

Police repulse attack
F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Lakki Marwat police repulsed a terrorist attack on two police check posts on Wednesday. According to police, terrorists equipped with rocket launchers and other advanced weapons attacked the police stations of Ghazni and Shehbaz Khel in Lakki Marwat. The timely response by the police officials forced the terrorists to flee from the scene.

Firing triggers protest
F.P. Report

HUB: A furious protest block traffic and paralysed life in Hub city on Wednesday after a man died when Coast Guards opened firing on his car. The Coast Guards personnel allegedly opened firing on a car near Customs checkpoint in Wandar area of Hub. One of the bullets hit the tyre of the car due to which the driver lost its control and the vehicle fell into a gorge.

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Unprovoked Iran’s missile strikes

Pakistan expels Iranian envoy

Islamabad decides to recall ambassador from Tehran, suspend all high-level visits

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday decided to recall its ambassador from Iran and suspend all high-level visits following the unprovoked violation of its airspace by Iran on Tuesday night.

Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, in a televised press statement, said that Pakistan had also conveyed that the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan who was currently visiting Iran might not return for the time being.

"We have conveyed this message to the Iranian Government. We have also informed them that Pakistan has decided to recall its ambassador from Iran and that the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan who is currently visiting Iran may not return for the time being," the spokesperson remarked.

She said that the unprovoked and blatant breach of Pakistan's sovereignty by Iran was a violation of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

She said that the said the illegal act was completely unacceptable and had no justification whatsoever. "Pakistan reserves the right to respond to this illegal act. The responsibility for the consequences will lie squarely with Iran," she said.

The spokesperson said that Pakistan had also decided to suspend all high-level visits which were ongoing or were planned between Pakistan and Iran in the coming days.

Islamabad has already communicated strong condemnation of Tehran's move to the Iranian Charge d'affaires who was told that the consequences of such an unprovoked move lie squarely with Iran. Reiterating Pakistan's stance on coordinated action against the scourge of terrorism, the spokesperson had underscored that such unilateral acts are not in conformity with good neighbourly relations and can seriously undermine bilateral trust and confidence.

Balochistan Information Minister Jan Achakzai Wednesday said the violation of Pakistani sovereignty by Tehran "damages relations" between Iran and

FM stresses Pakistan’s ‘right to respond’
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilil Abbas Jilani stressed Pakistan's right to respond in a telephonic conversation with his Iranian counterpart on Wednesday following the "unprovoked violation of its airspace" by Tehran, according to the Foreign Office (FO).

Jilil Abbas Jilani on also firmly underscored that the attack conducted by Iran inside Pakistani territory, on January 16, was not only a serious breach of Pakistan's sovereignty but was also an egregious violation of international law and the spirit of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran.

"Expressing Pakistan's unreserved condemnation of the attack, the Foreign Minister added that the incident has caused serious damage to bilateral ties between Pakistan and Iran. The Foreign Minister added that Pakistan reserved the right to respond to this provocative act," the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

The caretaker foreign minister who is currently leading the Pakistan delegation to the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Kampala, Uganda, received a telephone call from Foreign Minister of Iran Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

Pakistan. "The enemy forces are trying to intervene externally in Pakistan, especially in Balochistan. The enemies will never succeed in their plans," the minister said. The minister's comments came during a presser in Quetta where he spoke in the wake of a drone and missile attack by Iran on 'militant bases' near its shared border with Pakistan late on Tuesday. The attack, however, resulted in the death of two innocent children and injured three girls.

(Continued on Back Page)

Imran among other PTI leaders out of election race

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has turned down Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's appeal against the rejection of nomination papers for the February 8 general elections.

The high court upheld the decisions of the returning officer (RO) and appellate tribunal given acceptance of the disqualified former premier's nomination papers from NA-122 and NA-89 constituencies. A three-member bench headed by Justice Ali Baqar Najafi heard the plea on Wednesday.

In his plea, Khan stated that his nomination papers were rejected by the RO and appellate tribunal in contrast with the facts, therefore, he should be granted permission to contest forthcoming polls. After hearing arguments from both sides, the LHC bench rejected the politico's appeal and upheld the previous decisions.

The ousted prime minister had filed his nomination papers from Lahore's NA-122 and Mianwali's NA-89 constituencies. Moreover, the high court also heard a series of petitions filed by other PTI bigwigs to challenge the rejection of their nominations. The larger bench also dismissed the appeals filed by PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi, PTI Secretary General Hammad Azhar, PTI leader Latif Khosa's son Khurram Latif Khosa and PTI activist Sanam Javid. The development comes as a major blow to the party whose leadership is facing a plethora of cases — especially pertaining to the May 9 riots — with senior leaders, including Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi and others, behind bars.

Court drops charges against PTI founder and wife: The Islamabad court has dismissed the case alleging an illicit relationship against the founder of PTI, Imran Khan, and his wife Bushra Bibi. The District and Sessions Court

in Islamabad presided over the hearing on the marriage case between Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi, ultimately rejecting the accusations of improper relations.

The court cited legal requirements, specifically Section 496B, which mandates two witnesses. Noting the absence of the second witness, the court decided to drop the charge under Section 496B. Consequently, the charges against PTI founder Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi now solely pertain to Section 496. The charges revolve around the marriage between the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi during Eid. The court has scheduled the appearance of prosecution witnesses for January 18.

The case originated from allegations made by Latif, an employee of Khawar Manika, Bushra Bibi's ex-husband. Latif accused Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi of incidents dating back six years. The hearing for the Nikah case is set to take place on January 18.

CJP: Kalashnikov culture has wreaked havoc with country

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has summoned details of licenses issued for prohibited bore weapons from authorities while hearing a case with regard to stolen arms on Wednesday. "Pakistan has to get rid of the Kalashnikov culture," Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa remarked.

The Supreme Court issued notices to the Secretary Interior as well as provincial secretaries, Police IGs, the Attorney General and Advocate Generals. "The police even didn't ask about arms license from the owner during arms theft investigation," CJP remarked. "The owner himself confesses crime". "Two Kalashnikovs, two Kalakovs, pistol and other valuables were

stolen in the theft," chief justice said.

"I was also offered to get Kalashnikov license," he further said. "Drugs and Kalashnikovs have wreaked havoc with Pakistan," CJP remarked. "No one stroll in the world carrying Kalashnikovs in big automobiles with tinted glasses," CJP remarked. "How did you get Kalashnikov," chief justice asked the petitioner.

"Why should not be taken action when IG was issuing Kalashnikovs papers," he questioned. "We are writing to the secretary interior to take back Kalashnikovs and their licenses," CJP said. Commenting on presence of weapons in everyday life, chief justice said that people carrying Kalashnikov standing everywhere when a person

visits a school or market. "If they are afraid then restrict them to homes or they go out to scare other people," CJP said.

"Security guards seen standing outside of homes with Kalashnikovs in Islamabad. When people go out of home carrying Kalashnikovs in cars with tinted glasses, police don't have dare to question them," he observed. The CJP expressed resentment with the KP Police over failing to question about arms license in arms theft case. "Keeping arms without license is crime but the police didn't ask the owner about license," he said. The court granted bail to the accused for Rs 50,000 security deposit. A three-member bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, heard the case.

China calls for restraint after attack

BEIJING (INP): China has called upon Pakistan and Iran to exercise "restraint" after Tehran carried out an air strike on its territory that killed two children and injured three girls.

"We call on both sides to exercise restraint, avoid actions that would lead to an escalation of tension and work together to maintain peace and stability," foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a regular briefing on Wednesday. "We consider both Iran and Pakistan as close neighbours and major Islamic countries," she said.

Pak receives \$700m IMF bailout tranche
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has received \$700 million from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as part of its bailout programme, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmed said Wednesday.

The loan was approved after the IMF Executive Board completed its first review last week, bringing the total disbursements under the \$3 billion Standby Arrangement (SBA) to about \$1.9 billion. Following the board's approval last week, Antoinette Sayeh, Deputy Managing Director and Chair, had said: "There are now tentative signs of activity picking-up and external pressures easing."

The nine-month SBA approved by the Executive Board on July 12 last month, aims to provide a policy anchor for addressing domestic and external balances and a framework for financial support from multilateral and bilateral partners. To secure the bailout, Pakistan implemented tough IMF-requested measures: a revamped budget, a record interest rate hike, and painful increases in electricity and gas prices.

Under the bailout deal, the IMF also got Pakistan to raise \$1.34 billion in new taxation to meet fiscal adjustments. The measures fuelled all-time high inflation of 38% year-on-year in May, which is still hovering above 30%. "The authorities took challenging steps to bring both electricity and natural gas prices closer to costs in 2023. Continuing with regularly-scheduled adjustments and pushing cost-side power sector reforms are vital to improving the sector's viability and protecting fiscal sustainability," Sayeh said.

As Pakistan has secured the IMF loan, analysts expect the struggling South Asian nation to secure more multilateral and bilateral loans. In a statement, the SBP also confirmed that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has rolled over two \$1 billion deposits, which were maturing soon, providing respite to the friendly country. "UAE has confirmed rollover of its two deposits of US\$1.0 billion each placed with State Bank of Pakistan for another one year which were maturing in January 2024," the statement mentioned.

PPP to double salaries: Bilawal

F.P. Report

SHAH DADPUR/SANGHAR: Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, has said that the PML-N in Punjab and the group of political orphans contesting elections on the symbol of the Star in Sindh have no ideology nor manifesto. They are looking towards someone else to win the elections, but that era has now become the past.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, while addressing the people of Sanghar, said that they should make the PPP successful with an 'overwhelming majority', so that he can take maximum steps for the welfare and progress of the people of entire Pakistan, including Sanghar as Prime Minister. He promised that the 'people's government' at the Centre under his leadership would double the salaries, provide 300 units of solar power for poor families free of cost, expand the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), provide interest-free loans for poor women to start small businesses, build 3 million house units for homeless families, and give ownership rights of such houses to the women of the family. Additionally, he pledged to issue the Benazir Kisan Card for peasants, Benazir Mazdoor Card for workers, and Benazir Youth Card for the youth, establish Youth Centers at the district level, and launch the 'Bhook Mitao Program' to fight hunger and malnutrition.

According to the press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, the PPP chairman, while addressing a Jalsa as part of the general election campaign in Shahdadpur city of Sanghar district, said that in the elections to be held on February 8, the contest is now between the Arrow and the Lion, but only Jiyalas are present in the field. "The lion is hiding in the house as a cat, (and) from there asking that someone else should hunt for it, (and) someone else should make arrangements against its opponent. It is the tiger that sucks the blood of the people, the poor, the farmers, and the laborers. This is the tiger that you (people) have to hunt on February 8," he added.

Zardari inaugurates election office
F.P. Report

LAHORE: Former President of Pakistan and President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari inaugurated the election office of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in constituency NA-127 Lahore.

President Zardari addressing the workers of the party recalled the time when he was incarcerated in Lahore and the women and men workers used to call him at the time of the hearing of the cases against him. He also recalled that he had sowed a mango tree besides the Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in jail. The two trees are now bearing fruit.



DAVOS: Co-chair of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on the sidelines of World Economic Forum.

PM optimistic about political, economic stability after election

DAVOS (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday expressed confidence that a stable government would be formed after forthcoming general elections, scheduled for February 8, eventually leading to sustainable economic stability in the country.

"I do see and project that there will be great growth in Pakistan. There will be a sense of stability. The growth will be slow but it will be sustainable," the prime minister said in an interview with CNBC on the sidelines of the 54th annual meeting of World Economic Forum (WEF). He said that the speculations regarding holding the elections, had been addressed and everyone was certain about the election date of 8th of February.

PM Kakar said it was the top priority of the caretaker setup to bring economic revival and to focus on growth and other economic indicators. He said the next government had to follow a clear principle of spending less and earning more to achieve economic stability. "We need to bring back the non-documented economy into the documented economy and transform our state to a more viable economic entity," he added.

He highlighted that the caretaker government would publish a white paper on its 4-5 months performance. "We did introduce and revamp the programme within taxation system, we brought structural changes that would be passed through the Cabinet formerly by the end of the month, after that it would be in place as policy." Further, he said the caretaker government opted for aggressive privatization, it cut its expenditures at the federal level and it was also carrying out talks with the provinces so they could rationalize their expenditures.

As regards delay in elections, the prime minister said the country faced legal and technical challenges related to the electoral procedures and processes. However, he said those challenges had been addressed now and the people of Pakistan would be given the opportunity to exercise their constitutional right of electing the leadership for the next five years.

To a question about former PTI Chairman, PM Kakar said he was not in prison on account of his political opinion but due to his purported role for inciting riots and encouraging his followers towards disruption.

He said the people who had been involved in the riots were behind bars. "It is not that the innocent people have been picked up for their political opinions and they have been denied a political role." The prime minister pointed out that the former PTI Chairman had the right to say that he was jailed because of his political opinion but let the court decide the issue. He said the matter would not be decided by any individual, media or any other group but the courts would address these points.

To a question about free and fair elections, PM Kakar said prior to holding elections, no one could question the fairness of the process. "Let the election happen as there will be international observers, the international media and other watchdogs to report whether the elections were held in the free and fair manner or not." As regards the media freedom in Pakistan, the prime minister said even the Western media was under more strict regulations than that of Pakistan.

With regard to the regional issues, he said Pakistan did foresee that there would be implications for the country after the withdrawal of the US and NATO forces from Afghanistan and that was why Pakistan had been advocating for a responsible withdrawal. The focus of world powers

(Continued on Back Page)

PPP to double salaries: Bilawal

F.P. Report

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Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that Pakistan is currently surrounded by several severe problems, but the rest of the parties do not even realize it, who are contesting elections for their own personal interests. "There is one 'Sahib' who is contesting elections to escape from jail, and another 'Sahib' is contesting elections to get out of jail. (But) I am contesting elections for you (public) to rid you of inflation, unemployment, and poverty," he contended.

Terming the 'People's Economic Charter' as his 10 promises, he assured the people that as prime minister, he would not breathe a sigh of relief till these 10 promises were fulfilled. The PPP chairman said that it is the stance of PML-N and GDA that there is no money in the country, so the 18th Amendment and NFC should be abolished. "I was in Islamabad for 18 months, I know there is money and resources in the country. But you (PML-N and its allies) don't want to spend money on people," he added.

He said that there are currently 17 such ministries in the Center, which are not needed there, and reiterated that he would invest the amount spent annually on those 17 ministries and Rs 1,500 per annum in the form of subsidies to the elite for the welfare of the people. "You (people) make me prime minister. I will stop this forever. We know how to take away our rights," he said.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that PPP candidates are in the fray for both national assembly seats in Sanghar district. "One is my sister Shazia Marri and the other is my brother Alauddin Junejo. You have to make them victorious them with a big lead. These are my representatives; they will be your voice in the National Assembly," he said, and also appealed to vote for the PPP candidates, Ali Hassan Hengorji, Jam Shabbir Ali, Naveed Dero, Paras Dero, and Shahid Thaheem, who are contesting Sindh Assembly seats in Sanghar district.

The PPP chairman also took oath in front of the public from the candidates contesting the general elections on the Arrow symbol in Sanghar that they will fulfill their responsibilities for the welfare of the people after winning the election. He also appealed to the people of Sanghar that they would come out in large numbers on February 8 and make the PPP successful by stamping the Arrow on the ballot paper.



Developmental programs of social welfare reviewed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Provincial Minister Social Welfare Justice Retired Irshad Qaisar has said that soon Rehabilitation Center will be inaugurated in Peshawar for the rehabilitation and treatment of drug addict women where only women suffering from drug abuse will be rehabilitated and treated.

This will be the first government level rehabilitation center for women. He expressed these views on the occasion of chairing the review meeting of ongoing projects under the annual development program of Social Welfare.

The meeting was attended by Additional Secretary Social Welfare Farooq Khan, Senior Planning Officer and the relevant officials of the department. Secretary Social Welfare

Aneela Durrani participated in the meeting through video link.

In the meeting, the participants were given a detailed briefing on the ongoing projects under the annual development program for the year 2023-24. In which 20 projects are ongoing. Seven projects have been frozen due to financial difficulties while thirteen projects have not been approved yet. Thus, the total cost of these projects is Rs 13201 million. For the first eight months of the annual budget, 716 million rupees have been earmarked for these projects.

In the meeting, the ongoing projects were reviewed in detail and the challenges faced were discussed and necessary instructions were given for the improvement of the projects. It was told by the authorities that a center of excellence for

child artism was created where children suffering from artism are treated and counselled. Thus, plans are underway to establish Dar ul aman in different districts of the province. In this way, Zamong Kor have been established in different districts for street children. Meanwhile, Rehab centers have been established in eleven districts of the province, where people who use drugs will be rehabilitated and treated.

Caretaker Provincial Minister Social Welfare Justice Retired Irshad Qaisar while appreciating the performance of the Social Welfare Department said that the Caretaker Provincial Government is using all resources to support the weak and helpless sections of the society. I have visited these centers myself. Their efforts are commendable he added.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Minister for Social Welfare Justice (R) Irshad Qaisar chairing a meeting to review developmental projects.

KPHCC geotags 29079 health care centers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Care Commission (KPHCC) quarterly report for the months of October to December 2023. The report says that the Commission has finalized the empanelment criteria for secondary and tertiary care hospital under the social health protection, in collaboration with the Sehat Card Plus, State Life Insurance Corporation and Shifa foundation.

The criteria would serve as the essential threshold for empanelment under the Sehat Card Plus program. During the quarter, the commission continued its ongoing project of registration at doorsteps and geotagging of the Health Care Centers in the province and tagged 29,079 centers.

The process of geotagging is not targeting the valid service providers only but also the centers being run by the quacks and will

help the commission to easily identify and take actions against the illegal health care services providers. Quality assurance of health care centers through engagement is the policy of commission, rightly envisioned by the dynamic and expert Board of the Commission under Leadership of Dr. Ikram Ghani Khan, Chairperson KPHCC.

During the quarter, the commission trained 486 health care service providers from 147 establishments across the province. The Commission also aided UNODC in training 26 service providers from 22 drug rehabilitation centers. 43 hospitals were assessed during the quarter on the yardstick of minimum service delivery standards of the Commission and 21 hospitals have been awarded full license.

During the Quarter, the Commission has resolved 347 complaints of medical

negligence, malpractice, maladministration and other regularities and imposed penalties against the persons and premises that were found involved in substandard practice. In its drive for eradication of quackery from the province 94 health care centres were permanently sealed while 171 centers were warned and guided through regulatory directions.

The Chief Executive Officer Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Care Commission Dr. Nadeem Akhtar appreciated the efforts of all the employees of the commission for their hard work and dedication to the gigantic task of regulation of health sector in the province and articulated that the Commission was committed to make all efforts for enhancing patient safety and healthcare quality in the province. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and exhibit transparency and accountability and performance of its statutory obligations.

KPBC flays malicious drive against judiciary

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council (KPBC) condemned malicious campaign against judiciary and judges as well as urge legal fraternity to avoid derogatory rhetoric on media, on Wednesday.

KPBC Vice Chairman Zar Badshah and Chairman Executive Committee Syed Mubashir Shah took notice of malicious campaign against judiciary. They argued the legal community to avoid hateful and immoral rhetoric as well as content against judiciary and honorable judges.

KPBC argued that the decisions should may challenge before court of law despite using immoral rhetoric and unfair criticism. They urged lawyers to discuss court's decision but avoid usage of derogatory rhetoric.

PBA to observe strike today: Peshawar Bar Association (PBA) to observe strike from court's proceedings today (on Thursday) against deployment of unnecessary security personnel in the premises of judiciary.

The strike is announced after completion of 24 hours ultimatum provided by legal fraternity for removal of extra security personnel and check posts from the premises of courts. The decision was made after consultation with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council stakeholders regarding strike and ultimatum for removal of unnecessary check posts.

WMFP stands in solidarity with Kosovo journalist

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Women's Media Forum Pakistan (WMFP) stands in solidarity with a Kosovo journalist who was assaulted by the Prime Minister's security team. WMFP is concerned about the increasing attacks on women in media around the world.

WMFP strongly condemns the assault, pressing media rights organisations to take steps to help train women journalists against such attacks and demand that authorities ensure journalists, especially women journalists are safe in the field.

On December 28, 2023, journalist Blerta Dalloshi-Berisha from TV Klan was attacked when she attempted to ask Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti a question. Blerta hurt her right hand after the PM's security used needless force on her and snatched her microphone which also disrupted the filming.

Later, Blerta elaborated on the incident, condemning the attack on her Facebook calling it a "shame." Media reported there has been tension between PM Kurti's government and the media outlet TV Klan that Blerta works for. In June 2023, the government tried to close the channel by stripping it of its license. Fortunately, the courts did not allow this to happen.

The Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK) condemned the attack in its statement. Talking about the media's growing sense of insecurity within Kosovo's media community, AJK called the mistreatment of journalists "completely unacceptable". WMFP asks the Kosovo government to provide journalists and media workers, especially women, a conducive environment to work and refrain from usurping freedom of media and speech.

