA-44, DIK-I.

From the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Amir Masood Mughal is fighting from NA-46, Advocate Shoaib Shaheen from NA-47 and Ali Bokhari from NA-48.

In Punjab, Major Tahir Sadiq has been fielded from NA-49 in Attock and his

daughter Eman Sadiq from NA-50, Raja Basharat and Shahriyar Riaz have been fielded from NA-55 and NA-56, Rawalpindi, where Sheikh Rashid returned many times in the past while Senior party leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi has been fielded from Multan and Tharparkar.

Ayaz Amir is the PTI's candidate for NA-58, Chakwal, Riaz Fatma for NA-107, Sheikh Waqas Akram for NA-109, Brig Ejaz Shah from NA-112, Nankana, senior lawyers Latif Khosa for NA-122, Salman Akram Raja for NA-128 and Dr. Yasmin Rashid for NA-130, Lahore.

From NA-151, Multan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Mehar Bano Qureshi have been named while Jamshaid Dasti is the PTI candidate for NA-175, Zartaj Gul for NA-185, Qureshi for NA-214 and Ghulam Qadir Sanjrani for NA-260.

From Faisalabad, Ali Sahi, son of former speaker of Punjab Assembly Afzal Sahi has been fielded from an NA seat whereas Sahibzada Hamid Raza, son of late Sahibzada Fazal Karim, has also been awarded a ticket from Faisalabad for the NA seat.

From Lahore, former PML-N MPA Wasim Qadir has been fielded from NA-121 from where he will contest against PML-N's Sheikh Rohail Asghar whereas former Punjab governor Mian Azhar is the party candidate from NA-129. Shafqat Mehmood, two-time MNA of PTI from Lahore, withdrew his nomination papers.

The most significant decision regarding Lahore has also been made as former Punjab Health Minister Dr Yasmin Rashid has been fielded from NA-130 against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. From NA-127, PTI has fielded former Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) MNA, Malik Zaheer Abbas Khokhar and he will contest against PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and PML-N's Atta Tarar. Salman Akram Raja has also been fielded for an NA seat in Lahore.

According to a notification, for the NA-108 (Shah Jevna/ Mochiwala) seat, former federal minister Sahibzada Mehboob Sultan, for NA-109 (Jhang urban) former federal minister Sheikh Waqas Akram and NA-110 (Shorkot/Ahmedpur Sial) Sahibzada Ahmed Sultan were awarded tickets.

A candidate from the Hindu community, Lal Chand, is also contesting elections from NA-213 in Umer Kot whereas Qureshi has been fielded from NA-214, a seat that falls in Tharparkar.

However, at least 34 NA constituencies still have no candidates and these include Lahore, Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Kasur, Khanewal, Sahiwal and Pakpattan.

Meanwhile, the PTI has decided to announce the remaining names of ticket holders on different seats once their cases are decided by the court. PTI President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi and his son Chaudhry Moonis Elahi are out of the poll race due to the rejection of their papers.

Parvez Elahi out of election race

E.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has rejected Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Parvez Elahi's plea against the rejection of his nomination papers, however, his wife Qaisara was granted permission to contest the February 8 general elections from two constituencies.

A three-member bench headed by Justice Ali Baqar Najafi issued the verdict on pleas filed by the embattled party's president and his wife challenging the appellate tribunal's and returning officer's (RO) decisions. The high court upheld the verdicts given by the RO and appellate tribunal regarding the rejection of Elahi's nomination papers from NA-64 and PP-32.

Additionally, the LHC full bench also rejected Moonis Elahi's appeal against the rejection of his nominations from NA-64, NA-69, PP-32, and PP-34. However, Qaisara's nomination papers from NA-64 and PP-32 have been accepted for contesting the forthcoming general polls.

On January 8, an election tribunal rejected Elahi and his wife's appeals against the rejection of their nomination papers from NA-59 and PP-23, upholding RO's decision of declaring them "disqualified" for concealing asset details and other information. A series of objections had been raised against them, which included the concealing of assets, non-disclosure of shares in different companies, Qaisara's foreign visit, non-compliance with the rule to open separate bank accounts for expenditures in both constituencies, technical mistakes in documents and submitting documents without verification from the oath commission.

The senior PTI leader was initially arrested on June 1 in a Rs70 million graft case related to the embezzlement of development funds allocated for the Gujrat district and has been behind bars ever since. He was released several times in between, only to be re-arrested immediately in different cases, including a money laundering case and allegations of illegal appointments in the Punjab Assembly.

JI demands equal playing field for all political parties

E.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami leader Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan has urged the election commission of Pakistan and the apex court to provide equal level playing fields to all political parties, ensure the general elections are held on Feb, 8 and avoid depriving a specific party of its election symbol.