Gas theft crackdown continue

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 316 connections; Rs 5.6 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 17 connections on illegal use of gas while another 24 on use of compressor and also imposed fine 3.29 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged an FIR against gas pilferers.



PESHAWAR: Adviser to KP CM on Transport Zafarullah Khan Umerzai in a group photo with members of Mardan Trasport Association after meeting.

Strengthening nurseries enterprises to boosts agribusiness

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) takes a crucial step for strengthening and modernizing fruits plants nurseries enterprises in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its Newly Merged Districts (KP-NMDs) by signing 35 grant agreements in Peshawar.

Diverse agro-climatic conditions in KP-NMDs offer potential for a variety of fruits, yet the fruit industry in KP and its NMDs faces obstacles due to non-availability of true-to-type and disease-free planting material, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

USAID-ERDA is extending in-kind support to 35 fruit plant nurseries in districts Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Dir, Orakzai, South Waziristan, North Waziristan, Malakand, Dera Ismail Khan, and Kurram. Shad Muhammad, Chief of Party for USAID-ERDA, highlighted the goal of the activity: "To strengthen and expand existing fruit plant nurseries enterprises, ensuring easy access for local farmers to high-quality fruit saplings."

By providing in-kind support such as planting materials, lath-house/greenhouse establishment, and toolkits, we aim to empower the local agribusiness community and ensure easy access to farming community to certified and diseases free planting material." Jan Muhammad, Director General Agriculture Extension Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, emphasized the crucial need for fruit plant nurseries, stating, "The estab-



lishment and strengthening of fruit plant nurseries are imperative for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's agriculture.

This initiative not only addresses the current scarcity of planting material but also holds the potential to significantly boost the agricultural sector by providing local farmers with high-quality, disease-free saplings." Beneficiaries, like Gul Shaid Afridi and Muhammad Qayum Dir Lower, emphasized the positive impact on local communities.

Afridi stated, "This support will enhance our nursery's capacity and contribute to disease-free planting material, fostering growth of the fruit industry." The project will also provide capacity building, and handholding for nursery establishment and management, and will facilitate in establishing forward

and backward linkages for selected grantees. Registration with the Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department (FSC&RD) is a key focus to ensure availability of certified planting material.

USAID-ERDA's Senior Agriculture Specialist, Zia Ur Rehman, highlighted anticipated outcomes, including the promotion of the fruit industry in KP-NMDs, availability of disease-free planting material at local level, strengthening local MSMEs, and the creation of direct and indirect job opportunities. The grant program is envisioned to motivate entrepreneurs, attract private sector investment, and contribute to the economic development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its NMDs.

PATNC KP commends KP govt for interim ban on e-cigarettes

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Blue Veins and the Provincial Alliance for Tobacco and Nicotine Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (PATNC KP) today expressed profound gratitude to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government for implementing an interim ban of 60 days under Section 144 on the storage, sale, and use of e-cigarettes in the province.

According to the notification issued by the Home and Tribal Affairs Department, all Deputy Commissioners are directed to enforce the following interim measures: Ban on Sale to Minors: A complete prohibition on the sale of e-cigarettes and vapes to individuals below the age of 21 years across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Prohibition near Educational Institutions: The sale and storage of e-cigarettes and vapes within a 50-meter radius of all educational institutions in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa are strictly forbidden. Violators of these orders will face legal consequences under Section 188 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC).

This decisive action follows a series of meetings conducted by the Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control, Blue Veins, and KPTCC with key figures such as Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali, Chief Secretary KP, and Special Secretary Home & Tribal Affairs KP and others. These meetings focused on discussing the dangers of e-cigarettes and vapes and examining global legislative and policy practices regarding their sale and storage.

In response to the World Health Organization's call for action and in the interest of public health, civil society organizations commend the proactive approach of the Governor and Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This ban is a critical step in safeguarding citizens from

the harmful effects of vapes and e-cigarettes, which include respiratory issues, nicotine addiction, and potential long-term health risks.

Recent momentum and media visibility around the hazards of newer nicotine and tobacco products in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have underscored the need for policy and legislative reform at both provincial and federal levels.

Currently, there is a lack of policy and legislative framework to regulate the sale of electronic cigarettes and vapes. Civil Society Activist Qamar Naseem, Key advocate for tobacco and nicotine control in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, stated, "This interim ban is a commendable step by the KP Government, reflecting its proactive approach to public health. However, we must solidify this progress through comprehensive provincial legislation to ensure a permanent solution to this growing health concern."

Power to remain shutdown

F.P. Report

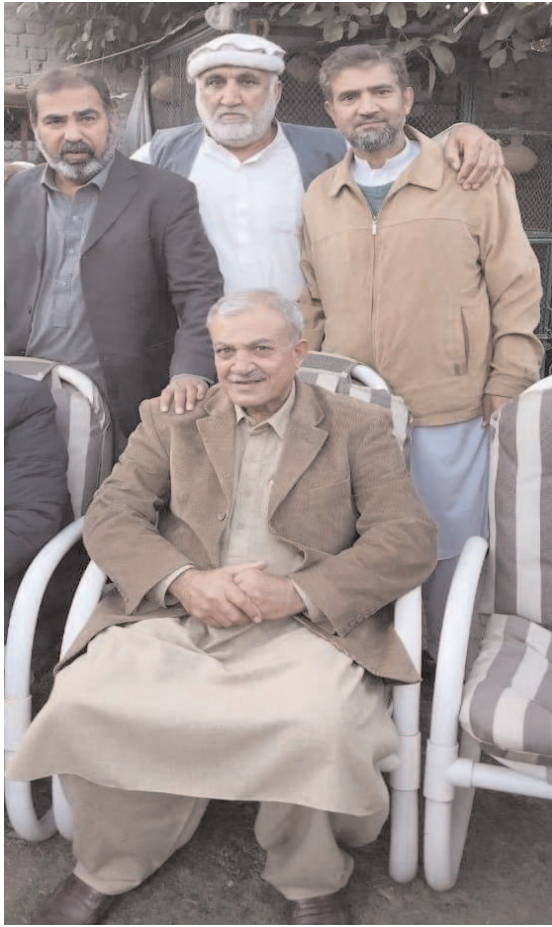
PESHAWAR: Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Wednesday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Jamrud Grid Station on 18th, 24th and 31st January from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Hayatabad 2 feeders will face inconvenience.

It said that power supply will also remain suspended from Hayatabad Grid Station on 18th, 24th and 31st January from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Hayatabad 12, 14 feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar University Grid Station on 18th and 23rd January from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of New Hayatabad, University Campus, Canal Town, Malakandher, Engineering, Regi, Taj Abad, Taj Abad 2, Agriculture, Mera Achini, HMC, Ring Road, Danish Abad, Gharib Abad, Rahatabad 1, CMB and Abdara feeders will face

inconvenience.

Likewise, it said that power supply will remain suspended from RMT Grid Station on 18th and 23rd January from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of Professor Model Town, Sheikh Yaseen and Regi feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar Cantt Grid Station on 18th and 23rd January from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of Tehkal, Islamia College, KTH, Commercial, Jahangir Abad, University Town, NCB, Air Port, PAF Base, Saddar Road, Mall Road, MES 1, 2, Old MES, Babu Garhi, Marble Industry, CAA, Palosi 1, Behari Colony, Tehkal Payan feeders will face inconvenience.

Moreover, it said that power supply will remain suspended from PESCO Colony Grid Station on 18th and 23rd January from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Bank of Khyber, Scarp 1, ICF, Darmangi, Warsak Road and Jail feeders will face inconvenience.



PESHAWAR: ANP leaders Noor Muhammad Khan, Advocate, Irshad Khan, president, Ayaz Khan and Faiz Muhammad Khan in a group photo after UC-35 meeting.

QWP flays social media campaign against SC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Wednesday condemned the malicious social media campaign against the judges of the Supreme Court while addressing a gathering at Mandani area of Charsadda district, he said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lost its electoral symbol but due to its own follies.

QWP chairman said that PTI founding chairman Imran Khan was responsible for the situation his party was facing. He said the recent decision of the Supreme Court upholding the ruling of the Election Commission of Pakistan about the intra-party election of the PTI was based on merit and in accordance with the law. However, he expressed resentment over the launching of the smear campaign against the judiciary. He said the country was already facing a host of issues and it could not afford confrontation and unrest.

Aftab Sherpao said that some elements were out to create disturbance for their vested interests. The QWP leader said that holding a free, fair and transparent election was the only way to steer the country towards economic and political stability. He maintained that the country was facing the issue of law and order, poverty, unemployment and inflation so concerted efforts were needed to address these challenges.



However, he hoped that the 2024 general election would bring stability to the country. He said the political leadership would have to work hard to pay off the loans and provide relief to the have-nots. He said during the election campaign the politicians should avoid making promises, which were difficult to honour. He said the nation should be told the truth as the prevailing difficult period was also a test for them. He said the people should use to their right to vote with great care and think about the country and their future.

Commenting on the problems facing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Aftab Sherpao said KP and its merged districts had been overlooked. He said that KP was not getting its due share in resources. The QWP leader said the merged areas were also facing shortage of funds and the promises made at the time of merger remained unfulfilled. He said the province was facing gas and electricity load shedding. He asked the federal government to give KP its arrears of the net hydel profit and gas royalty.

Very cold and dry to prevail in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Regional Meteorological Center Peshawar on Wednesday predicted that very cold and dry weather is likely to prevail in most districts of the province.

It said that foggy conditions are likely to occur over Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Karak, Bannu, Laki Marwat, Swabi, D.I. Khan and Tank districts as well as over Motorway (M1) / Highways in morning and night hours.

During the last 24 hours, very cold and dry weather prevailed over most districts of the province, while moderate foggy conditions prevailed over some plain areas. Rainfall recorded in the province was nil.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar 18/02, Chitral 17/-02, Timergara 20/00.



In brief

AD&SJ rejects plea against NPC elections

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Nowshera Tayyab Khan rejected Tahim-u-Rehman plea challenging Nowshera Press Club (NPC) elections, on Wednesday. Moreover, Civil Judge Iltaf Khan also rejected plea for status quo against NPC 2024 elections as the petitioner named Nadeem Shah Tipu neither member of the press club nor satisfied court regarding maintainability of the case. It is worthy to mention that NPC elections made controversial by one group within the community and challenged at different forum. However, the competent forums including judiciary and information's department has decided the matter in favor of NPC constitutional jurisdiction.

Two coal miners dead

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: The 3rd accident in the beginning of 2024 had claimed lives of two more coal miners belonging to Shangla district due to collapse of mine at Akharwal area of Dara Admakhel while the 65% local population directly dependent on the industry. The deceased was identified as Nawaz Khan who was killed on the spot while Muhammad Ali was shifted to Lady Reading Hospital in critical condition but succumbed to injuries at Peshawar. The dead bodies of coal miners are shifted to their native villages at Shangla district. The residents argued competent authorities for provision of employment opportunities to local of Shangla.

Man killed, woman injured

BAHAWALNAGAR (INP): At least one person was killed and a woman critically injured when an over speeding trailer hit a motorcycle here on Wednesday. According to details, the accident took place at main highway of Fort Abbas in Bahawalnagar where a reckless trailer knocked down a bike carrying two people. As a result of accident, the motorcycle rider person was killed on the spot while another woman was critically injured. The trailer responsible for accident fled the scene. The body and injured were shifted to local hospital for medico-legal formalities. The police impounded the trailer and after registering a case against the driver at large started raids for his arrest.

Additional DC injured in mishap

KALAT (INP): Panjgur additional deputy commissioner and his driver sustained injuries in a road mishap on the Quetta-Karachi National Highway in Kalat on Wednesday. According to sources in the police, a Zamyad vehicle crashed into the car of Panjgur Additional Deputy Commissioner Khurram Khalid on the Quetta-Karachi National Highway. As a result, the ADC and his driver sustained injuries. The injured were shifted to a hospital in Quetta after administering first aid. Police have also arrested the driver of Zamyad.

163 POs held

FAISALABAD (APP): The police arrested 763 alleged criminals including 163 proclaimed offenders (POs) and 131 court absconders (CAs) during fortnight from different parts of Faisalabad. Spokesman Nawaz said here on Wednesday that the police nabbed 160 illicit weapon-holders and recovered 118 pistols, five rifles, nine guns, 7 Kalashnikovs, two repeaters, one revolver and 430 bullets from them accused during this period.

JI to equip youths with IT if came into power

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami candidate for NA 7 and former provincial khaateeb Maulana Muhammad Ismail has said that Islamic system is the only solution to all problems faced by the nation. He said the youths will be taught a free IT courses program to empower them for serving the country and the people if the JI came into power.

He was addressing separate gatherings and corner meetings in Badwan, Saifroona Adenzai and Talash as chief guest here on Wednesday.

The JI candidate for PK 15 Azizullah Khan, JI tehsil chief Dr Bashir Muhammad, Al-Khidmat Foundation assistant secretary general Fazal Mehmood, party candidate for PK 16 Shad Nawaz Khan and others also addressed the gatherings.

The JI candidate said that millions of youths were jobless due to the govern-

ment's lack of interest. He said the country was enriched with natural resources like gold, silver, gas, forests and other minerals but due to corrupt practices and incompetent rulers the nation had been loaded with foreign loans. He said the JI would prefer to solve the collective problems of the region without any discrimination.

Maulana Muhammad Ismail said that Pakistan, according to its ideology, was supposed to create a society based on justice and fairness by introducing the system of Quran and Sunnah. "We appeal to the people to stamp the symbol of 'scale' on February 8", he said, adding the JI would bring a real change in society if it came into power. He said that his political opponents were also respectable personalities and he would not speak against anyone but it was the voters' choice to elect their representative.

He said the AKF had

been supporting 30 thousand orphans at its orphanages and homes while it had the biggest ambulance services in the country. The JI leader said that people trusted the AKF because they knew that their money would be spent transparently. "Similarly, we will not disappoint the nation if it trusts us in elections", he said, adding that after coming to power, they would end the system of inflation, unemployment and oppression, implement the fair system of Islam, and provide quality education and health facilities. He asked party workers to respect the political opponents and refrain from abusive language.

Maulana Ismail said that 'scale', the JI election symbol, was a symbol of justice, equality, honesty and trust, so the people should stamp it on Feb. 8. He also asked workers to mobilize women as well because they played a decisive role in the electoral process.

Commissioner directs arrangement for elections

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Shaukat Ali Yousafzai has said that the peaceful conduct of general elections on February 8 is the first priority of the administration. He directed all the concerned departments that all necessary arrangements should be made in this regard.

He was addressing a meeting of the Divisional Intelligence Coordination Committee in his office held here on Wednesday. Commandant of 6th Brigade Brigadier Sajid, Additional Commissioner Naem Akhtar, Deputy Commissioner Mardan Mohammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, DC Swabi Dr. Tariqullah, DPO Mardan Najibur Rahman Bagwi, District Election Officer Zia-ur-Rahim, DSP Iqbal Khan from Swabi police

besides officers of security forces were present in the meeting.

The Deputy Commissioners of Mardan and Swabi, who are also District Returning Officers, told the meeting that normal, sensitive and most sensitive polling stations have been determined in consultation with the relevant institutions in both districts. 389 polling stations have been declared most sensitive in Mardan while 80 polling stations in Swabi has been declared as most sensitive. Elections will be held on 5 seats of National Assembly and 13 seats of Provincial Assembly in Mardan Division.

To meet the shortage of staff, the duties of officials from the Department of Forestry, Excise, Education, Health have also been assigned. The

process of installing security cameras at the polling stations will be completed in a week. Officers of intelligence also briefed the meeting regarding the security situation.

DPO Mardan and DSP of Swabi told the meeting that poll-proof arrangements have been made for the protection of voters and staff at the normal, sensitive and most sensitive polling stations in both the districts and the higher authorities have also been contacted for more personnel. The final security plan will be issued after their delivery. The meeting expressed satisfaction over the preparations made so far. Commissioner said that peaceful conduct of elections is a national responsibility and everyone will work together for this purpose.



LARKANA: Motorcyclists on the way carrying long tree logs at Miro Khan Road.

Candidates seek court intervention for symbol change

FAISALABAD (INP): Candidates contesting for National Assembly seats NA-101 and NA-104 in Faisalabad have approached the court seeking redress. According to media reports, the applicants have filed a plea in court requesting to alter the election symbols for both constituencies, replacing the current for NA-101 and for NA-104.

Basharat Ali revealed that the candidate from my panel contesting for NA-101 has been assigned the symbol of 'Minaret', while I have been designated the 'Mace' for NA-104. Basharat Ali expressed concerns about the unwarranted and diverse symbols assigned, causing complications in conducting the electoral campaign.

It should be noted that candidates in previous elections who were given unfavorable election symbols had criticized the Election Commission of Pakistan.

Agriculture dept recommends prime time for sunflower farming: Director Agriculture Extension Department Faisalabad, Dr. Khalid Iqbal has highlighted the optimal sowing time for sunflower cultivation in the divisions of Faisalabad,

Sahiwal, and Sargodha until February 15.

For Southern Punjab regions like Multan, Bahawalpur, and DG Khan, the suitable time extends till February 10, whereas for Lahore, Gujranwala, and Rawalpindi divisions, it remains until the end of February.

Farmers are advised to focus on cultivating sunflowers during these days, allowing them to harvest the crop in 110 to 120 days. Dr. Khalid Iqbal informed that in terms of sunflower production, Russia leads with 9.69 million metric tons, followed by Ukraine with 8.67 million metric tons, and Pakistan ranks 17th with 0.4 million metric tons.

Emphasizing the economic impact, he pointed out that the cultivation of sunflower and other oilseed crops would play a vital role in saving Pakistan's foreign exchange, which currently incurs an annual expenditure of over Rs. 350 billion.

Meanwhile, the Excise and Taxation & Narcotics Control Department has initiated a crackdown against tax evaders, stating that despite repeated notices and reminders, certain individuals have yet to fulfill their civic responsibilities.

The crackdown aims to take impartial legal action against defaulters, considering all aspects of their social standing, and impose penalties alongside the fulfillment of governmental duties. The spokesperson for the Excise and Taxation Faisalabad Region on Wednesday informed that several notifications had been issued to tax evaders, advising them to collect their dues by adhering to their civic duties. However, no response or acknowledgment has been received from them.

Hashish seized

PASNI (INP): Pakistan Coast Guards (PCG) seized hundreds of kilogram drugs worth billions of rupees during operation here on Wednesday.

According to PCG spokesperson, the coast guards on intelligence tip-off conducted operation in mountainous Golanch of Pasni, district Gwadar. During operation, 1700 kilogram hashish valuing Rs 8.217 billion in international market was recovered.



FAISALABAD: A view of thick fog that engulfs the whole city during early morning.

Cops kill dacoit during 'encounter' in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD (INP): A robber was fatally shot dead by police in an encounter, while his partner managed to escape, in Doctor Colony on Wednesday. The authorities were informed about two robbers intending to loot valuables and cash from residents in the colony.

On reaching the hideout of the criminals, they initiated gunfire against the cops. In response to which, the police reacted accordingly, and silenced the criminals' weapons. After the encounter, police conducted a search operation in the area, discovering the dead body of the robber identified as Hashim.

Police revealed that the killed accused Hashim, had a criminal history and was wanted in connection of several terrible crimes. The police transported the dead body to the hospital for autopsy and initiated the investigation of the incident. The arms and valuables were detained from the possession of the robber, while the police has also started the investigation of the incident after registering the case.

FIA arrests four 'human traffickers'

GUJRANWAL/GUJRAT (INP): The Anti Human Trafficking Circle of Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) arrested four fugitives allegedly involved in human smuggling during separate actions in two cities of Punjab.

A spokesperson of FIA said on Wednesday, the operations were conducted against human smugglers in Gujranwala and Gujrat while the nabbed suspects included Ali Waqas, Latif Ehtisham, Saleem Akhtar and Tanveer Iqbal. He said that the detainees used to send citizens abroad on fake documents by receiving huge sum of money.

The detainees have looted millions of rupees from citizens on the pretense of employment abroad. The FIA spokesperson said that the nabbed suspects were being interrogated after registering separate cases against them while raids were being conducted to arrest their other accomplices.

Rehan Zeb to contest election

F.P. Report

KHAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Rehan Zeb Khan will contest election on both national and provincial seats as NA8 and PK22 from Bajaur district.

This he announced while addressing a press conference at Bajaur press club along with other PTI's activists and claimed that his name was finalized for party ticket but removed due to corruption. He claimed that PTI had grabbed by two families in Bajaur which had deprived youth from representation in the party.

The nominated candidate claimed that PTI had granted tickets to corrupt persons in Bajaur which fact of the day as well as stories of their embezzlement are famous around the corners. He added that PTI activists had announced their support for him and will win both the seats in general election

Mian Iftikhar, Dr Imran in loggerhead on PK-89

PESHAWAR (APP): Awami National Party (ANP) General Secretary and former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Minister, Mian Iftikhar Hussain and Pakistan Tahrik e Insaf Parliamentarians (PTIP) leader and former member national assembly, Dr Imran Khattak are in faceoff on PK 89 Nowshera during general election 2024.

Political observers believed that a tough electoral battle is expected between the two stalwarts in their home constituency where literacy rate was high compare to other constituencies of Nowshera district.

In 2008 General Election, PK 89 was won comfortably by Mian Iftikhar Hussain, and that he was awarded the important portfolio of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Minister. However, in 2013 and 2018 general election, this constituency was clinched by former Chief Minister and PTIP President Pervez Khattak and his brother Liaquat Khattak respectively.

Later, Liaquat Khattak had resigned from PTI and joined JUIF. Political observers said that differences between the brothers had helped PMLN KP spokesman Ikhtair Wali to win the by election from PK 88 Nowshera. PK-89 consists of Pabbi, Mohib Banda, Amankot, Pashtunghari, Khudarza, Korvi and others areas where mostly people are associated with Government jobs, agriculture and business.

The candidates of all mainstream political parties blew up horns for two national and five provincial assemblies seats in the politically fertile Nowshera district. On NA-33 Nowshera-I, Pakistan Tahrik e Insaf Parliamentarian (PTI) Chairman and former Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pervez Khan Khattak, Pakistan Muslim League-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Secretary and former member provincial assembly, Ikhtair Wali Khan, Awami National Party's Khan Pervez, Barrister Sarwar and Mustafa Anwar of Pakistan Tahrik e Insaf and Ijazul Haq of Jamiat Ulema Islam-F are trying their luck in election 2024.

Interestingly, all family members of PTIP Chief, Pervez Khattak including his son-in-law Dr Imran Khattak and his sons were contesting election from all the national and provincial assemblies' seats from Nowshera. Pervez Khattak has filed nomination papers for NA-33, PK-87 and PK-88 while nomination papers of his nephew and son-in-law Dr Imran Khattak were accepted for NA-34 and PK-89

respectively.

Pervez Khattak's sons Ibrahim Khattak and Ismail Khattak submitted nomination papers for PK-85 and PK-86, respectively. PMLN's Ikhtiyar Wali filed nomination papers for NA-33 and PK-88. Awami National Party's Khan Pervez, Barrister Sarwar Khan and Mustafa Anwar of PTI, Fayyazur Rahman of PMLN, Mufti Shakatullah and Ijazul Haq of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl and independents are eyeing on NA-33 Nowshera-I.

Major-Gen (r) Saad Khattak of Aam Admi Party, Mian Babar Shah of ANP, Mian Khalique Rahman, Haji Akbar, Daud Khattak of PTI, Shaiq Amin of Tehreek-e-Labbaik, Hamza Pervez of PMLN, Alhaj Pervez Khan of JUIF, Idrees Khattak of PPP and others filed papers are in faceoff on NA-34 Nowshera-II and others provincial constituencies. NA-33 Nowshera-I was previously won by PTI's Siraj Muhammad Khan in 2013 general election after securing 54,266 votes against Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah of PMLN's with 34,537 votes while in 2018 general election this constituency was clinched by Pervez Khattak who contested on PTI ticket with 82,118 votes against Khan Pervez of PPP with 35,658 votes.

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

In the 2018 General Election, this constituency was again won by Dr. Imran Khattak who contested on PTI's ticket after securing 90,256 votes against Jamal Khattak of ANP's with 47,132 votes. The total registered voters in NA-34-Nowshera-II are 377,306. NA-33-Nowshera-I constituencies comprises on Akora Khattak, Jaghangira, Pirsabaq, Raisalpur, Nowshera Kalan, Nizampur, Manki Sharif, Misri Banda, Mera Akora Khattak, Adamzai and Inzari where literacy ratio is relatively higher compared to NA-34 Nowshera-II with key areas of Pabbi, Akbarpura, Charat, Amankot, Mohib Banda, Khesgi Payan, Saleh Khana and Shah Kot. Political observers said that candidates that achieve support of young voters and strong communities would get an edge over others on February 8, 2024.

Annual report regarding public protection issued

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: The annual performance report issued regarding police protection Center Toba Tek Singh of year 2023 for the welfare of transgenders, disabled children, victims of sexual violence, children and needy persons as well as for their education, health, psychological and legal support.

The Police Protection Center is providing immediate access to transgenders and individuals along with other facilities. These include facilities like FIR copy, missing report, tenant registration, vehicle verification, police character certificate, driving license general police verification, legal guidance on violence

against women, crime reporting and best employment provision.

Police Protection Center Toba Tek Singh provided the following facilities to transgenders and individuals during the year 2023, in which more than 200 destitute women and transgenders were registered under the Benazir Income Support Program. For this, MOUs were signed with 8 different organizations and institutions.

Respective employment was provided to 4 transgenders. Blood screening of 140 transgenders was done. 6 children of destitute women were admitted to schools for free education. 7 missing children were found and handed over to their heirs. 10 cases were

registered for sexual abuse. Sewing machines were distributed to destitute women for employment. 8 disabled people. Wheelchairs were provided to 11 transgenders.

Learner licenses were made for 11 transgenders. During the year 2023, Police Protection Center Toba Tek Singh ended more than 230 domestic fights and restored peace and tranquility to many homes. Complete treatment of 6 drug addicts through rehabilitation centers. DPO Toba Tek Singh Ibadat Nisar has instructed to provide the available facilities to the citizens coming to the Police Protection Center within the stipulated time limit.

PML-N seat adjustment with JUI-F divides party

F.P. Report

BUNER: Serious differences surfaced in the PML-N Buner when the president and general secretary flexed muscles over the issues of party tickets for PK 25 and seat adjust with JUI-F, on Wednesday.

Addressing a press conference Shah Bakht Rawan Khan Advocate (general secretary) accused Salar Khan (president) of stealing his PK 25 party ticket and

entering into seat adjustment with JUI-F for securing his (president) NA 10 seat at the cost of his PK 25 seat. He demanded of the party central and provincial leadership action against district president Salar Khan over stealing PK 25 party issued ticket of general secretary.

The GS in a press conference claimed he was awarded party ticket by central president Shahbaz Sharif but the district presi-

dent Salar Khan was snatched it just to enter into seat adjust for own vested interests.

He made it clear in the eyes of party central leadership he is still party candidate but having no party ticket he would contest elections with the sambal of Teapot and claimed the leaguers from PK with him and outrightly rejected the seat adjustment on his seat by district president with JUI-F.



Gaza fishermen brave shells for tiny catches in struggle to feed families

RAFAH (Reuters): Gaza fisherman Abdul Rahim al-Najjar risks his life every day rowing a dinghy into the waves under Israeli military surveillance to net an occasional crab or fish - tiny morsels of food on which his hungry family has come to rely. The fishermen of the tiny Palestinian enclave have long been subject to strict Israeli prohibitions on how far out they can fish, but since the devastating war began on Oct. 7 they only dare venture about 100 meters (110 yards) from the shore.

More than three months of fighting, blockade and Israeli bombardment have pushed Gaza, which is ruled by the militant Palestinian group Hamas, to the brink of starvation, with U.N. assessments saying its people are at serious risk of famine. For fishermen, barely able to cross the first swells of Mediterranean surf, let alone reach the deeper water where the larger shoals may be swimming, anything they catch is now vital to keep themselves and their families alive. "It is very little. This is our fishing. You see? We cannot feed our children," said Najjar, sitting on the beach and holding up a lone, scrawny crab he had pulled from his net.

Small girls sat watching Najjar as he worked, searching for morsels in the nets as he sorted them and hung them to dry. Before the war, fishermen used motors with their small boats and could range several kilometers from Gaza's built-up shoreline. Now they head off in pairs with oars, one pulling them through the waves while the other stands to throw nets. When they get more than 100 meters out, Israeli forces sometimes fire shells towards them to urge them back to shore, he said, amid increased security concerns linked to the war.

"We live according to what we fish. Despite what we are going through, we want to go fishing and live," Najjar's brother, Ibrahim who fishes with him. Why they are willing to brave shellfire for so small a reward is evident in Rafah town centre, where people queued at a charity kitchen. Children, their faces pinched, stood waiting to eat meagre, unaccompanied portions of lentils or pasta. "Our bodies are failing due to lack of food. My children are ill from lack of food. It's not enough. It's barely enough for two people and must serve seven. It's not even one meal," said Mohammed al-Shondoghli, a displaced man at the kitchen. Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed more than 24,280 people, according to health authorities in the enclave, and driven most of its 2.3 million people from their homes.

Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas after militants from the group killed more than 1,200 people and seized 240 hostages during an Oct. 7 rampage into southern Israeli

towns. A U.N.-backed report in December said Gazans faced crisis levels of hunger, with the risks of famine rising daily. Recent footage showed a melee as hundreds of people in Gaza City rushed for a rare flour aid delivery. At the charity kitchen a woman who gave her name as Um Mustafa said she had come too late and it was all gone when she reached the front of the long queue. "I don't know what I will feed my children. My father is elderly. He has a heart condition. Schools only give a bottle of water and two biscuits," she said. Meanwhile, huddling around a bewildering tangle of cables and extension leads plugged into a hospital power outlet, displaced Gazan men are pursuing a critical but elusive goal: getting their phones charged. In wartime Gaza, a charged phone is nothing less than a lifeline. It serves to check on loved ones after Israeli bombardments, helps find out where food and water might be available, and provides light in tents after darkness falls.

"Every day we come here for three or four hours and waste time to charge our phones," said Mohammed Abu Skheta, who fled with his family, including a baby boy, from Al-Shati refugee camp in northern Gaza to a tent in Rafah, southern Gaza. "It's a dream to fully charge it. It's very difficult. You can charge it to 50 or 60%, 70% at most," he said. The charging spot outside the Emirati Hospital in Rafah is popular because it is free. The hospital allows displaced people to plug cables into its power sockets, which are fed either by solar panels or by a generator, when there is fuel for that.

Elsewhere, some households or small businesses that have solar panels allow people to charge, but often for a fee, which not all can afford. "My financial situation is difficult, so I have to look for an alternative, such as charging at a hospital or shop, without paying money," said Abu Skheta. Phones are not the only devices in need of regular charging. Mohamad Abu Taha, a barber in Rafah, said he was relying on a solar panel at the family home to recharge his electric razor in between jobs.

"For almost every haircut, I send my nephew to charge the razor. I have to inform the customer that if it's sunny I can work, if not then I cannot," he said. One tailor in Rafah has got around the lack of electricity by converting a dismantled child's bicycle into a pedal dynamo to power his sewing machine. The war in Gaza started when Hamas militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people and kidnapping 240 hostages, of whom more than 130 are still being held captive, according to Israel's tally.

Sudan suspends contacts with IGAD mediating group

KHARTOUM: Sudan has suspended its involvement in mediation efforts with an east African regional bloc that has sought to broker talks between the country's warring parties. The Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group have been fighting for nine months in a brutal war that has displaced more than 7 million people and left nearly half of Sudan's 49 million people requiring aid.

Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that the decision came after the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) added Sudan to the agenda of a meeting scheduled for January 18 in Kampala, Uganda, and invited the RSF's leader, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo - known as Hemedti - to attend. The ministry, which is loyal to army chief and Sudan's de facto leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, accused IGAD of "violating Sudan's sovereignty" and setting a "dangerous precedent".

The bloc, in parallel with the United States and Saudi Arabia, had repeatedly attempted to mediate between the two warring generals, but to no avail. On Saturday, the ministry accused the bloc of lending Hemedti's "militia" legitimacy by inviting it to a meeting that will be attended by member heads of state and government. Al-Burhan had recently accused the bloc of bias and seeking to intervene in "an internal matter". The RSF chief recently toured six African capitals including IGAD members, while analysts say the army chief is growing more and more isolated diplomatically, as his troops lose ground to RSF advances.

Al-Burhan has reacted angrily to Hemedti's growing diplomatic status, accusing African leaders receiving him of complicity in atrocities against Sudanese civilians. The war between the two sides erupted in mid-April over an internationally backed plan to merge the RSF into

the army and launch a transition towards elections. The army and the RSF had shared power after long-time ruler Omar al-Bashir was toppled during a popular uprising in 2019. Before they came to blows, they jointly staged a coup in 2021 that upended efforts to steer Sudan towards democracy. Throughout the conflict, both sides have been accused of war crimes, including the indiscriminate shelling of residential areas, torture and arbitrary detention of civilians.

The RSF has also specifically been accused of ethnically-motivated mass killings - especially in Darfur - as well as rampant looting and the use of rape as a weapon of war. The conflict has killed more than 13,000 people, according to a conservative estimate by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. Around 7.5 million civilians have fled the fighting either abroad or to other parts of the country, according to United Nations figures. — Aljazeera

Erdogan vows to widen operations against groups

ANKARA (AP): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed on Tuesday to widen military operations against groups linked to Kurdish militants in neighboring Iraq and Syria, days after an attack on a Turkish military base in Iraq killed nine Turkish soldiers.

Turkish warplanes and drones have been carrying out airstrikes on targets in Syria and Iraq believed to be affiliated with the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, since attackers attempted to infiltrate a military base in northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region on Friday. Five soldiers died in the attack while four others died later of critical injuries.

In a televised address following a Cabinet meeting, Erdogan said Turkish jets had struck a total of 114 targets in Syria and Iraq in operations launched

in the last five days. A further 60 infrastructure and facilities were destroyed in separate operations by Turkey's intelligence agency, the president added.

Erdogan said Turkey was determined to eliminate the threat from Kurdish militants "at its source" in Iraq and Syria. It was not clear if Ankara, which has carried out land offensives in the past, is contemplating a new ground operation. "Our operations will continue until every inch of the mountains in northern Iraq that have become the source of terrorist actions ... are secured," he said. "In the same way, we will not stop until the terror nests in Syria ... are completely destroyed."

The Turkish leader continued: "God willing, in the coming months, we will definitely take new steps in this direction,

regardless of who says what, what threats they make or what their plans are." On Monday, Kurdish led-authorities said Turkish shelling and airstrikes have targeted dozens of infrastructure facilities in northeast Syria over the past days wounding at least 10 people and cutting out electricity and water supplies in wide areas held by the main U.S.-backed group in the war-torn country. The PKK, which maintains bases in northern Iraq, is considered a terror organization by Turkey's Western allies, including the United States. Tens of thousands of people have died since the start of the conflict in 1984. Turkey also considers Syrian Kurdish groups as terrorist organizations but the U.S. disagrees with that status and regards them as allies in the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria.

Putin says Ukraine's statehood at risk

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Ukraine's statehood could suffer an "irreparable blow" if the pattern of the war continued, and Russia would never be forced to abandon the gains it had made. Putin made his televised comments a day after Switzerland agreed to host a global summit at the request of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Putin dismissed "so-called peace formulas" being discussed in the West and Ukraine and what he called the "prohibitive demands" they entailed. "Well, if they don't want (to negotiate), then don't!" he said. "Now it is quite obvious, not only (Ukraine's) counter-offensive failed, but the initiative is completely in the hands of the Russian armed forces. If this continues, Ukrainian statehood may suffer an irreparable, very serious blow." Putin's statements about the course of the war have become increasingly confident and aggressive in recent months, with the failure of Ukraine's counter-offensive to deliver any substantial gains against well entrenched Russian forces. Russia currently controls 17.5% of the territory of Ukraine. Putin said talk of negotiation was "an attempt to motivate us to abandon the gains that we have realized over the past year and a half. But this is impossible. Everyone understands that this is impossible." A peace formula put forward by Zelenskyy calls for the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of Russian troops, among other points. Russia says any negotiation would have to take account of the "new realities" created by its forces on the ground.

Pacific nations meet in China

BEIJING (Reuters): Naval officials from countries bordering the Pacific, such as Japan, Russia and the United States, are meeting from Tuesday in China's eastern city of Nanjing to discuss updating rules on unexpected encounters, among other issues, state media said. The three-day talks among 70 representatives from 30 countries come amid heightened tension in the South China Sea, particularly sea encounters between China and the Philippines.

The two countries, which have competing claims in the strategic waterway, have traded accusations of aggressive behaviour for months. China lays claim to almost the entire South China Sea, a conduit for goods worth more than \$3 trillion every year, where Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam also have competing claims. On Monday, Manila said the Philippines would develop islands in the South China Sea that it considers part of its territory to make them more habitable for troops. China also occasionally accuses U.S. naval vessels of illegally entering what it says are its waters in the South China Sea, though the U.S. navy says its routine operations in international waters are consistent with international law.

This week's working group meeting lays the groundwork for a biennial Western Pacific Naval Symposium set for the eastern city of Qingdao in April. The event was last held in Japan in November 2022. Since 2002, China and Southeast Asian nations have tried to establish a framework to negotiate a code of conduct for the South China Sea, but progress has been glacial. In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration said China's South China Sea claims had no legal basis, in a ruling rejected by Beijing.

The concerns of members of the Pacific naval symposium go beyond the South China Sea, however. On the sidelines of the 2022 symposium, Japan, South Korea and the United States met to discuss three-way security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, including those from North Korea.

Zelenskyy urges Western allies to step up pressure on Russia

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has urged the West to tighten sanctions against Russian President Vladimir Putin and step up its support for Kyiv to ensure that Moscow does not succeed in its war. Western hesitation in supporting Ukraine and fears of an escalation in the war with Russia are costing time and lives and could prolong the fighting by years, Zelenskyy said in an emotional speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

With the West's once-staunch wartime support for Kyiv now wavering amid political wrangling in Washington and Brussels, Zelenskyy said Europeans need to understand that Putin's plans go beyond the war in Ukraine. "In fact, Putin embodies war. ... He will not change. ... We must change. We all must change to the extent that the madness that resides in this man's head or any other aggressor's head will not prevail," the president said.

Nearly two years after Russia launched its full-scale invasion, Zelenskyy said he strongly opposes freezing the conflict along its current lines. "Putin is a predator who is not satisfied with frozen products," he said. He said sanctions on Moscow need to be enforced properly and the lack of sanctions on Russia's nuclear sector are an illustration of the West's weakness. European Union and NATO leaders echoed Zelenskyy's concerns, telling the forum the West could not let up supplying Ukraine with weapons and money if it wants Kyiv to prevail.

"Ukrainians need predictable financing throughout 2024 and beyond. They need a sufficient and sustained supply of weapons to defend Ukraine and regain its rightful territory," European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen advised. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, also speaking at Davos, said support for Ukraine was not charity but an investment in the alliance's own security. "We just have



to stand by Ukraine. At some stage, Russia will understand that they are paying too high a price and sit down and agree to some kind of just peace - but we need to stand by Ukraine," he stated.

The forum is being held as Kyiv's troops are going onto a more defensive footing after a major counteroffensive last year was unable to break through Russian defensive lines in Ukraine's occupied south and east. Speaking hours after the Ukrainian president, Putin insisted his forces have the upper hand. "Not only has their counteroffensive failed, but the initiative is entirely in the hands of the Russian armed forces," the Russian leader said in televised remarks. "If this continues, Ukraine's statehood could be dealt an irreparable, very serious blow," he added.

Putin also shot down the possibility of peace talks with Ukraine, saying the country had advanced "prohibitive formulas for the peace process". Kyiv is now focused on trying to secure Western assistance held up in the United States Congress and

Brussels as it reforms its conscription effort to replenish manpower and addresses artillery shortages at the front. In a question-and-answer session after his speech, Zelenskyy said he had received "positive signals" about the unlocking of financial support from the EU. He said he hoped that the US would approve further aid within weeks.

To drive home his point about the need to support Kyiv, he asked rhetorically what other European nation could provide a combat-ready army that could hold back Russian forces. "If anyone thinks this is only about Ukraine, they're fundamentally mistaken."

Possible directions and even timeline of a new Russian aggression beyond Ukraine become more and more obvious," Zelenskyy met senior officials on the sidelines of the forum, including US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, Stoltenberg and international investors, such as executives from JPMorgan Chase. — Aljazeera

China's population drops for 2nd year, with record low birth rate

HONG KONG (Reuters): China's population fell for a second consecutive year in 2023, as a record low birth rate and a wave of COVID-19 deaths when strict lockdowns ended accelerated a downturn that will have profound long-term effects on the economy's growth potential. The National Bureau of Statistics said the total number of people in China dropped by 2.08 million, or 0.15%, to 1.409 billion in 2023.

That was well above the population decline of 850,000 in 2022, which had been the first since 1961 during the Great Famine of the Mao Zedong era. China experienced a dramatic nationwide COVID surge early last year after three years of tight screening and quarantine measures kept the virus largely contained until authorities abruptly lifted curbs in December 2022. Total deaths last year rose 6.6% to 11.1 million, with the death rate reaching the highest level since 1974 during the Cultural Revolution. New births fell 5.7% to 9.02 million and the birth rate was a record low 6.39 births per 1,000 people, down from a rate of 6.77 births in 2022. Births in the country have been plummeting for decades as a result of the one-child policy implemented from 1980 to 2015 and its rapid

urbanisation during that period. As with earlier economic booms in Japan and South Korea, large populations moved from China's rural farms into cities, where having children is more expensive.