He was addressing a party workers' convention as chief guest at Talash here on Saturday. The JI Youth wing Talash chapter organized the event which was attended by a large number of party workers and youths from the area.

The convention was also addressed by the JI candidate for NA 7 Maulana Dr Muhammad Ismail, PK 16 candidate Shad Nawaz Khan, former tehsil nazim Riaz Muhammad, JI Youth wing district president Ateequr Rehman, JI tehsil emir Malik Sher Bahadar, Muhsin Khan and others.

Realizing the importance of youths' votes, the JI senator said that 130 million youths lived in the country and their role could not be ruled out. He asked the JI Youth wing to mobilize youths and women to vote this time for the JI. He said the JI would provide education to every child, healthcare to every citizen and

would distribute national resources equally among the people. He said that election was the right of 250 million Pakistanis and the ECP should ensure its timely conduction. He said that militancy would never succeed and elections would be held right on Feb 8. "We will not allow anyone to postpone elections", Mushtaq said.

Senator Mushtaq condemned the arrest of the Pukhtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) chief Manzoor Pashteen and termed it illegal and unconstitutional. The JI chief also condemned the 'forced disappearance' of Baluchis and said that the Baluch protesters had genuine demands.

He said the JI had been struggling for the enforcement of Islamic system through ballot in the country that guaranteed equal facilities of education, healthcare and shelter to citizens and ensured justice to all irrespective of people's social and economical status.

He said the Islamic system would rid Pakistan from slavery of the IMF, World Bank and America. He said the JI wanted across the board accountability of the judges, Generals and bureaucrats. He alleged that rulers had looted national wealth and

shifted it abroad for their personal gains. He said the JI would take into accounts all the elements involved in plundering the national wealth.

Talking about the justice system the JI senator said that 2.1 million cases were under-trial in courts. He alleged the country was being ruled by 'mafia' that had roots even in the parliament and judiciary. "Some individuals and political parties want to postpone the general election in the garb of militancy but the JI will not let it so", Mushtaq said, adding that delaying polls was tantamount to surrendering before the militants.

Talking about the current situation in the country Mushtaq Ahmad said that prices of daily use items increased weekly while millions of youth were jobless despite getting higher degrees from universities. The JI senator was of the view that free, fair and transparent elections were the only solution to all problems faced by the nation. He said that depriving a political party of its election symbol and arresting its candidates was not fair. About his party, Mr Ahmad said that the JI had the biggest ambulance service in the country and was facilitating 300, 00 orphans despite the fact that it was not in government.

UNHRs official warns UNSC of 'very real' risk of atrocities in Gaza

NEW YORK: "Incendiary statements" by some within the Israeli leadership calling for the permanent resettlement of Palestinians in other countries have sparked fears that they are being deliberately forced out of Gaza and will not be allowed to return. A leading UN human rights Official warned the Security Council on Friday that "this must not be permitted" and that compelling Palestinians to evacuate their land might be tantamount to a war crime.

Izzy Brands Kehris, the assistant secretary-general for human rights, told council members that "the horror of the Oct. 7 attacks, for which there must be accountability, will not be forgotten." But the threat of forced displacement carries "particular resonance" for Palestinians, she added. "It is seared into Palestinian collective consciousness by what they refer to as the

Nakba, or "catastrophe," of 1948 when millions of Palestinians were forced from their homes," she said.

Brands Kehris was speaking during a meeting of the Security Council that was requested by Algeria to discuss the threat Palestinians face of forced displacement in Gaza. She said the mass displacement began on Oct. 12 when Israeli authorities ordered civilians living north of Wadi Gaza to leave their homes and head south, ahead of the launch of Israel's military offensive. "While Israel stated that its evacuation orders have been for the safety of Palestinian civilians, it appears that Israel has made scant provision to ensure such relocations comply with international law, in particular by ensuring access to appropriate hygiene, health, safety, nutrition and shelter, and

taking steps to minimize the risk of separation of family members," Brands Kehris said.

"Such compelled evacuations, failing to meet the necessary conditions for lawfulness, therefore potentially amount to forcible transfer: a war crime. "These orders have often been confusing, requiring civilians to move to so-called 'humanitarian zones' or 'known shelters,' despite the fact that many such areas have been subsequently struck during Israeli military operations, and the lack of any capacity in the shelters to absorb more people." More than 90 percent of the population of Gaza is suffering from acute food insecurity, she added, and many are on the brink of "avoidable, human-made" famine. She stressed that starvation of a civilian population as a tactic of war is prohibited under international law. — Arab News