Japan's birth rate was 6.3 per 1,000 people in 2022, while South Korea's rate was 4.9. "As we have observed again and again from other low fertility countries, fertility decline is often very difficult to reverse," University of Michigan demographer Zhou Yun said. Further denting appetite for baby-making in China in 2023, youth unemployment hit record highs, wages for many white-collar workers fell, and a crisis in the property sector, where more than two-thirds of household wealth is stored, intensified. The fresh data adds to concerns that the world's No.2 economy's growth prospects are diminishing due to fewer workers and consumers, while the rising costs of elderly care and retirement benefits put more strain on indebted local governments. India surpassed China as the world's most populous nation last year, according to estimates by the United Nations, fuelling more debate over the merits of relocating some China-based supply chains to

other markets, especially as geopolitical tensions rise between Beijing and Washington.

Long-term, U.N. experts see China's population shrinking by 109 million by 2050, more than triple the decline of their previous forecast in 2019. China's population aged 60 and over reached 296.97 million in 2023, about 21.1% of its total population, up from 280.04 million in 2022. China's 2023 rate of 7.87 deaths per 1,000 people was higher than a rate of 7.37 deaths in 2022. The country's retirement-age population, aged 60 and over, is expected to increase to more than 400 million by 2035 - more than the entire population of the United States - from about 280 million people currently. The state-run Chinese Academy of Sciences sees the pension system running out of money by 2035. Zhu Guoping, a 57-year-old farmer in northwestern Gansu province, said his annual income of about 20,000 yuan (\$2,779.59) leaves his family with meagre savings. He will receive a 160 yuan monthly pension once he turns 60, the equivalent of \$22.

"The money is definitely not enough," Zhu said. "Maybe our children can provide us with some support in the future." High

childcare and education costs put many Chinese couples off having children, while uncertainty in the job market discourages women from pausing their careers. Gender discrimination and traditional expectations that women assume the caretaker role in the family exacerbate the issue, demographers say. President Xi Jinping said last year that women should tell "good family tradition stories," adding it was necessary to "actively cultivate a new culture of marriage and childbearing," which he linked to national development.

Local governments have announced various measures to encourage childbirth including tax deductions, longer maternity leave and housing subsidies. But many of the policies have not been implemented due to insufficient funding and a lack of motivation by local governments, said a Beijing policy institute, urging a unified nationwide family subsidy scheme instead. Beijing resident Wang Weidong, 36, who works at an internet company, said he and his wife were reluctant to have a second child. "People will not have a child because of these incentives. The incentives are auxiliary, not the root cause. So I think it is harder to reverse this trend," Wang said.

Qatar announces Israel-Hamas deal for medicine and aid to enter Gaza

DOHA: Israel and Hamas have reached an agreement to allow medicines to be delivered to Israeli captives held in the Gaza Strip and for aid to be transported to residents in the besieged Palestinian territory, Qatar has announced. The deal will see humanitarian aid delivered to civilians in "the most affected and vulnerable areas" in Gaza in exchange for the delivery of medication to Israeli captives held by Hamas, the group that governs Gaza, Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

Ministry spokesperson Majed al-Ansari said medication and aid will leave Doha on Wednesday for the Egyptian city of El Arish in preparation for their delivery into the Gaza Strip. He said the agreement was mediated by Qatar in cooperation with France. Earlier, Philippe Lalliot, head of France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Crisis Centre, which organises aid efforts, said negotiations had been going on for weeks and

the initial idea had come from the families of some of the Israeli hostages.

Specific medical packages for several months, which were put together in France, would be delivered to each of the 45 hostages. The International Committee of the Red Cross will coordinate on the ground. Hamas seized about 240 people as hostages during its attack on southern Israel on October 7 in which at least 1,139 people were killed, according to an Al Jazeera tally based on official statistics.

Israel responded to the assault with a devastating bombardment, siege and ground invasion of Gaza. More than 24,000 people have been killed in the Israeli assault, according to Palestinian authorities. More than 100 captives were freed during a week-long truce in late November following lengthy negotiations mediated by Qatar and the United States. In exchange, Israel released hundreds of Palestinian prisoners from jails.

Earlier on Tuesday, the White House said US Middle East Envoy Brett McGurk was in Doha in recent days discussing a possible deal for the release of captives. National security spokesperson John Kirby

told reporters that McGurk was involved in "very serious and intensive discussions" with the Qataris about another deal. "We are hopeful it will bear fruit and bear fruit soon," he said. — Aljazeera

Taiwan PM says Cabinet will resign in accordance with past practice

TAIPEI (Reuters): Taiwan Premier Chen Chien-jen said on Tuesday that the Cabinet will resign in accordance with past constitutional practice before the new parliament meets next month after the ruling party lost its majority in the legislature. He did not give an exact date, but the new parliament meets on Feb. 1 following elections on Saturday.

The ruling Democratic Progressive Party won the presidential election, but lost its majority in parliament. Neither of Taiwan's other parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the much smaller Taiwan People's Party, won majorities either. Under Taiwan's system of government, the president appoints the premier, who then forms a Cabinet, and signs legislation into law. Given president-elect Lai Ching-te's party will not have a parliamentary majority, he may have to reach across the aisle and appoint a premier and Cabinet that include opposition or non-party figures to enable legislation to be passed.

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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

Riyadh must holdback its pressure

SAUDI Foreign Minister Prince Faisal Bin Farhan informed the world leaders at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos on Tuesday that the kingdom could recognize Israel if a comprehensive agreement were reached that ensured statehood for the Palestinians. According to him, Riyadh agreed to regional peace including peace for Israel, that also ensures peace and statehood for the Palestinians through the creation of an autonomous Palestinian state.

The state of Israel had long sought to create bonds and normalise ties with the most influential, resourceful, and wealthiest Arab states including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Jordan, and Kuwait which not only have decades-long animosity with Tel Aviv but pose a persistent security risk for the Jewish state due to long common borders amid an all-time heated Palestine dispute. Historically, securing a normalization deal with Saudi Arabia would be the grand prize for Israel after it established diplomatic ties with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, which could transform the geopolitics of the Middle East according to the desires and plans of Tel Aviv at the later stage in the future.

Successive US administrations have been working ceaselessly for the normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, the most powerful country in the Arab world and home to the most sacred sites in Islam, wields considerable religious clout across the Muslim world. As a stable and peaceful Middle East not only serves Washington's strategic interests but sufficiently facilitates Israel's political and economic merger in the Middle East region. Previously, the Trump administration facilitated the Abraham Accord that paved the way for Israel's normalization of diplomatic and trade ties with four important Muslim nations, while the Biden Administration carried forward the idea for a Riyadh-Tel Aviv partnership in exchange for a defence pact with the Kingdom and a few concessions for Palestinians. Over the past months, Saudi Arabia has been in talks with the United States and Israel for the normalization of Saudi-Israel bilateral relations in exchange for US Security guarantees along with a vague assurance regarding the creation of a Palestinian state if things move smoothly in that direction. However, Hamas sabotaged the US plan through the October 7 attacks that not only stalled the Saudi-Israel diplomatic romance pushing the whole region into a crisis.

Historically, peace and regional stability are equally important for Israel as well as the Arab states but it could not be possible without a just and amicable resolution of the Palestine issue. Israel and its close ally America desire to forge friendly ties with Arab countries while putting the Palestine issue aside on mere assurance and promise of the formation of the Palestinian state and they succeeded in their plan throughout the past. However, Hamas blocked their path and failed their strategy through recent incursions into southern Israel. In fact, over 24000 Palestinian deaths, unprecedented ruination of the Gaza Strip, months of the suffering of innocent Palestinians, and utmost pressure from the global community caused a rift between Israel and the US, which created an opportunity for dialogue on ceasefire and detailed talks on Palestine issue. At this crucial moment, being a power hub of the Arab nations and the leader of Muslim Ummah, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia owes an important responsibility not to lose its temperament and hold back its pressure without luring into the ploy of security guarantees, promises for civilian nuclear technology, any other political, economic or military deal for the kingdom that betray poor Palestinians for another time. The desire for peace and diplomacy is a sane policy but unnecessary kindness and compromise with the opponents are seen as cowardliness and cost huge strategic prices to a nation in the long run. Hence, Aale-Saud has to demonstrate resoluteness and loyalty to the Arabs and Palestine cause at this point otherwise its loss would be eternal and irreparable.

Pakistan Railway, lapse, and scopes

THE Federal Minister for Communication and Railways has commended the efforts of Railways Staff and management for record revenue earning of 41 billion rupees during the first half of the fiscal year 2023-24. According to the Minister, there is a 46 percent increase in revenue of Pakistan Railways in comparison to the same period of last year 2022-23. As said, the total earned revenue consists of 24 billion rupees from passenger trains and 11.5 billion from freight services, wherein the remaining five billion have been earned through vendor contracts, private publicity campaigns through trains/ Railway stations, or rented properties in some parts of the country.

Railway is a mass transit system and acts as the backbone of the economy of a nation. A robust railway system plays a crucial role in transportation of goods contributing to the smooth functioning of supply chains and reducing transportation costs. It also plays an integral part in transportation of passengers, Infrastructure Development, Trade Facilitation, increasing Connectivity and Accessibility, along with facilitating Emergency and Disaster Response in affected areas during disasters and emergencies. At the same time, Railway is an important means for mass troop mobilization of the armed forces during peacetime and in war.

Historically, the role and importance of the Railway system in Supply chain development and mass transportation of cargo through freight trains has increased many folds in the modern age due to its high speed, safety, lower cost, and being eco-friendly as compared to road transport or cargo aircrafts. The Railway has about 30-40% share in cargo transportation in North America and Europe while it owes less than 4% in Pakistan which is very concerning as the thousands of cargo wagons are idle parked without any use at multiple railway stations. Unfortunately, Pakistani authorities totally abandoned the Pakistan Railway cargo service which has been the major source of revenue, instead picking the passengers train and platform vandars to overcome fiscal depletion of their department. In fact, rehabilitating passenger trains, and renovating Platforms are less likely to bring any revolution in the Railway sector. The authorities must invest in the maintenance of railway infrastructure, repair railway engines and bogies to modernize the system and make them feasible for freight services that will generate bulk funds and reinvigorate the Railway department and national economy as well.

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Israel now a liability for the West and its universal values

Osama Al-Sharif

ISRAEL'S appearance at The Hague last week to defend itself against South Africa's charge of committing genocide in the Gaza Strip marked the most significant legal and diplomatic challenge to the country since its inception more than seven decades ago.

In a public hearing, South Africa's legal team presented a solid legal document that outlined how Israel has breached the Genocide Convention during its three-month-old war on Gaza. More importantly, the plaintiff debunked Israel's claim that its actions in Gaza were justified as self-defense in retaliation for Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, which South Africa had condemned. And finally, using the hateful rhetoric of senior Israeli officials, South Africa proved intent.

By the admission of international and even some Israeli experts, Israel's attempt to debunk the charges against it was weak and unconvincing, considering the horrendous crimes its military has committed in the beleaguered Gaza Strip. But Israel was not the only party on trial that day. The Western governments that have backed and justified Israeli actions with no regard for its documented breaches of international law were also present in the defendant's corner, at least in spirit. Israel could not have carried out its genocidal war without the direct military and diplomatic backing of Washington, London, Paris, Ottawa, Berlin and the EU. These Western governments and bodies enabled Israel, both politically and physically, to carry out one of the most atrocious onslaughts on a civilian population since the Second World War.

Making things worse, these governments ignored the genocidal statements uttered on an almost daily basis by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top Israeli officials. They raced to deny charges that Israel was deliberately targeting civilians, destroying hospitals, universities,

schools, mosques and churches, and applying a scorched earth policy in Gaza. Washington and its allies rejected calls for a ceasefire, knowing full well that Israel was committing war crimes in Gaza, denying civilians access to aid, bombing hospitals and killing thousands of women and children. Despite the enormity of the killings and the scale of destruction, these governments shied away from criticizing, not to mention denouncing, Israeli atrocities.

Even when millions of people around the world saw videos of horrific and unimaginable Israeli war crimes against hapless Palestinian civilians - including the rounding up of displaced men and children, parading them half-naked in the streets of Gaza and then moving them to undisclosed locations - Western officials continued to justify Israel's actions. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken described the genocide charges as "meritless," while his British counterpart, David Cameron, said that the South African case against Israel was "unhelpful." Germany stepped in to defend Israel at The Hague. This was happening while millions in the West marched in support of Palestine and denounced their governments' complicity in the Gaza carnage.

While the world awaits the International Court of Justice's response to South Africa's request for a provisional ruling to stop the war until a final and binding verdict is reached, Netanyahu remains defiant, attacking the court, South Africa and any party that accuses Israel of committing genocide in Gaza. A ruling on this case will test the integrity of the International Court of Justice and the credibility of the rules-based world order. The challenge for the judges is unprecedented. The defendant is Israel, the West's closest ally - a state that has incredible political sway in the most influential capitals. The case is highly

politicized. If Israel is ruled to have committed genocide, the case could then move to the International Criminal Court, where warrants for individuals directly or indirectly involved in war crimes and crimes against humanity can be issued.

If the court rejects the charge, what does that mean for international law and conventions? What would be the message the court would be sending to the rest of the world? And what would that mean for the more than 30,000 killed or missing, more than 60,000 injured and more than 1.8 million people displaced with no home to go back to? This case is a watershed for the world as we know it and the future of international laws and conventions.

Why? Because the West, led by the US, has for decades allowed Israel to be above the law and enabled it to carry out its crimes against the Palestinians with impunity. This policy would have continued if Israel had chosen a low-intensity response to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack. But Netanyahu and his far-right coalition, as well as a humiliated Israeli army, decided to decimate Gaza instead. This time, the crime was too big to cover up.

The reality is that Israel has long been a liability for the West, in particular the US, which has crowned itself as the world's sole superpower and the defender of democracy and universal values since the 1990s. And while it took it upon itself to unilaterally dictate an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Israel-Palestine question, it looked the other way as Israel drifted to the far right under Netanyahu, destroying the two-state solution as it expanded illegal settlements, blockaded Gaza while appeasing Hamas at the expense of a weak and dysfunctional Palestinian Authority, armed and supported extremist Jewish settlers and carved up the West Bank. Even before Israel

launched its war on Gaza, its army and settlers had been attacking Palestinians in the West Bank on a daily basis, killing hundreds and arresting thousands. Washington and its allies ignored Israeli actions, even though each extrajudicial killing, each attack by the settlers and each home demolition was a breach of international law and the Geneva Conventions. Israeli war crimes, both in Gaza and in the West Bank, have been going on for decades. Western governments, using empty rhetoric, became apologists, then enablers and finally accessories to these crimes.

The West must make a choice, a hard but necessary one, in the wake of the unforgiving Gaza genocide. It can continue its collusion with the likes of Netanyahu, Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich in the biggest crime against humanity this century, or it can tell Israel that it must become a normal state, one that abides by international laws and conventions, end its occupation, allow the Palestinians to have self-determination and pay for its crimes. Otherwise, Israel will become a pariah state subject to global sanctions and liability. Allowing Israel's impunity for so long has damaged the West's credibility and is threatening the world order. Israel's exceptionalism must end and it is up to the West to carry out that mission.

One other defendant on trial at The Hague is the Western mainstream media, which has failed terribly in its responsibility to cover the truth impartially and objectively. Social media has beaten the likes of the BBC, CNN, The New York Times, The Times of London and others at their own game. By ignoring the horrific reality in Gaza and by subscribing to Zionist propaganda in an attempt to mislead the public, they have done irreparable damage to themselves. They, too, stand as complicit in covering up war crimes and the catastrophic humanitarian conditions in Gaza. They stand discredited forever.

The intentions behind the West's 'very late reaction'

Eyad Abu Shakra

THERE is a realistic Western saying: "Making a mistake once is an opportunity to learn from it, repeating it another time makes it an error, but doing it a third time ... that's idiotic." This saying applies to all of our daily lives, but the world's mightiest power repeatedly making the same mistake cannot be explained by stupidity. It must be intentional ... even if it makes claims to the contrary.

Therefore, given the military situation we have reached in the Red Sea region, it is no longer sound to see things as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken or National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications Rear Adm. John Kirby would like us to. Repeating a mistake - or let us say repeatedly being late to react - at such a high political level cannot possibly be a matter of stupidity. Rather, it is a strategic policy for which tasks are assigned, budgets are allocated and schedules are set.

Washington may have been "surprised" that bringing down Saddam Hussein's regime, following the 2003 invasion, handed Iraq over to the clerics in Tehran and their Iranian Revolutionary Guards on a silver platter. I say "may have been surprised" because there are research centers, higher learning institutes and high-level, specialized experts in the US that provided the officials making decisions of war and peace with a clear picture of Iraq, its demographic composition, strategic location, regional and international hostilities and alliances, and the general balance of power in the Middle East and the Gulf, not to mention the sectarian and expansionist war launched by Tehran against the Arabs after 1979 under the banner of "exporting the Islamic Revolution." Moreover, this "may" becomes more serious when we recall that Iran regularly topped the US State Department's annual lists of "rogue states" and "state sponsors of terror."

Moving on. Iraq was invaded, its rulers were overthrown and executed, and the new "people in charge" returned from their Iranian exile to take power and begin implementing Ayatollah Khomeini's "export" plan. However, the picture should have become clear in Washington over the subsequent years in which Tehran's subordinates dominated the Iraqi political scene, especially since their dominance was paralleled by the acceleration of Iran's nuclear project and the expansion of the Revolutionary Guards' field of intervention and sponsorship in countries neighboring Iraq, which "occupied," in effect, from Bahrain and Kuwait to Syria and Lebanon, and even as far as Yemen.

Nevertheless, for some reason - possibly an American decision egged on by Israel - Washington, as well as Tel Aviv, chose to "coexist" with Iran's regional ambitions. That decision contrasted with their keen determination to eliminate Iraq's very early ambitions in this regard. This "coexis-

tence," which continues to this day, emerged despite the concerns of Arab countries in the region, including those that had explicitly warned, before the 2003 invasion, of Iran's plan to "fill the vacuum" in Baghdad.

Later on, specifically after 2006, Hezbollah was left to impose its hegemony over Lebanon through the "innovative" formula developed by Western capitals, including Washington, of distinguishing between the political and military wings of the party that is ideologically, strategically and logistically linked to Tehran.

Then, under the pretext of the dubious emergence of Daesh, this coexistence continued and extended to Syria following the 2011 uprising. Again, Washington and Tel Aviv "acquiesced" to the status quo despite the regime in Damascus being on the same US State Department's list of "rogue states" and "state sponsors of terrorism" as Tehran, as well as Iranian militias from different countries taking part in the fighting and then settling in Syria and the use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs in sectarian ethnic cleansing campaigns that claimed the lives of millions of civilians.

In the same vein, within two or three days of the operation on Oct. 7, Washington rushed to announce that it had "no evidence that Iran was involved" in what happened around the Gaza Strip, before changing its mind weeks later following the systematic destruction and horrific massacres that have claimed tens of thousands of lives over the past three months. Meanwhile, using its vast experience in political bargaining and security extortion, Tehran mobilized its militias in Iraq and Syria, along the Lebanese-Israeli border and, finally, in the Red Sea region.

The fact that various Hamas wings and a number of Palestinian factions are tied to Tehran was never a secret to the US administration. However, this state of affairs was acceptable so long as Palestinian divisions served Israel's strategic interests and the "rules of engagement" were respected - as they are now in the "calibrated" skirmishes with Hezbollah across the border with Lebanon and in some locations in Syria.

Western capitals, especially Washington and London, were well aware of the reality on the ground but did nothing to protect international maritime trade routes. The truth is that what we are seeing, including the recent Anglo-American bombing of Yemen, is nothing more than "maneuver warfare," through which the trajectory of the region is being negotiated. The main player is the US and the two regional parties benefiting most from the Arabs' weakness are Israel and Iran. This "trajectory" was behind the decisions to invade Iraq in 2003, hand Lebanon over to Iran in 2006, protect the Damascus regime after 2011 and alter the nature of what remains of Palestine in the autumn of 2023.

Arab News

Return of piracy adds to Red Sea's troubled waters

Zaid M. Belbagi

THE passage of ships in the Red Sea and the surrounding waters has faced unprecedented destabilization in the past two months. Maritime attacks by the Yemen-based Houthi rebel group on commercial ships traversing the Red Sea has caused significant disruption to global trade. The group has targeted ships perceived to be linked to Israel, but several unrelated commercial vessels have also been attacked.

This has led to a US-led multilateral military response against the Houthis. Within this context of increased maritime insecurity around the Horn of Africa, an old threat has reemerged in the shape of maritime piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Somali piracy was the most significant threat to ships traversing vital maritime trade routes around East Africa. At their peak, between 2010 and 2015, more than 350 incidents of piracy were reported. In light of this, the Djibouti Code of Conduct was established in

2009 following an International Maritime Organization subregional meeting on piracy, armed robbery and maritime security in the waters of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Western Indian Ocean. This code has played a crucial role in significantly reducing piracy and other illicit maritime activities in these waters.

The Jeddah Amendment, added in 2017, further enhanced multilateral cooperation in the field of maritime security. Additionally, several naval military and patrolling forces have provided cover to these waters over the past decade, significantly deterring piracy. However, late in 2023, this threat reemerged. At least four instances of the hijacking of vessels by suspected Somali pirates have been reported since the beginning of last month.

Firstly, more than a dozen unidentified persons reportedly boarded MV Ruen, a Maltese-flagged commercial vessel, east of Bossaso, Somalia, on Dec. 14. Reports suggested that this was the first instance of the hijacking of a large commercial vessel

since 2017, when pirates briefly reemerged and captured the Aris 13 oil tanker. Further, on Dec. 18 and Dec. 22, the UK Maritime Trade Operations received information of two separate hijackings, in northwest Djibouti and near the Somali coastal town of Eyl. In the first instance, a vessel was approached by five small boats carrying armed personnel, while in the second a dhow was hijacked by heavily armed attackers.

Finally, a Yemeni fishing vessel was hijacked by five to six armed personnel 13 km north of Eyl on Dec. 23. The motivation for these acts remains unclear, but they represent a worrying trend in that, against the backdrop of the Houthi attacks, Somali pirate attacks are also taking place again. Piracy, particularly around Somalia, has typically been motivated by economic reasons. A combination of factors, such as volatile domestic politics, climate change, a weak economy and fragile public services and infrastructure, continues to push a section of the

population into illicit activity. This includes piracy, illegal fishing and the narcotics trade.

Somali piracy has posed a significant threat to global trade since the outbreak of the country's civil war in the early 1990s. It was particularly prevalent due to the large number of merchant ships in these geostrategically important waters. Despite the increased frequency in recent months, however, maritime piracy is not expected to expand significantly and reach previous levels. The ongoing naval attacks by the Houthis, which have notably been difficult to deter despite counterattacks by the UK and US, are motivated by political reasons. As per the statements made by Houthi leaders, the attacks will persist until the culmination of the Israeli hostilities in Gaza. Therefore, a reduction in such attacks will depend on broader diplomatic decisions and negotiations between the warring parties.

Economically motivated crime, on the other hand, may be constrained through other

means, such as heightened international patrolling, law enforcement and government-sponsored schemes to train and reskill Somali youth. The last of these may take the form of providing alternative employment opportunities and developing the coastal economy, but this depends entirely on the stability of the Somali state. Despite recent events, anti-piracy infrastructure is already in place in the Western Indian Ocean. The Puntland Maritime Police Force was formed in 2011 and is dedicated to the deterrence of illicit maritime activities in Somali waters. It has heightened its patrolling measures since November 2023. Operation Atalanta, also known as the EUNAVFOR, is the EU's counterpiracy military operation that is present in the waters of the Horn of Africa and the Western Indian Ocean. Similarly, the multinational naval force Combined Task Force 151 was established in 2009 with a view to combating Somali maritime piracy. It collaborates with Operation Atalanta and NATO's Operation Ocean

Shield.

National naval forces also respond on a case-by-case basis. For instance, following last week's hijacking attempt on the MV Lila Norfolk in the northern Arabian Sea, with 15 Indian crew members in the firing line, the Indian navy deployed its stealth-guided missile destroyer INS Chennai to secure the vessel. The Indian navy had similarly deployed its naval maritime patrol to assist MV Ruen, the Maltese-flagged vessel that was attacked around the Gulf of Aden last month. Finally, while several pirates tend to be armed, they are not known to use advanced weaponry such as that used by the Houthis.

This makes the act easier to deter with armed forces. Therefore, heightened patrolling around Somalia and Djibouti will likely deter any further instances of piracy. Maritime piracy has been deemed to be a high risk, low reward endeavor, so heightened patrolling is liable to increase the costs for hijackers while simultaneously reducing the frequency of such attacks.

It is time to use Russia’s frozen assets to help Ukraine

Maximilian Hess

AN estimated \$350bn in Russian government assets have been frozen in Western accounts since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. These are not idle funds. In 2023, Belgium-based financial services company Euroclear, whose settling and clearance role mean that it holds 197 billion euros (\$214bn) in such assets, reported that they produced at least 3 billion euros (\$3.26bn) from interest.

Given that the sanctions on the Kremlin remain firmly in place and Putin has shown no willingness to negotiate on his demand to annex one-quarter of Ukraine's territory or to cease his attacks, how these assets can be harnessed to push for an end to the war or help Ukraine resist has become a key question for Kyiv's Western allies.

British Foreign Secretary David Cameron publicly opened the doors to the idea last December by stating: "Instead of just freezing that money, let's take that money, [and] spend it on rebuilding Ukraine." Meanwhile, Washington has privately circulated a plan to seize at least some of the assets although the administration of US President Joe Biden dithered on previous European proposals for such measures in 2022. But action speaks louder than words. The only material step taken thus far is one by Belgium, which is setting aside tax earnings thrown off by the frozen funds to aid Kyiv. Yet dangerous and deadly delays resulting from Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Republican hardliners in the US Congress blocking direct financial and material aid have made the question all the more urgent.

Washington and Brussels are ultimately likely to find additional funds for Kyiv, but both have already hinted that aid will be diminished compared to what Kyiv received in the

past, even as Russia's military spending grows by leaps and bounds. It is estimated that the Kremlin has budgeted some \$140bn - or seven percent of Russia's gross domestic product - for its military in 2024. And as Europe and the United States both face crucial elections in 2024 that are likely to see calls to further diminish the cost to taxpayers for aiding Ukraine, harnessing Russia's frozen funds appears not only an increasingly attractive solution but a necessary one if Western support for Kyiv is to be ensured in the years to come.

But the process of actually doing so has raised considerable debate among policymakers, historians, diplomats, academics, and international lawyers. As with the West's initial sanctions response to Russia's full-scale invasion, the term "unprecedented" has been thrown out quite a lot. Many opponents of seizing Russia's frozen funds warn that the backlash for the West could be severe because it would establish a precedent for states to openly seize assets of other countries in response to their foreign policy decision-making. Ultimately they fear that this will cause third countries to potentially threaten the same against the West and that doing so will undermine the so-called "global rules-based order".

Others caution that it will accelerate the shift of countries away from the US dollar, which is what grants the US sanctions their extraterritorial reach by threatening access to the core trading instrument of global finance and trade, a cost far greater than aiding Russia, even for its allies and partners except those under sanctions themselves. This is why powers such as China and India are hesitant to openly aid Moscow, and only its fellow sanctions-stricken sovereigns like North Korea, Iran, and Syria do so openly. Those calling for hesitancy

point to the expansion of the so-called BRICS alliance - which Putin has openly said should lead the way on finding an alternative to the dollar. But although Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are now nominal members of the bloc, affiliated BRICS institutions remain largely toothless.

Even the New Development Bank that is the most solid institutional creation of the founding BRICS members - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa - remains relatively small. It had just \$26bn in assets at the end of 2022, and has suspended giving out new loans to Russia. BRICS members were not only too divided to take up the Russian suggestion of discussing a new currency at their South African summit last year, their fear of losing access to US dollars was so great they agreed Putin was to refrain from attending the meeting.

The argument that seizing Russia's assets risks accelerating de-dollarisation is sophomoric. It fails to consider the fundamental flaw at the heart of a structure like BRICS, or any other hypothetical political-economic tie-up of non-Western countries. For the major BRICS members not only have disparate and often competing geopolitical interests - which they may occasionally leave aside to ally around pushing back on US hegemony - but they also run substantial trade surpluses, i.e. they export more than they import.

Thus, their borrowing needs are secondary to their need to find a safe haven for the earnings they gain from selling goods to the rest of the world, whether it be manufactured goods in India or China's case or commodities in Russia and Brazil's. It is not that the US dollar and all of Washington's laws and regulations that come along with holding it is their ideal instru-

ment for banking these earnings. But they need deficit markets like the US's that import such capital to put their earnings to use. And unlike their own currencies, they want currencies that lack capital controls to ensure these funds can be moved abroad. The only real alternative to the US dollar - because it also lacks capital controls and is the currency of another large deficit market - is the euro.

If the US and Europe do proceed as they should and seize Russia's funds, it may increase some other countries' desire to move away from the dollar, but it will not erase the structural challenges to doing so. The second reason for Western skittishness comes from the fact that they prefer to talk about operating in a "rules-based system" and to paint Putin and his ilk as the greatest threat to that system.

The idea that the international order is based on a series of rules or laws is fallacious. After all, even if there was the will, no other country had the ability to hold Washington to account for its 2003 invasion of Iraq and the devastating aftermath thereof. A precedent that would have raised the cost of doing so would be no bad thing. Solidifying the principle that unilateral aggression or annexation of territory should cause a sovereign's position under international law to be weakened is precisely the kind of thing that a just rules-based order should seek to implement. If the West's use of its financial might must make it right, so be it. Time is of the essence as Russia has substantially increased its missile and drone attacks against Ukraine in recent weeks and Putin seeks to further deter Western support for Kyiv. Seizing Russia's frozen assets is not just the most effective way to ensure that Ukraine can continue to resist Putin's onslaught, but it can also dissuade future such aggression by any power.

Aljazeera

Repercussions from Taiwan’s polls will continue

Lanhee J. Chen

FOR the US, Saturday's Taiwan election results signal the continuation of heightened tension with China over the issue of Taiwan's sovereignty. In some ways, President-Elect Lai Ching-te and his Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) made the election into a referendum over whether Taiwan should draw nearer to the US or China.

Lai's victory signals four more years of efforts to emphasize the island's ties to the US and to seek closer cooperation between Taipei and Washington. This will be the case regardless of who wins the US presidential election in November. Expect the US to continue its strong, bipartisan support for Taiwan - a posture reinforced by the presence of a bipartisan coalition of former senior officials who met with Lai and Vice-President-elect Hsiao Bi-khim in Taipei on Monday.

In fact, support for Taiwan is one of the few policy issues on which there is agreement between Republicans and Democrats. Further efforts to sell weapons and provide military support to Taiwan are likely to be a congressional priority, even during a contentious election year in the US. Both President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump have evinced strong support for Taiwan, with Biden even declaring four separate times that the US would defend Taiwan if it were attacked by the People's Republic of China or PRC (a position repeatedly walked back by members of Biden's own administration). And policymakers in Congress have proposed legislation that would impose significant economic sanctions on China if it were to engage in efforts to take the island by force.

Overall, Taiwan's voters chose continuity over change by delivering a victory to Lai and the incumbent DPP. The DPP's victory means that it will be the first party to hold the presidency for three consecutive terms since Taiwan began directly electing its president in 1996. Lai's results largely mirrored those found in the last public opinion surveys published

almost two weeks ago, reflecting the reality that there were probably very few votes up for grabs in the stretch run leading up to Saturday's election.

Taiwan's voters largely overlooked concerns about a sluggish domestic economy in favor of the DPP's skeptical view of China's ruling Communist Party and its leader Xi Jinping. But it was not a complete victory for President-Elect Lai. His administration will have to deal with a divided legislature where his own party did not come close to reaching a majority, allowing the two major opposition parties - the Nationalist or Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan People's Party (TPP) - to come together to block his initiatives and generally make life for his administration more challenging. As is the case in many recent Taiwan presidential elections, voter turnout was almost 72% - slightly weaker than in 2020 and markedly lower than the high-water mark of approximately 80% in 2004 - but still a strong affirmation of the island's system of democratic governance.

Taiwanese officials were able to announce election results within a few hours after the polls had closed and conducted an election generally free of accusations of fraud, foul play, or external influence (despite significant PRC efforts to influence the electoral result in the lead up to the balloting). China continues to view Taiwan as an existential issue over which there can be no negotiation. Shortly after Lai's victory, in fact, Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office shrugged off the result, repeating its assertion that "Taiwan is China's Taiwan" and that Lai's election "cannot change the basic pattern and development of cross-strait relations."

Xi and his underlings will likely use the four months between now and Lai's inauguration on May 20 to make their displeasure known to residents of Taiwan through continued military incursions into the island's waters and airspace, disinformation activities, and efforts to place economic pressure on the island. These actions are

intended not just to impact people on Taiwan but to signal the PRC's position to the US and the rest of the world. The PRC will also continue to diplomatically isolate Taiwan, something that continued this week when the small Micronesian country of Nauru announced it was switching formal relations from Taiwan to the mainland - for the second time. And it is these activities, coupled with America's ongoing support for Taiwan, that will likely accentuate tensions between the US and China as Lai takes office, and beyond.

Lai is a particularly vexing problem for Xi and the Chinese Communist Party because he has long been disliked by Beijing, which has called him both a "troublemaker" and "separatist" who wants to push Taiwan toward formal independence; a claim that Lai himself denies, saying that there is "no need to declare independence" because Taiwan has already been operating for years as an "independent sovereign state." Lai will pursue the status quo for Taiwan once he takes office and has expressed a willingness to engage in dialogue with the mainland so long as it happens on mutually agreeable terms - something that Beijing is unlikely to accede to. After all, voters on Taiwan reaffirmed his (and the DPP's) views on cross-strait relations, and polling trends leading up to the election suggest that increasingly Taiwan voters view themselves as "Taiwanese," an identity separate and apart from "Chinese" that makes "reunification" with the mainland even more challenging.

While some had hoped that Saturday's elections would ease tensions across the Taiwan Strait and between the US and China, the reality is that the results affirmed the status quo. What Taiwan's elections did demonstrate, once again, is the power of democracy there and that the people's voice - even if it continues to support the uneasy balance between the island and mainland that has existed for decades - remains the loudest of all.

CNN

Marginalized Israeli peace camp has opportunity to rebuild

Yossi Mekelberg

THE mere idea of writing about the peace camp in Israel might seem ludicrous. After all, the entire Israeli society is still traumatized by Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 attack, while most Jewish Israelis are demonstrating little to no sympathy for the current suffering of the people of Gaza as they face the bloodiest ever military assault by the Israel Defense Forces.

In the meantime, the security situation in the West Bank is deteriorating, raising the question of whether Israelis can be convinced that peace is their best security and prosperity guarantee, or even if there is the intellectual space to lay the conceptual foundations for peace and reconciliation with the Palestinians. And yet, more than ever, this dire situation could and should lead to new thinking and allow for the decimated peace camp in Israel to rise like the phoenix from the ashes of this devastating war.

What the last three months have demonstrated beyond doubt is that, in the absence of peace, it is the extremists who are dominating not only the discourse but also the events, with catastrophic consequences. Moreover, without switching the discourse from war and hostility to peace and coexistence, both sides will learn the wrong lessons from the current war and will become even more entrenched in their negative views of each other and, as a result, further radicalized. This makes paramount the necessity to infuse hope into society, based on solid policies and programs. This would replace the current dangerous zero-sum approach with a horizon where both sides benefit from peaceful coexistence, even if it means compromising on some of the historic aspirations.

The peace process between the

Israelis and Palestinians enjoyed its heyday in the early 1990s. After the Oslo Accords were signed, the peace camp in Israel thrived and enjoyed broad support. It felt exonerated when peace with the Palestinians based on a two-state solution was not only desirable but also seemed possible. However, it has now shifted to the point where the peace camp is confined to the margins of Israeli society and politics. However, there is still a big minority that believes that a two-state solution must be the preferred way forward - and that should be utilized effectively.

For too long, the enemies of a peace based on a historic compromise of partitioning Mandatory Palestine, on both sides, were allowed to monopolize the political and social spheres and to use whatever means they could utilize, including terrorism, to derail the peace process. On the Israeli side, after months of incitement against the government and the Oslo Accords orchestrated by none other than Benjamin Netanyahu, who was then leader of the opposition, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a right-wing extremist. This act signaled the beginning of the end of the peace process and, with it, the gradual decline and near-disappearance of the camp that supported it.

There is something in the approach of the Israeli peace camp that inherently puts it at a relative disadvantage compared to the hawks and especially the settler community. Not only do its members believe that their cause is just, but they also cannot understand why others cannot see this too. There is an element of haughtiness in this approach that derives from an unsubstantiated, deterministic belief that, because

peace based on a two-state solution is obviously the right and just approach, people are bound to support it, at least eventually. This attitude is also coupled with the idea that peace agreements are reached between elites, whether political, economic or intellectual. While the argument for the role of leaderships and elites holds some sway, but still requires support of a critical mass in society, the argument that the right things happen because they are ... well, right, is both naive and arrogant and is without any empirical evidence.

Another major blow to the peace camp was the collapse of the 2000 Camp David peace negotiations, which were immediately followed by the eruption of the Second Intifada, to the detriment of any future peace negotiations and the consolidation of a large and sufficiently committed peace movement. First was the notion promoted by the Israeli prime minister at the time, Ehud Barak, that Israel was presenting the Palestinians with the most generous offer ever and they rejected it, serving as ultimate proof that there is no Palestinian partner for peace, leaving the Israeli negotiating team taking no responsibility for the failure of these negotiations.

Worse, the outbreak of the Second Intifada gave rise to the claim that, instead of accepting this generous peace offer, they - and this included every Palestinian who responded with violence, whether or not they were involved in terrorism - had their will for peace cast into doubt. To these two skewed conclusions was added another, which argues that, when Israel withdraws from territories - never mind territories that should never have been occupied in the first place, as was the case with

the withdrawal from Lebanon or the disengagement from the Gaza Strip - it is "rewarded" with rocket and missile attacks. If there has been any oversimplification in Israel's response to its military threats, this is one of the more worrying examples.

With the demise of the peace camp's leaders, such as Rabin and Shimon Peres, while others succumbed to fatigue and despair, the peace movement was left leaderless and rudderless, with no new cadres of supporters. Worse, it had no novel ideas for adapting to the changing circumstances, which allowed the right wing's security and settler discourse to take over. Much of the thinking and activism in support of peace was left to civil society, the Meretz party and those representing the Palestinian citizens of Israel in the Knesset. Meanwhile, the Labor party, which had been at the helm when the Oslo Accords were signed, mistakenly avoided the issue altogether, seeing it as a vote loser rather than a winner.

For now, the Oct. 7 Hamas attack - among whose victims were a substantial number of peace activists - has left very little room for talking about peace, reconciliation and coexistence. Instead, there is only the language of "destroying Hamas" at whatever cost to the Palestinians. But there is also an opportunity for this marginalized segment of Israeli society that still believes in peace based on a two-state solution to rebuild itself in terms of ideas, leadership and appeal to wider parts of the population. The alternative to this has proved to be catastrophic for all aspects of Israel's existence and a fatal blow to its international reputation. It is high time to bring back a peace discourse with the Palestinians as a matter of long-term existential and moral necessity. If not now, when?

their interests. The best outcome for these actors is a low-level, ongoing conflict that weakens Israel and damages Washington's reputation without entering into a major war with Israel and the US' far more powerful militaries. Nonetheless, unintentional escalation is a real risk. Among Iran's allies, the Houthis might have the most interest in escalation. They have taken advantage of the situation to broaden their cause and demand global attention. They might calculate that they can survive US strikes and that most Yemenis will blame Washington, while the Houthis bolster their reputation.

There are actors that see escalation as in their interests. There are others that do not want escalation but could benefit from ongoing conflict. Of course, there are those that want neither escalation nor continuing war, especially the many civilians in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Yemen and elsewhere who bear the brunt of the cost and have nothing to gain. Many Israeli civilians - especially the families of hostages - have no interest in escalation.

The governments of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon do not want war with Israel. Anyone with an interest in regional stability and international shipping does not want escalation. Avoiding escalation requires acknowledging that some powerful actors would welcome it. The question going forward is whether the many civilians and leaders who have a genuine interest in avoiding escalation can overcome the agendas of those who might benefit.

West is protecting China’s vital interests in Red Sea

THE longer that Houthi missile attacks continue in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, the less they work to the geopolitical advantage of Xi Jinping. Beyond a certain point, this conflict starts to pose a serious risk to China's long-term economic and strategic interests.

That point may have been reached this week as Tesla and Volvo announced temporary closures of plants in Europe, in both cases because the Red Sea crisis has held up critical components from China.

It exposes Xi as the de facto patron of a truculent Iran, putting him at loggerheads with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and an alliance of nine Sunni states that together fought a long war trying to stop the Houthis taking control of Yemen. The collapse in revenues from the Suez Canal is pushing Egypt deeper into a financial crisis, putting at risk the welfare subsidies that keep a lid on that political powder keg, and threatening to provoke the beginnings of a backlash against China within the country. It would be an exaggeration to say that the Anglo-US bombing strikes in Yemen do Xi's work for him, but ultimately it is China that has built up an existential economic dependence on stable supplies of oil and gas from the Middle East and on the free flow of global shipping.

One could, of course, make the same point about Europe, home to a great number of equivocating free-riders that have refused to take part in the US-led Operation Prosperity Guardian - a decision they may regret if a vindictive Donald Trump is re-elected in November. China is the world's biggest importer of crude oil by far, barely able to cover 28pc of its needs from domestic supply, a key reason for the frantic switch to electric vehicles. It is also the biggest importer of liquefied natural gas (LNG). China has filled its strategic petroleum reserve and can weather a short-term shock. It would face something close to an economic "sudden stop" if Middle East tensions were to escalate into

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard

House. Needless to say, such a promotion of the Houthis is abhorrent to the Sunni bloc. It threatens to undo everything that China has achieved in the region through brokering the Saudi-Iranian truce and the Yemen peace process, the result of painstaking diplomacy that stunned diplomats and turned China into a major player in the Middle East.

The Chinese navy has had a base at Djibouti and takes part in the anti-piracy task force fighting pirates off the Horn of Africa. Beijing has made much of this in the past, presenting itself as a defender of free navigation through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal for the good of all. This rhetoric rings hollow today as 30pc of global container traffic has to run the Houthi gauntlet or take an extra 18 days round the cape, quadrupling the Drewry freight rate index for the Shanghai to Genoa and Rotterdam routes, and leading to the havoc of misaligned ships in ports at both ends. The larger point in this saga is that China is the chief beneficiary of globalisation. It relies to an extraordinary degree on foreign markets, and therefore has the most to lose if geopolitics destroy confidence in maritime supply lines.

Personally, I am a free trader, but there is a brutal historical logic to Trump's protectionism. Could Britain have stayed out of the US strikes on Houthi targets given that much of the world's maritime insurance market is based in London, and given that Britain has sought to uphold free navigation as a fundamental principle for two centuries? Rishi Sunak had no real choice. My objection is that the US and the UK acted too soon - taking the Iranian-Houthi bait, so to speak - before the glaring contradictions of China's position had been fully exposed. It is time to hold Xi's feet to the diplomatic fire. Is China a co-defender of the world trading system? Is it a great power - a "major country with influence", to use its own terminology - or is it still a free-riding opportunist?

The Telegraph

Some actors do want escalation in ME

Kerry Boyd Anderson

LAST week, during a trip to the Middle East, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that "escalation is in no one's interest. No one's seeking it." But is that true? One challenge to considering this question is that escalation is often more of a dial than a switch - parties to the conflict can turn their engagement in violence up or down, rather than simply on or off. This makes it difficult to know how to define escalation in a particular conflict. In the current case, all-out war between multiple states in the region is very unlikely, but dialing up violence in ways that increase the scale and breadth of fighting is a serious risk.

As the Biden administration seeks to avoid escalation, its own ally is its biggest obstacle. Key figures within Israel's government clearly see themselves as benefiting from an intensification and escalation of the war. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a personal interest in escalating the war. He faces corruption and other charges in court and his efforts to weaken the judiciary led to large-scale protests before the Oct. 7 Hamas attack. His political reputation has largely been based on providing security, but he failed to prevent the worst attack in Israel's history.

An Israeli poll in December found that only 15 percent of Israelis want Netanyahu to remain as prime minister after the war. Netanyahu has an interest in buying time before facing a postwar reckoning and his best chance to turn around his fortunes is

to achieve sufficient military victories over Hamas and Hezbollah so that Israelis believe he has restored and strengthened their security. Netanyahu's right-wing allies, including many senior government officials, also have an interest in intensifying and potentially expanding the war. The right wing of Israeli politics has openly embraced the opportunity that the war in Gaza presents to displace many Palestinians and crush any remaining hopes for a Palestinian state. Current senior leaders such as Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter - as well as multiple former senior officials and a policy proposal from the Israeli Intelligence Ministry - have called for moving Gazans to Egypt.

Furthermore, the Israeli military has created facts on the ground in Gaza - including the destruction of more than half of the Strip's buildings, crucial infrastructure and even cultural sites - that will make it difficult for Palestinians to ever return to normal life there. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, right-wing politicians, settlers and the military have used the world's focus on Gaza to significantly ramp up efforts to displace Palestinians and assert Israeli control. Since Oct. 7, at least 332 Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem have been killed and multiple communities and families displaced, according to the UN.

The threats to Palestinian lives and

property predate Oct. 7, but Israeli military raids and settler attacks have spiked in the last 100 days. The ongoing war in Gaza and potentially an expansion to Lebanon could provide cover for right-wing efforts to diminish Palestinian communities and move toward annexing the West Bank. US officials have expressed concern that Iran and its allies will widen the war, but Tehran and its partners have reasons to be satisfied with how things have gone so far while avoiding intensification.

Despite Gazans' extreme suffering, Hamas can claim some success. It put the Palestinian cause back in the global limelight, derailed efforts to expand normalization between Israel and Arab states, damaged Israel's reputation, proved its relevance and forced Israel to release some Palestinian prisoners. Polls suggest that Palestinian support for Hamas has increased (for now). However, Hamas has little ability to escalate further. The Iranian regime and Hezbollah have used the opportunity to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to resistance against Israel while distracting attention from their own domestic problems. These allies, plus Iranian partners in Iraq and Syria, benefit from the opportunity to work together, as well as from the growing isolation of Israel and the US on the world stage.

However, it is not clear that Iran and its allies want further escalation. A major war that could weaken Hezbollah in Lebanon would not suit



PSX stays bearish, loses 170 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 170.13 points, a negative change of 0.27 percent, closing at 63,567.34 points against 63,737.46 points the previous trading day.

A total of 421,331,988 shares valuing Rs.18.579 billion were traded during

the day as compared to 407,543,943 shares valuing Rs.12.646 billion the last day. Some 332 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 111 of them recorded gains and 203 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 18 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were PTCL with 45,978,785 shares at

Rs.14.02 per share, K-Electric Limited with 41,567,872 shares at Rs.5.59 per share and Treet Corporation with 36,390,498 shares at Rs.20.05 per share.

Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.51.24 per share price, closing at Rs.734.50, whereas the

runner-up was Bata Pakistan Limited with a Rs.33.00 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,733.00.

Rafhan Maize Products Company witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.401.50 per share closing at Rs.8,801.00, followed by Pak Suzuki Motor Company Limited with Rs.53.74 decline to close at Rs.662.77.

Gold rates down by Rs.3,600 to Rs.213,700 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.3,600 and was sold at Rs.213,700 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs. 217,300 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also

decreased by Rs.3,087 to Rs.183,213 from Rs. 186,300 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.167,945 from Rs. 170,775 the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs.50 to Rs.2,600 whereas that of ten gram silver declined by Rs.42.86 to Rs.2,229.08.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$22 to \$2,045 from \$2,067, the Association reported.

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Business community asks to play active role in local govt to resolve its issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said the Islamabad administration to ensure better development of the federal capital and resolve the key issues of the business community. President, ICCI said the business community should take an active role in the election of local government to get their issues resolved and accelerate the pace of development works in markets and the city, according to a press release issued here on Wednesday.

He said this while addressing the traders during his visit to Melody Market, G-6 Markaz, and Islamabad.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that ICCI would try to set up a filtration plant in the Melody Market to provide clean drinking water to the traders. He said that ICCI is working on modern washrooms in markets including Melody Market for the traders.

He stressed that the traders should pool their resources for arranging the installation of CCTV cameras in the Melody Market to improve the security situation and ICCI would cooperate with them.

He assured that ICCI would work with the Traders Association for the better development of Melody Market.

Speaking on the occasion, Azhar Iqbal President, and Malik Nadeem Chairman, Traders Welfare Association, Melody Market, Islamabad said that their market is one of the oldest markets of Islamabad but due to lack of development works, its traders are facing many problems.

They said that ICCI should cooperate in addressing parking issue and the need of development work in the market. They also informed the issues of the Food Street of the Melody Market and hoped that ICCI would work with CDA for its upgradation.

'ICT exports increased by 22.67% in December 2023'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr Umar Saif on Wednesday said that the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) export remittances had increased by 22.67 percent in the month of December 2023.

A total of \$303 million ITC exports proceeds were received in December, following a 13% increase in November 2023, the minister said in statement.

Dr Umar Saif said that facilitating measures, such as allowing to retain 50% of the dollars, digital payment systems, and initiatives for freelancers had played a crucial role in boosting ICT exports growth.

Expressing gratitude to Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and the Special Investment Facilitation Council for their efforts in providing facilities for the IT industry, he said that the objective behind the policies was to bolster the national economy and advance the IT and telecom sectors in the country. Dr Saif said it was a beginning, which would usher in significant growth of the industry.



LAHORE: A vendor is busy in making and selling the traditional food item "Laddu Peethi" to the customers on his roadside setup at local market.

SCCI, ANF agreed to take joint initiatives for rehab of drug-addicts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq and Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), Regional Directorate Commander Brig Mazhar Hussain have agreed to take joint steps for elimination of drugs and rehabilitation of drug addicts and make them a good citizen of the society.

Fuad Ishaq vowed the SCCI along with ANF will make contacts with philanthropists for engaging drug addicts in healthy activities and getting rid them from drug addiction and uprooting

the menace of drugs from the society. The SCCI chief said proactive steps would be taken for establishment of a drug-free society and establishment of rehabilitation centres.

According to the details, an important meeting was held between SCCI president Fuad Ishaq and ANF Regional Directorate Commander Brig Mazhar Hussain, said in a press release here on Wednesday. The ANF Joint Director Col Ishanullah and Inspector Chemical Incharge Qaiser Rasool were present in the meeting. The meeting discussed cases of drug-smuggling cases, recovery of drugs in passengers' limbs and luggage who were traveling abroad along with illegal sale of the banned chemicals, use in chemicals factories and other matters.

Fuad Ishaq was apprised during the meeting that chemical use in different chemical factories were used in drug related materials, for its eradication, the SCCI and ANF will work jointly.

In the meeting, it was informed that ANF will prepare a list of various factories under which data of chemicals, which are using drugs will be gathered and the SCCI will provide assistance in

this regard. The list, which would be provided by ANF, will be disseminated between SCCI members, particularly in industrialists and awareness will be raised among them in this regard, the meeting said.

Fuad Ishaq presented a proposal for rehabilitation of drug-addicts under a policy of 'adopt a brother' and 'adopt a sister'. By signing memorandum of understandings (MoUs), he said SCCI in collaboration with non-governmental organisations and social welfare institutions will take initiatives for making the drug-addicts a good citizen of the society.

OGDCL to send christian and Hindu employees to sacred religious places

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a display of commitment to diversity and inclusion, the Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) on Wednesday organized a draw to select members from the Christian and Hindu communities for special visits to their respective sacred religious places.

The draw was conducted here at OGDCL Head Office Islamabad in the presence of OGDCL CBA leaders, members from both communities and OGDCL Senior Management.

Seven deserving members from the Christian community were selected for a trip to the Vatican City, with an additional five persons placed on the waiting list.

The lucky employees were selected from a list of 78 employees of the

company from the Christian community. Meanwhile, one member from the Hindu community was chosen for a special visit to Hindu sacred places, while two others were placed on the waiting list.

They were selected from a list of 27 employees of the company from the Hindu community.

This initiative underscored OGDCL's commitment to creating an inclusive workplace where every individual feels val-

ued and respected. OGDCL extended best wishes to the selected employees.

The company is committed to upholding the principles of diversity, unity, and inclusivity in the workplace.



PCAA inaugurates exam centre at Islamabad International Airport

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) is pleased to announce the inauguration of a state-of-the-art exam centre for pilots at Islamabad International Airport (IIAP).

The new exam centre will provide greater accessibility and convenience for aspiring pilots in northern regions of

Pakistan. The inauguration ceremony took place at IIAP and was presided over by Advisor to the Prime Minister on Aviation, Air Marshal (Retd) Farhat Hussain Khan. In attendance were notable dignitaries including Secretary Aviation, Director General PCAA, Additional Director General PCAA, Deputy Director General (Regulatory), Director

Personnel and Licensing, and Manager Islamabad International Airport.

Mr. Matt Margesson and Mr. Ian Saunders, representatives from the United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authority (UKCAA), were also present on the occasion. With the establishment of this exam center at IIAP, candidates appearing for pilot exams from across northern

regions can now benefit from PCAA's modern facilities, advanced technological support, and expert supervision offered through UKCAAi and in collaboration with British Council in Pakistan.

The PCAA is committed to providing unparalleled services for future pilots in Pakistan, ensuring their growth and success in global aviation standards.

regions can now benefit from PCAA's modern facilities, advanced technological support, and expert supervision offered through UKCAAi and in collaboration with British Council in Pakistan.

The PCAA is committed to providing unparalleled services for future pilots in Pakistan, ensuring their growth and success in global aviation standards.

Businessman Forum leader voices concern over closure of Pak-Afghan border, and hurdle in export

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Leader of the Businessman Forum (BF), former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour expressed grave concern over closure of Pak-Afghan border and hurdles in export.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, the BF leader, Ilyas Bilour said exporters are facing huge financial losses and damages of items-loaded by a large number of trucks that were stuck at Torkham border. He said govern-

ment, relevant institutions in consultation with president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fuad Ishaq should resolve the issue.

Bilour was of the view that country's economy was negatively impacted owing to the closure of Pak-Afghan border. He said trucks laden with food items, especially fruits, standing near border areas in long queues, are damaging while exporters are bearing the brunt of huge financial losses as well.

The businessman forum leader

said the economy of the both countries was also adversely affected due to halting movement of goods-loaded trucks on both sides of the border. Bilour said halting of export is a serious issue and demanded the emergent steps to resolve the issues.

He suggested both governments along with Pak-Afghan traders' community should initiate talks at high level in which recommendations of the SCCI president Fuad Ishaq should be implemented to ease difficulties of exporters, importers and traders' community promptly.

COURT NOTICE

In the court of Miss Sabina Jadoon civil judge V. Swabi, Case # 50/1 institution 22/06/2023. Next Hearing date 30/01/2024. Maaz Ullah VS Putwari. Putwari Haigra muza shah mansoor Gardawar circle. 3) Tahsildar Swabi 4) Fareed Ullah sons. 5) Mst. Riyasat daughter Sami Ullah 6)Ahad Ullah 7)Mst. Nazesh daughter Israr Ullah 8) Farhan Ullah 9) Irfan Ullah sons. 10) Mst. Rozeena widow Madar Ullah Heirs Mst. Zarpari. 11) Khalid Rehman 12) Salah Rehman 13) Zahar Rehman sons fazal Rehman 11) Adnan 15) Nouman 16) Jawad Sons Msts. 17) Tanzeela 18) Andaleeb daughter 19) Saleema widow Rahat Ullah 20) Sharafat Ullah sons, Msts. 21) Fadim pari 22) Naseem Daughter Safi Ullah 23) Lavangee. 24) Aimal. 25) Selah sons 26) Mst. Waheeda Naz widow Riaz. 27) Nangyal son 28) Haya. 29) Farika Wagar 30) Khula Nizar daughters Nizar Ali 31) Anwar Ali 32) Ifkhar 33) Mst. Farah Naz 34) Simat. 35) Kifayat daughters Mst. Sultana daughters Muhib Ullah 36) Mst. Mushtar Sheeda widow. 37) Ishiaq Ahmad. 38) Mushtaq Ahmad. 39) Nasir ali. 40) Ishaq Ahmad sons 41) Mst. Imtiaz. 42) Fozia tariq 43) Mehnaz Shabnam. 44) daughters pazeer Ullah 45) Asim Ullah 46) Asad Ullah sons & Msts. 47) Mst. Bakhsheda 78) Hameeda daughters 50) Mst. Wahida widow Jaz Ullah 51) Hayat Ullah 52) Saeed Ullah 53) Sefat Ullah sons muhib 54) Inenullah 55) sajad 56) Anjid 57) Qasir sons. 58) Msts. Dilshad 59) Naz bibi 60) Waheeda Naz 61) Naveeda daughters 62) Mst. Razia widow Fateh Ullah Heirs Muhib Ullah 63) Mst. Zarsheida daughter Semat Ullah 64) Safarish Khan s/o Shahid Ullah 65) Itlaf 66) Toufeeq 67) Tufail 68) Shakeel 69) Ansar sons & Msts. 70) Savera 71) Balma daughters 72) Mst. Zareen Taja widow Habib Ullah 73) Pukraj begum daughters Shareef Ullah Heirs Mst. Zeeba 74) Bashir Khan 75) Masam Khan 76) Qurash sons 77) Msts. Bakhsheda 78) Hameeda daughters Fareed Ullah Heirs Mst. Mushtari jan 79) Wazir Ullah son 80) Mst. Hussan Bano widow Hazrat Ullah 81) Mst. Bas Khanum widow Zeer Ullah 82) Sanab Gul 83) Habib Gul sons Umar Gul 84) Msts. Salma 85) Nargas 86) Sabah 87) Sumbal 88) Spoomgi daughters 89) Bilal son Zakir Ullah 90) Ziadul 91) Irsahd Ullah 92) Saleh sons 93) Mst. Aneesa daughter Wansoor Ullah 94) Zabeel Ullah s/o Maaz Ullah heirs Mst. Maro Jan r/o shah Mansoor Teshi & district Swabi. Whereas the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 30/01/2024. at 8.30 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.

COURT NOTICE

MATTA SWAT

In the Court of Sidra Jalal Civil Judge-III/Judicial Magistrate-II Matta Swat. Case # 14/1. Institution 03/02/23. Next Hearing date. 27/01/2023. Isman Roometc. VS Usman etc. Notice to defendant. 4) Mst. Ghatta bibi daughter Hazrat yanosh. 7) Mst. Karam shaha bibi widow hazrat yanosh. 9) khan zaraan. 10) Momin khan. 11) Bacha khan. 12) Imran khan sons mohsen sambat teshil matta. 14) Adil Muhammad s/o Noor Muhammad. 15) Haider s/o Muhammad Rehman. 16) Muhammad kamran s/o yar Muhammad r/o sambat teshil matta district Swat. Whereas the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 27/01/2024. at 8.30 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.

BUNER

In the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 6/12/2/1 Institution. 21/1/2023. date of hearing 22/1/2024. Abdullah VS Mohmad Afzal Notice to no. 7/1. Mohmad Afzal. 7/2. Sher Afzal. 7/3. Jabeen Khan sons. 7/4. Amena d/o Bibi Zieha. 14/4. Ekhtiar Ali. 14/5. Mukhzer Ali sons of Bakht Rehman. 17/1. Mst Raj widow. 17/2. Zahideen. 17/3. Sajiden. 17/4. Khaliden sons. 17/5. Muslihat. 17/6. Shadmeena daughters of Israrul Aarefen. 13/3/1. Abdullah son. 13/3/6. Afzana d/o Iqbal Mohmad resident of Maskipur teshel Mandan district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in

the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 22/1/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

SWABI

In the Court of Quratul-Ain Rashid Senior Civil Judge/ Judge Family Court Swabi Naheed Begum VS Muhammed Zeb Suit number: 387/FC, Institution date: 28/11/2023 Hearing date: 23/02/2024 Subject: Dissolution of Marriage Notice to: Muhammed Zeb S/o Ghulam Habib R/o Presently Green Park City House No. R-36, Mohalla Quidabad, National Highway, City Maleer, Teh, Maleer, District Karachi Maleer, Permanent Address, Mohalla Bara Khankhel, Tandkoi, Teh, & Distt, Swabi The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court on 13-02-2024 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.

In the Court of Hafeez Ullah Civil Judge-I, Topi, Mst. Mahal Pari VS Meer Akram Khan Suit number: 534/1 Institution date: 12/10/2022 Hearing date: 29/01/2024 Notice to: Ali Asghar Khan S/o Shamsheer Khan R/o Zarobi, Teh, Topi Presently Buhta village, KPT Ground, Kamela Road, near Nasrullah Hamam, Kemari, Karachi. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court on 29-01-2024 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.

In the Court of Qurat-ul-Ain Rashid Senior Civil Judge/Judge Family Swabi, Kosar Bibi VS Nadeem Suit

number: 326/FC, Institution date: 11-10-2023 Hearing date: 03-02-2024 Subject: Dissolution of Marriage Notice to: Nadeem S/o Usman R/o Mohallah Palu Dand, Near Hujra Khan Baba, Village Saleem Khan, Teh, & Distt, Swabi. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court on 03-02-2024 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte.

In the court of Sabeena Jadoon Civil Judge- V Swabi, Mukhtiar Ahmed VS Abdul Malik Suit number: 25/1 Institution date: 01-02-2022 Hearing date: 13-02-2024 Notice to: Fazal Qamar, Fazal Mabood sons Mst. Nazakat Begum bibi, Rasool Bibi Daughters Ab-u- Shukur, Mst. Rahmania Widow Abdul Aziz Son Sher Afzal, Shams-ul-Qamar, Mohammad Iqbal Khan, Mohammad Ashiq Khan, Mohammed Sadiq, Anwar Ali Sons Mst. Jannat Bibi Daughter Jamdad Khan, Sardar Son Unknown, Sultan Jan, Faqir Mohammed. Siraj Mohammed Sons Mst. Zar Pari, Shafqat, Ulfat Daughters Mst. Roshan Jan Widow Mohammed Jan, Mst. Romania, Zakia, Zubania, Mumtaza Daughters Mohammad Afzal, Israr Mohammed, Alam Shah, Rashid Ali Shah Sons Mst. Yasmeen Daughter Sardar shah heirs Mst. Zakia, Abdul Qayyum Son Sher Afzal, Mir Farosh, Hidayat-ur- Rahman, Saeed-ur- Rahman, Atiq-ur- Rahman Sons Tehzeeb Sultana, Abida Begum Daughters Mir Asghar, Ghulam Serwar, Nisar Mohammed Khan Sons Mir Afzal, Mir Khanum Shah, Mir Ali Shah, Syed Shoaib Shah, Mohammad Ali Shah Sons Syed Qaism Shah, Samiullah, Rafiullah, Mohammed Yunus, Jan

Nabi sons Mohammad Nazir Sons Abdul Hameed, Islam Jalil, Mohammed Jalil, Farman Jalil, Mohammed Ali Jan Sons Mst. Sadiya Daughter Mst. Tajman Quresha, widow Abdul Jalil, Abdul khitab, Farukh Siyar Khan, Mir Badshah Sons Umar Khitab, Mukhtiyar Alam, Anwar Alam, Ibrar Alam, Zulfiqar Alam, Qaisar Sultan Sons Sultan Jan, Faqir Mohammed, Siraj Mohammed Sons Daughters Zar Pari, Shafqat, Ulfat Daughters Mohammad Jan, Noorul Basar, Sher Afzal, Alam Sher Son Shahzada, Bacha Gul, Zarin Gul Sons Shahzad Gul, Bahaded Khan Son Inamdad, Sardar Bahadur, Abdul Bahadur, Sher Bahadur R/o Zaida, Teh, & Distt, Swabi, Siddique Akbar Son Sher Bahadur Mst. Rubina Daughter Sher Bahadur Village Zaida, Teh, & Distt, Swabi, Defendant Defendant No 14 Noorul Basar died heirs are Noorul Hadi, Shamsul Hadi, Luqman, Salman Sons Mst. Sadiya, Halima, Asma Daughters Mst. Saeeda, Defendant No 25 Zar Pari died heirs are Manzoor Alam Son, Defendant No. 27 Mst. Ulfat died heirs no children, Defendant No. 28 Mst. Romania died heirs are Muhammad Farooq Son Mst. Nihayat Daughter, Defendant No 29 Zakia died heirs are Israr Mohammed, Tahir Shah, Arshad Ali Shah Son Mst. Yasmeen Akhtar, Defendant No 71 Mst. Shafqat died heirs are Waheed Khan Son, Defendant No. 72 Mst. Ulfat died and no children, Defendant No. 74 Noorul Basar died heirs are Shamsul Hadi, Luqman, Mst. Sadiya, Halima, Asma Daughter, Defendant no. 76 Alam Zaid alive and request for register heirs. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court on 13-02-2024 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.



In brief

PCB Level 1 coaching course

RAWALPINDI (APP): A four-day Level 1 coaching course, organised by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), concluded on Wednesday in Rawalpindi. As many as 32 participants took part in the course, conducted at the Pindi Cricket Stadium from January 13 to 17. The complete list of participants is as follows: Afzal Hussain Shah, Ali Sarfraz, Asad Sumairy, Ashfaq Ahmed, Basharat Ali, Bashir Ahmed, Ehtisham Sultan, Faisal Umar Abbasi, Jawad Raza, Kamran Farooq, Lal Zaman, Mohammad Shoaib Khaliq, Mohammad Haris Khan Niazi, Mohammad Naveed-Ur-Rehman Khan, Malik Hasnad Ahmed, Mehtab Tariq Aziz Khan, Moeid Ahmed Shaikh, Mudassar Ali, Muhammad Bilal, Muhammad Jafar, Naveed Gulzar, Qaisar Abbas Awan, Riaz Ud Din, Sibtain Sarwar Shah, Syed Bilawal Abbas Shah, Syed Jamil Shah Qadri, Umair Ali, Usama Ahmad Waqas Ahmad Waqas Ahmad Waseem Haider and Zeeshan Nadir Earlier. Peshawar's Islamia College hosted the same course, which was attended by 32 participants including Test cricketer Fazal-e-Akbar. Karachi will host the level 1 coaching course from 19 to 22 January. 33 participants are set to take part in the course.

Sports dept firmed to promote squash

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Balochistan Sports Dr. Javed Anwar Shahwani has said that the Sports Department is committed to the promotion of squash in the province. Concrete steps are afoot to facilitate youth want to prove their flair in the squash. He expressed these views while talking to reporters on the occasion of a visit to the squash court in Ayub Sports Complex along with the Director General of Sports Durra Baloch on Wednesday. President Balochistan Squash Association Mohammad Arshad, Kalim Khan Javed Ahmed, Salman Nasir, Dr. Manzoor and others were present. Secretary recalled that the renowned names of Pakistan in squash have made the country famous at the international level. There are also squash players in our province who have no shortage of talent, and who have shown their skills whenever they get a chance. "The purpose of visiting squash court was to see the venue so that it can be further improved," the secretary said adding "We are trying to take steps to promote squash not only in Quetta but also in other districts of Balochistan. Steps will be taken to provide opportunities to the players and further tournaments will be organized for them so that the players can get a chance to develop their skills." Shahwani maintained.

Rashid is likely to miss PSL 9

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Rashid Khan, the renowned leg-spinner from Afghanistan, is set to miss out on participating in the forthcoming Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 9 due to an ongoing lower-back surgery. Afghanistan's Head Coach, Jonathan Trott confirmed the status of Rashid Khan as he had cautious approach adopted by the team management to address his injury. Rashid has undergone thorough assessments and check-ups to gauge his fitness levels, with no specific timeline established for his return.

Pakistan beat China in Olympic qualifying match

MUSCAT (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan hockey team defeated China 2-0 on Tuesday, earning their first victory in the Paris Olympics Qualifiers to keep their hopes alive for the upcoming mega-event.

Pakistan and China both played defensively in the first half, not allowing any goal, however, the Green Shirts created some brilliant chances in the third

quarter.

Their initial advances were denied before Abu Bakr gave Pakistan the advantage in the 42nd minute with a penalty corner. Pakistan's lead was further extended nine minutes later, thanks to Abdul Rahman, who scored his first international goal on a penalty corner.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's hockey team lost their first

game in the Paris Olympics Qualifiers against England 6-1 yesterday.

Abdul Hanan Shahid scored Pakistan's only goal in the match, as the England team showed brilliant quality, scoring six goals.

Pakistan will next face Malaysia tomorrow in the must-win contest to qualify for the semi-finals of the Paris Olympics Qualifiers.

New Zealand win third T20I to take unassailable 3-0 lead

DUNEDIN (Agencies): New Zealand won the third T20I at University Oval, Dunedin by 45 runs taking an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series. After being put to bat first, New Zealand put a mammoth total of 224-7, owing to a brilliant century by Finn Allen. In reply, Pakistan could only manage 179-7 in their 20 overs.

Pakistan won the toss and invited New Zealand to bat first. Although opening batter Devon Conway (7, 8b, 1x4) departed early, falling to Haris Rauf in the fourth over, Allen and Tim Seifert gave New Zealand a breezy start. A 125-run second-wicket partnership between the two allowed the home side to gain control of the innings.

Mohammad Wasim Jr provided the breakthrough for Pakistan by removing Seifert, who walked back after scoring 31 from 23, including three fours and a six.

Allen went on to complete his second century in T20Is before he was removed by Zaman Khan in the 18th over. The opening batter produced an impressive 137 from 62, including five fours and a record 16 maximums. He was later adjudged player of the match for the second consecutive time.

Glenn Phillips (19, 15b, 1x4, 1x6) was the other contributor with the bat as New Zealand crossed the 200-run mark for the second time in the series. The Pakistan attack had a rough day at the office, with each bowler conceding in excess of eight runs an over. Haris bagged two wickets while Shaheen Shah Afridi, Zaman, Wasim and Nawaz accounted for one each.

Opening batter Saim Ayub (10, 13b, 2x4s) was dismissed inside the power-



Finn Allen raises his bat after scoring a century during game three of the T20 International series.

play of the Pakistan chase, courtesy of Tim Southee. A 39-run partnership between Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan brought a semblance of stability to the chase, however, it was cut short by Mitchell Santner who removed Rizwan (24, 20b, 2x6s).

Pakistan's top run-getter of the innings, Babar, completed his third consecutive half-century (58, 37b, 8x4s, 1x6) before he fell to Ish Sodhi. Fakhar Zaman (19, 10b, 2x4s, 1x6) got a start as well before Lockie Ferguson dismissed him.

Nawaz (28, 15b, 2x4s, 2x6s) stitched a 40-run seventh wicket stand with his captain Shaheen (16 not out, 11b, 1x4, 1x6) though the result seemed like a foregone conclusion by then.

Southee, who picked up two wickets at the expense of 29 runs in his allotted four

overs, was the pick of the bowlers for New Zealand as the home side successfully restricted Pakistan to 179-7 in 20 overs to win the game by 45 runs.

The fourth game between Pakistan and New Zealand will be played on 19 January at Hagley Oval in Christchurch. The first ball is expected to be bowled at 1110 PKT and the toss will take place at 1040 PKT.

Scores in brief: New Zealand won against Pakistan by 45 runs. New Zealand 224-7, 20 overs (Finn Allen 137, Tim Seifert 31, Glenn Phillips 19; Haris Rauf 2-60).

Pakistan 179-7, 20 overs (Babar Azam 58, Mohammad Nawaz 28, Mohammad Rizwan 24; Tim Southee 2-29).

Player of the match - Finn Allen (New Zealand).



BLOEMFONTEIN: The captains pose ahead of the 2024 Under-19 World Cup.

Babar, Fakhar move up in ICC Rankings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ace Pakistani batter Babar Azam was up one place to fourth while Fakhar Zaman to 81st in the MRF Tyres ICC Men's T20I Player Rankings released on Wednesday.

Babar was up one place to fourth after notching consecutive half-centuries in the first two matches against New Zealand while Fakhar Zaman is up 14 places to 81st. Daryll Mitchell (up nine places to 37th) and Kane Williamson (up 13 places to 59th) are the Kiwi batters to move up, said a press release. Axar Patel has advanced 12 places to a career-best fifth position among bowlers as a clutch of India players made significant gains in the T20I Player Rankings after strong performances in the series against Afghanistan.

Patel's hauls of two for 23 and two for 16 in India's identical six-wicket wins over Afghanistan in the first two T20Is of their three-match series have also lifted him two places to 16th among all-rounders after the latest weekly rankings update on Wednesday that takes into consideration all matches completed till Tuesday.

More matches decided in Peshawar Premier Football League

PESHAWAR (APP): Several matches have been decided wherein Shaheen FC Islamabad, and Dara 90 recorded victories against their respective rivals in the ongoing Peshawar Premier Football League Season-I being played here at Tehmas Khan Football Stadium on Wednesday.

Former International Footballer and FIFA Referee Qazi Asif was the chief guest on this occasion and before the start of the matches the players were introduced to him. Chairman Organizing Committee Khalid Khan, officials and a large number of spectators were also present.

In the first match played between Khyber Markhor and Buner Red tied at 2-2. It was the second session in which both Markhor and Buner Red players tried their hardest to take any lead but they failed as the defense line of both the teams defended their goal-post and did not allow the strikers to get any lead. Thus the match ended

in a 2-2 draw. In the second match was played between Darah 90 and SDFC teams, in which the Dara Adam Khail 90 team won the match 2-0. Dara Adam Khan 90 team succeeded in scoring the first goal through Ibrahim and Sajid Khan doubled the lead through a field attempt. SD FC team's players tried their hardest to reduce the margin but they failed due to tight marking by Dara 90 defenders.

In the third match played between FC Kohat and Shaheen Club from Islamabad, in which Shaheen FC Islamabad recorded 2-0 victory. The first half of the match ended in a goalless draw and it was the second session in which Shaheed Club Islamabad scored two goals through Muneeb Khan, the inner striker and center striker Mohsin. FC Kohat is a good team but it failed to reduce the margin and thus Islamabad Shaheen won the match by 2-0.

All Pakistan Junior Boys Age Group Squash from Jan 18

PESHAWAR (APP): The All Pakistan National Junior Boys Age Group Squash Championship including Boys U15, U17 and U19 will be commencing from January 18, 2024 here at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex, former Asian Games Gold Medalist and Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Squash Association Mansoor Zaman media men here on Wednesday.

He said arrangements for the smooth sailing of the Championship in which more than 150 players from all across Pakistan are taking part in different age groups including Boys U15, U17 and U19. He said the opening ceremony will be held at Qamar Zaman Squash

Complex, Qayyum Stadium here.

Mansoor Zaman, who reached his highest ranking World No. 11 till May 2003 in the world, said that the aim and objective of the age group competitions is to provide ample opportunities to the upcoming players to show their hidden talent through competitions.

Mansoor Zaman, the younger son of former World Champion Qamar Zaman, said that Chairman of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Squash Association Qamar Zaman and President KP Squash Association Muhammad Dawood Khan would grace the occasion as guests at the opening ceremony.

Born on April 14, 1980 in

Peshawar, Mansoor Zaman is a Pakistani professional squash player, who in 2007 won the Governor NWFP international and then at the President PSF international 2007 when he beat his compatriot Aamir Atlas Khan.

In 20023 Mansoor Zaman won a silver in the individual event at the 2002 Asian Games in Busan, South Korea and in 2006 he won a bronze medal at the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, Qatar. Mansoor said that they recently held a meeting with the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who assured all out support for holding various tournaments at the national and international levels.

Australian Open 2024

Mirra Andreeva beats Ons Jabeur, Aryna Sabalenka through



MELBOURNE (Agencies): Teenager Mirra Andreeva says knocking her idol Ons Jabeur out of the Australian Open was "probably" the best display of her fast-developing career.

The 16-year-old showed once again why is she is one of the sport's rising stars by demolishing an out-of-sorts Jabeur in a 6-0 6-2 second-round win.

"It was one of my dreams to play against her because I really like the way she plays," said the 47th-ranked Russian, who won in 54 minutes. "It means a lot to win this match."

Andreeva is the last remaining 16-year-old in the Melbourne draw after Brenda Fruhvirtova and Alina Korneeva were unable to cause shocks against their illustrious opponents.

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka won 6-3 6-2 against Czech Fruhvirtova, eventually overwhelming her teenage opponent with her power after a competitive start.

"For someone who is 16 years

old, Brenda is doing an incredible job and I wish I was this level at that age," said Sabalenka, who reached at least the semi-finals in each of the four majors last season.

"I didn't think about Mirra winning on this court earlier - I just didn't want to let this young lady win." Brazilian 10th seed Beatriz Haddad Maia saw off Korneeva - who is best friends with her fellow Russian Andreeva - in a 6-1 6-2 win.

Andreeva earns first top-10 win

Andreeva is leading the latest crop of prodigious youngsters defying expectation and, since arriving on the scene last year as a 15-year-old, has shown a fearlessness on the Grand Slam stage.

Shortly after reaching the Madrid Open last 16 in her second WTA tournament, she continued to make headlines by cruising into the third round at Roland Garros without dropping a set. There she lost to Coco Gauff but progressed even fur-

ther at Wimbledon by reaching the last 16. Because of her age, Andreeva is only allowed to play in a limited number of WTA tournaments as the governing body tries to nurture the development of teenage players.

On one of the biggest stages of all, and against a three-time Grand Slam finalist, she demonstrated the quality of her all-round game to record a first win over a top-10 opponent.

"Probably it was the best match [of my career]," said Andreeva, who faces France's Diane Parry, next. "The first set, I didn't expect that I would play this good. Second set was also not bad. For me, it was an amazing match. I'm super happy with the level that I showed today on the court."

Djokovic digs deep to reach Australian Open third round

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic survived a huge scare to reach the third round of the Australian Open on Wednesday, beating home favourite Alexei Popyrin to stay on track for a historic 25th Grand Slam title.

The world number one showed his trademark mental strength to face down his inspired opponent, prevailing 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 in more than three hours. It followed a gruelling first-round match on Sunday, when he was kept on court for more than four hours by teenager Dino Prizmic, admitting afterwards he was "a bit under the weather".

The Serbian, who let out a

huge roar after sealing victory over Popyrin, said the Australian was the better player for a set and a half but that momentum shifted in the third-set tie-break.

"I haven't been playing my best," he added. "I'm still trying to find form. But, particularly in the early rounds, you face players who have nothing to lose really. They come out on centre court trying to play their best match. Both my first and second-round opponents were really quality tennis players. I managed to find a way to win in four, that's what counts in the end. Hopefully I can find a way to build on this as the tournament progresses." The 10-time champion cruised through the first set on Rod Laver Arena. But his unforced error count ticked up in the second set and he was broken for the first time in the fourth game.

Popyrin appeared to have blown his chance to level when he produced a sloppy service game when serving for the set.

However, Djokovic, again looking out of sorts and blowing his nose during changeovers, failed to build on his break and the Australian produced an impressive backhand lob to level the match, urging the crowd to up the volume. Popyrin asked for a medical timeout when leading 3-2 in the third set and received treatment on his left calf, accompanied by a Mexican wave among the fans.

The pivotal point in the match came in the 10th game.

Three uncharacteristic unforced errors from Djokovic's racquet gave Popyrin three set points but he was unable to capi-



MELBOURNE: Djokovic plays a backhand in their round two singles match against Alexei Popyrin.

talise, also missing out on a fourth opportunity as the top seed levelled in a game lasting nearly 10 minutes. Djokovic, 36, won the tie-break to take a firm grip on the match as Popyrin received more treatment on his leg.

The Serbian got into an altercation with some fans early in the fourth set but re-focused, breaking to love in the sixth game, which proved decisive.

Djokovic, with 24 Slams under his belt, is already the most decorated player in the men's game -- two clear of the injured Rafael Nadal and four ahead of the retired Roger Federer.

He is gunning for an 11th Australian Open title to pull clear of Margaret Court on the all-time list of majors and will next meet Argentine Tomas Martin Etcheverry.



In brief

Women robbers' gang busted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two members women gang involved in conducting house robberies and recovered stolen Rs 2,50,000 from their possession here on Wednesday. According to a police spokesman, Airport police held a two-member gang involved in house robberies Naila and Ansar Bibi. They entered into houses on the pretext of some kind of household work. SP Potohar commended the police team adding that the accused will be challaned by the court and will be punished. He made it clear that the crackdown will be continued against the organized and dynamic gangs.

AIOU offers academic programs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University(AIOU) has announced admissions in first phase of the spring semester 2024 for Overseas Pakistani and international students. The programs offered in this phase include Secondary School Certificate (Matric) and Higher Secondary School Certificate (F.A and I.Com). International students can apply for admission in these programs until March 5, 2024. It is pertinent to mention here AIOU is the only university in the country that provides educational opportunities for overseas Pakistanis and international students from all over the world. During the last semester, more than 500 students enrolled in AIOU. The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has set a goal to enroll 10,000 international students in the next five years. He also expressed his pride in the fact that they provide educational opportunities to international students. All the programs for international students are offered under the online management system.

6374 FIRs lodged

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police registered 85 FIRs on Monday while a total 6374 FIRs have been lodged against underage drivers during a special campaign till now, said a police spokesman on Wednesday. He informed that police, on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani, were taking legal action against the underage drivers. The CPO had directed the City Traffic Police officers to take solid steps to control traffic rules violations and underage driving, he said. The parents were also advised to discourage driving by underage drivers. He said that fatal road accidents occur due to speeding and reckless driving of the drivers particularly, by the underage.

Traders demand to shift poultry market from city

RAWALPINDI (APP): President Traders Welfare Association Sharjeel Mir on Wednesday urged the district administration to shift the poultry market from Bagh Sardaran to outside the city limits. Talking to APP, he said the chicken market in the heart of the crowded vicinity was a potential threat for the outbreak of several diseases. He said chicken waste was the main source of causing viruses, which badly affect the health of children and adults. He suggested shifting the market to the surrounding Islamabad motorway interchange or the proposed Ring road hoping that the district administration would take the required steps.



ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador To Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong calling on Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, at the Parliament House.

Alternative Dispute Resolution essential to alleviate strain on judiciary: Mushaah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaah Hussein Mullick, has said that Alternative Disputes Resolution (ADR) is gaining considerable recognition in Pakistan due to its potential to alleviate the burden on the overburdened court system.

She was addressing a Workshop organized by Legal Aid and Justice Authority (LAJA), Ministry of Human Rights. The Workshop was aimed at capacity building and imparting training to ADR practitioners in ADR methods such as mediation, arbitration, and negotiation.

The workshop was addressed by a distinguished panel consisting of Senior Judge Federal Sharia Court Justice Syed Muhammad Anwar, DG National Police Bureau Ehsan Sadiq, DG LAJA Dr. Rahim Awan, DG HR Ministry of Human Rights Abdul Sattar, and Executive Director PCHR Choudhary Shafique. The workshop was attended by a large number of aspiring ADR practitioners.

In her address she said

that the Government, legal community, and various institutions had been taking initiatives to promote ADR and integrate it into the legal framework. She further said that ADR had many advantages to benefit from including: efficiency, cost effectiveness, Confidentiality, and Flexibility. Mushaah underscored the transformative potential of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in alleviating the strain on the judicial system. She emphasized that the core objective of ADR was to complement traditional courts and mitigate the backlog of cases. She pointed out that there were 750 cases per judge in Pakistan rendering the conventional court trial process resource intensive and time consuming.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaah Hussein Mullick said that one of the key functions of LAJA was to provide legal aid/assistance to poor and vulnerable groups, particularly women and children and enhance public awareness of legal aid and laws in Pakistan. She further said that ADR if institutional-

ized would prove to be a valuable tool in empowering women, girls and marginalized communities because of its quick dispensation of justice.

Mushaah acknowledged the efforts of the Legal Aid and Justice Authority formed under the LAJA Act 2020 to institutionalize the concept of ADR and establish reconciliatory committees across Pakistan. She further said that these efforts by LAJA would help to prepare a pool of Master Trainers on ADR in the country through capacity building and training sessions on modern ADR techniques and enable the ADR practitioners in dispute resolution mechanisms.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaah Hussein Mullick emphasized that training ADR practitioners should be our key priority. She further said that the workshop was an important avenue to explore the challenges, opportunities, and new developments in alternative dispute resolution in Pakistan.

Centralized Test for CS & IT graduates conducted in 27 Cities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Higher Education Commission (HEC), in collaboration with the Virtual University, successfully conducted the computer-based Centralized Test for Computer Science (CS) and Information Technology (IT) graduates in 27 cities of Pakistan.

A total of 9241 students from 190 universities participated in the test for which 61 test centers were established. The test was conducted in 948 sessions at specified venues, according to a news release.

According to the HEC, this is part of an academia-industry co-opt programme to promote and facilitate the placement of talented CS and IT students in the industry to acquire hands-on experience on the latest technologies for better job opportunities in the local and international market.

The stakeholders involved in the initiative include Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Ministry of IT and Telecom (MoITT), Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), Pakistan IT Industry Association (P@SHA), National Computing Education Accreditation Council (NCEAC) and Higher Education Commission.

CDA to build two electric bus depots

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has taken a delayed decision for construction of two electric bus depots in Islamabad.

The first batch of 30 out of 160 China-made buses arrived in Islamabad in the first week of the current month but the construction of two bus depots, which would take another six months, has been taken now. The second batch of buses would arrive by the end of next month. One of bus stations costing Rs 632.06 million would be constructed at Tramari Chowk, while the second station costing Rs 604.4 million would be constructed between sectors I-9 and H-9, a CDA official told here Wednesday.

He said the bus depots would be equipped with the necessary facilities like the charging stations, drivers' rest area, maintenance shed and washing area. The Authority has invited bids from the registered construction firms by January 24.

Minister announces price cut for ICU medicines

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for National Health, Dr. Nadeem Jan has announced an approval for a reduction in the prices of four medicines used for patients admitted to ICU, while a crackdown against counterfeit and unregistered medications is also underway.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Health on Wednesday, Dr. Nadeem Jan revealed that

the cabinet has granted approval for a reduction in the prices of four medicines primarily utilized for patients admitted to Intensive Care Units (ICUs). He highlighted that the cost of Colistimethate Sodium has decreased by 55% to 65%. The price of a 1 million-unit injection, which was previously 2987 rupees, has now been reduced to 1036 rupees.

Dr. Nadeem Jan further

stated that the price of a 2 million-unit injection has dropped from 4564 rupees to 1737 rupees, and a 3 million-unit injection, which was initially 5855 rupees, is now priced at 2591 rupees.

He emphasized that a crackdown against counterfeit and unregistered medications is in progress. Despite the challenging circumstances, he affirmed the government's unwavering commitment to providing relief to the public.

Efficient utilization of resources in health programmes urged

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Secretary Health Ifukhar Ali Shallwani has emphasized the need for an integrated approach to ensure the efficient utilization of resources in health programmes.

Addressing the meeting at the common management unit for a coordinated approach for managing AIDS, TB and Malaria grants, he urged for the implementation of evidence-based interventions. Shallwani affirmed the commitment of the government and its partners to the shared goal of creating healthier communities and preventing the spread of AIDS, TB, and Malaria.

He expressed optimism about the outcomes of the meeting, stating, "By working jointly and harnessing our collective strengths and with the wisdom of National Coordinator CMU, Dr Razia Fatima, we can make significant strides in combating

AIDS, TB, and Malaria."

The meeting was held to ensure a concerted effort to address the pressing health challenges posed by AIDS, Tuberculosis (TB), and Malaria.

The meeting aimed to foster collaboration and devise a comprehensive strategy to effectively manage the grants allocated for combating these infectious diseases.

Dr Razia Fatima, National Coordinator Common Management Unit (CMU) gave a detailed presentation on the Global Fund Grant Cycle 7 for the implementation period 2024-2026 and the challenges and way forward. This meeting marks a crucial step towards a more coordinated and effective response to these health challenges.

The Common Management Unit will continue to serve as a hub for ongoing collaboration, ensuring sustained efforts in the fight against these infectious diseases.

Ashrafi strongly condemns Iran's airspace violation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Prime Minister's Special Representative on Religious Harmony and Pakistanis in the Middle East and Muslim Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir

Mehmood Ashrafi, on Wednesday strongly condemned Iran's unprovoked airspace violation.

Ashrafi, in a video message, emphasized that though Iran was a neighbouring Muslim brother country but such violations were against Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity,

which was unacceptable.

Ashrafi, who is also Chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council, said Pakistan respected Iran's geographical boundaries and expected reciprocation from it.

He emphasized that adherence to international law was imperative, underscoring the importance of respecting each other's independence, security, and sovereignty.

He said terrorism was a global issue, stressing the need of a collaborative strategy to eliminate the

menace from the region.

Ashrafi called upon the Iranian government to tender an apology for its illegal act and give assurance that no such aggression would occur.

He said Pakistan had the right to give a fitting response, emphasizing that entire nation stood unitedly with its security forces.

No one should be in the elusion that Pakistan could be destabilized as it robust armed forces were fully capable to safeguard its sovereignty and geographical boundaries, he added.

SAPM Sohrab meets Qatari Labour Minister, discuss safe immigration

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistani and Human Resource Development, Jawad

Sohrab Malik, commenced his inaugural official visit to Qatar with a pivotal meeting with Dr Ali bin Samikh Al Marri, the Minister of Labour in Qatar.

During the meeting, SAPM, Jawad Sohrab Malik provided an overview of the Government of Pakistan's ongoing efforts and initiatives aimed at enhancing labour skills to align with and meet the demand and standards of the Qatari labour market and received a press release here on Wednesday. The discussion underscored the commit-

ment of both leaders to encourage as well as enhance the safe and legal migration of the Pakistani workforce to Qatar.

SAPM, Jawad Sohrab Malik and Qatar's Labor Minister, Dr. Ali bin Samikh Al Marri pledged to foster a collaborative environment that supports the secure and lawful movement of Pakistani workers to contribute to Qatar's dynamic labour market.

The leaders affirmed their commitment to ensuring the welfare and prosperity of the Pakistani workforce in Qatar. Both leaders also discussed the opening of more Qatar Visa Centers (QVCs) in Pakistan for ease of the Pakistani migrant workforce.

As part of the official

visit, SAPM Malik is scheduled to engage with Qatari conglomerates to explore and sign agreements aimed at providing and enhancing employment opportunities for the Pakistani workforce.

These agreements are expected to contribute significantly to the mutual economic growth and cooperation between Pakistan and Qatar. Muhemmed Aejaz, Pakistan's Ambassador in Qatar and Community Welfare Attachés (CWAs) also accompanied SAPM in the meeting.

The visit of the SAPM to Qatar intends to strengthen ties, enhance collaboration and create more opportunities for the Pakistani workforce in the State of Qatar.

Govt nears approval for National Space rules

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal government is on the verge of finalizing the National Space Rules, marking a significant stride in the execution of the National Space Policy.

After thorough consultations with vital stakeholders, including the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of IT and Telecom, PEMRA, SPARCO, and other key entities, these regulations are poised for official approval.

The National Space Rules are designed to lay the foundation for the establishment of the National Space Agency (NSA) under the National Space Policy.

The rules are set to define the composition and powers of the NSA, providing a comprehensive framework for its functioning. Sources reveal that upon the approval of the rules and the subsequent formation of the NSA, a streamlined registration process for satellites will be initiated.

Satellites registered with the NSA will then be eligible to obtain licenses from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, marking a significant milestone in the nation's space capabilities.

Under the visionary National Space Policy, the registration process for satellites has been notably simplified. Instead of navigating through multiple government agencies, satellite operators will now only need to approach the National Space Agency for registration.

After obtaining necessary clearances from relevant authorities, the NSA will grant registration to satellites, allowing operators to access services from these registered satellites. The move comes after the caretaker federal cabinet approved Pakistan's first-ever space policy on December 13, 2023. The policy, encapsulated in the National Space Program 2047, reflects the government's unwavering commitment to advancing space activities within the country.



ISLAMABAD: SAPM for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaah Hussein Mullick addressing a workshop on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) organized by LAJA, Ministry of Human Rights.

Mining explosion kills two

BAGHLAN (Agencies): Provincial authorities in Baghlan say that as a result of an explosion of unexploded ordnance in this province, two children have lost their lives, and seven others have been injured. Report indicates, on Wednesday citing Shirahmad Burhani, the security commander of this province that this incident occurred in the village of "Kunah Qal'eh" in the central Baghlan district. According to officials, the explosion occurred while the children were playing with unexploded ordnance.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

RAJJAB 06, 1445 — THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2023

Millions of Afghans go hungry

PULE ALAM (AFP/APP): Khurma had to borrow her neighbour's shoes to walk to Pul-e Alam city to collect a cash handout being given to the growing number of vulnerable Afghans who are struggling to survive the winter. The 45-year-old widow waited in her threadbare blue burqa to receive 3,200 Afghanis (\$45) from the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in the eastern Afghan city, where temperatures can drop well below freezing.

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

US aims to destabilize Afghanistan: Iranian Envoy



KABUL (Agencies): Hassan Kazemi-Qomi, Iran's special representative in Kabul, believes that despite the U.S.'s clear failure in Afghanistan, they continue to try to destabilize the country and support terrorism, especially ISIS. Qomi made these statements on Tuesday, January 16th, during an interview with the IRNA news agency in Islamabad.

According to the special representative and ambassador of Iran in Kabul, America's policies have not

only failed in Afghanistan after 20 years of occupation but have also failed in other countries like Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon.

He emphasized that "instability and insecurity in Afghanistan continue to be America's priority, and for various reasons, they pursue this policy because, in the view of Americans, Afghanistan can become a place of conflict and confrontation with their rivals and adversaries, such as China, Iran, and Russia,

and Afghanistan must continue to follow a confrontational path with these countries." According to Qomi, neighboring countries of Afghanistan will be the most affected by the developments and events in Afghanistan, and on that basis, "Afghanistan's neighbors have the most interaction with the people and government of this country." He added, "The more Afghanistan moves toward instability and insecurity, we will

witness a flood of Afghan refugees towards neighboring countries, including Iran. If Afghanistan's economy worsens and poverty intensifies, we will see an increase in drug cultivation and recruitment of forces for terrorist groups like ISIS." Qomi also said, "Fortunately, we have achieved a positive approach in negotiations with key regional players, including Pakistan. We emphasize regional cooperation in engaging with Kabul." Today, Iran launched missiles into Pakistan's Balochistan region, causing a rise in diplomatic tensions. In response, Pakistan has recalled its ambassador from Tehran. Earlier, Kazemi-Qomi had announced during a visit to Pakistan an agreement on the formation of regional contact groups for Afghanistan.

This comes at a time when Iran has maintained good relations with the Taliban in the past two years, despite tensions over water rights and the Helmand River.

Over 200 Afghan migrants deported from Pakistan

KABUL (Agencies): According to reports, over 200 Afghan migrants were forcibly deported as part of Pakistan's policy to expel them.

The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation on Wednesday, said on its social media platform X that the expulsion of 243 Afghan migrants by the interim government of Pakistan. The Ministry added that these migrants returned to the country on January 16th after their expulsion. According to the ministry's newsletter, these migrants reentered the country through the Spin Boldak border in Kandahar province and the Torkham border in Nangarhar province.

On the other hand, Pakistani media reported on Saturday, that the Torkham border has been closed to cargo trucks.

Meanwhile, Khan Jan Achakzai, the Information Minister of Balochistan, Pakistan, stated that the interim government of



Pakistan has implemented a "uniform visa regime" for all transit routes with Afghanistan recently.

Mr. Khan also mentioned that having a visa is now a requirement for drivers of Afghan cargo trucks on the Torkham route. Furthermore,

Taliban authorities have pointed out that such actions by Pakistan should not be repeated in the future, as 90% of Afghan drivers and patients do not possess passports.

According to reports, Taliban officials in this meeting have complained

that Pakistan has closed the Torkham border without prior notice, and if this practice continues, they may "permanently" close this border crossing. Recently, Pakistan has imposed further restrictions on migrants and cargo truck drivers at the country's border crossings.

UNICEF will establish thousands of educational classes in Afghanistan

KABUL (Agencies): The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has announced that it will soon establish approximately a thousand educational classes in Afghanistan.

This initiative, revealed on Wednesday, January 17th, aims to provide learning opportunities for around 140,000 children in Afghanistan. According to the organization, these educational classes will create a space for learning, inspiration, and building a brighter future. UNICEF has also stated that it plans to create 950 educational classes, funded by South Korea, in Afghanistan.

This announcement comes at a time when, following the takeover of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, girls beyond the sixth grade are not allowed to continue their education.

Taliban-imposed restrictions have resulted in over one million girls being denied access to schools and education in



A f g h a n i s t a n . Additionally, thousands of women and girls are being denied the opportunity to pursue higher education, while approximately 100,000 female school teachers have been deprived of their livelihoods. These limitations have had a severe impact on the educational oppor-

tunities and rights of Afghan women and girls.

Recently, the Ministry of Education of the Taliban also announced a change in the education curriculum from grades one to six, but as for reopening higher-grade schools for girls, no new decision has been made yet.

UNICEF is establishing

these educational classes for children in Afghanistan, while the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had previously declared that, three months after an earthquake devastated western Afghanistan, approximately 100,000 children in dire need of significant support.

Women's rights violations and humanitarian Crises require decisive actions

KABUL (Agencies): The Purple Saturdays Movement is urgently calling upon the United Nations, the international community, and human rights organizations to take immediate and decisive action against the grave rights violations taking place in Afghanistan.

The movement on Wednesday on its social media platform X, highlighted the alarming situation in Afghanistan where women are being unjustly arrested by the Taliban

simply for dress code violation or Hijabs.

The statement said, "In a shocking turn of events, women in Afghanistan are being subjected to a series of human rights abuses that have sparked international outrage. The current situation is dire, with women being arrested by the Taliban for wearing #hijabs, imprisoned, forced into marriages, and even raped in prisons."

Furthermore, women are being deprived of basic rights like education,

employment, and physical activity. These acts amount to grave crimes against humanity, and the situation is deteriorating rapidly.

The organization has issued a stark warning to the international community about the perilous situation of women in Afghanistan. Unless swift action is taken, a humanitarian disaster looms. Urgent pleas are being directed towards the United Nations, the global community, and human

rights organizations, urging them to intervene decisively and address this urgent crisis.

The urgent situation in Afghanistan requires immediate global solidarity and action to prevent further atrocities against women. Swift intervention and support are vital to protect their rights and lives and prevent a humanitarian crisis. We urge the United Nations, the international community, and human rights organizations to act swiftly.

Kunar's Hilgal Dara residents: No female doctor in our area

ASADABAD (Pajhwok): Some residents of Hilgal Dara of Ghaziabad district in eastern Kunar province say there is no female doctor in health centres of their area and sometimes pregnant women lose their lives during childbirth.

Haji Dawood, a tribal elder of the area, told Pajhwok Afghan News more than 20,000 families lived in their area and they were deprived of health facilities.

He said: "There is no women's healthcare center in our area, we live in a mountainous area, my wife had a baby in her womb a year ago, we tried to take her to the district health center, but she lost her life on the way." He added two health



centres were functioning in their area, but neither they had female doctors nor they provided 24 hours services.

Maulvi Najibullah, a religious scholar of Hilgal Dara area, said no infrastructure development work had been done in their area and they were deprived of many basic

facilities in addition to health services.

He said: "A female health worker has recently been appointed in a health centre in our area, but she cannot provide health services to the women of the whole area."

He asked the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

(IEA) to extend health services to 24 hours in their area and hire female workers. On the other hand, officials of the provincial Public Health Department said in addition to one well-equipped health centre, four others sub-health centres were functioning in the Ghaziabad district and most of them had female doctors.

Ayaz Safi, spokesman for the public health department, told Pajhwok: "We have two health centres in Hilgal Dara area which also have female staff and provide 24 hours services to the people." He added that mobile medical teams were also providing services in areas that were far from health centres.

Haqqani, Iodice discuss next month's meeting on Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting Interior Minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani, in a meeting with Rafaella Iodice, the EU Chargée d'Affaires for Afghanistan, talked about a range of topics including next month's meeting in Doha on Afghanistan.

The Interior Ministry in a statement quoted Haqqani as saying, "the presence of the Islamic Emirate representatives in the international organizations and meetings is key to resolving issues."

"Afghanistan needs to be a member of major international organisations in order to interact with the world more, and the demand should be resolved through close understanding," the ministry's spokesman, Abdul Mateen Qani said.

The spokesman quoted Haqqani as saying that "after several decades of instability and chaos, Afghanistan is rapidly moving towards economic and political stability."

Qani added that during the meeting, Rafaella Iodice talked about the provision of humanitarian assistance to Afghan people including assistance to Herat's earthquake affect-

ed people and the Afghan returnees. Political analysts said that the presence of the representative of the Islamic Emirate at international meetings is important.

"In order for these meetings to be effective, a representative of the Islamic Emirate must be present."

The representative of the Islamic Emirate will respond to any decisions made and criticisms raised," Gul Mohammad Mohammadi, a political analyst told TOLONews.

"It is not enough to have a representative from

Kabul in a meeting concerning foreign aid.

In Afghanistan major reforms are necessary from the government in order to be recognized," Tariq Farhadi, another political analyst told TOLONews.

The discussion between Haqqani and Iodice about the Doha meeting comes as last month a meeting was held in Qatar on women's education in Afghanistan.

The attendees of that meeting placed a strong emphasis on allowing females to receive an education.

UNICEF announces 950 community-based education classes

KABUL (TOLONews): UNICEF announced the establishment of 950 new community-based education classes in Afghanistan with the cooperation of South Korea.

UNICEF has said that these classes are aimed at helping the education process of children in Afghanistan, and by building these classes education will be provided for more than 140,000 children in Afghanistan.

UNICEF said: "We're establishing 950 new community-based education classes! That's 950 new spaces to learn. Inspire. Build a future. With support from the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these 950 community-based classes will provide an education for 140,000 children in Afghanistan."

Currently, some children in various provinces are getting educated outdoors and do not have access to standard classes.

Meanwhile, girl students who are currently away

from education, said that they are waiting for their schools to reopen.

Hadia, a 10th grade student, told TOLONews: "Currently, we are continuing our lessons at home, but we don't have the motivation that we had at school and in the class, because our fate is unknown."

"We hope that the gates of the university will be opened for girls so that we can continue our studies

and reach a place and succeed," said Mursal, another girl student.

At the same time, some women's rights activists, expressing their satisfaction with the establishment of these classes, asked the Islamic Emirate to provide all the available opportunities for the education of all girls. "The government of the Islamic Emirate should use these opportunities. Open the closed doors of

schools and universities so that they can provide education for women, which is needed today, and consider half of the society," said Tafsir Syahposh, a women's rights activist.

"Lack of education itself is a type of darkness and ignorance that spreads in a society. Therefore, the first human right is the right to education," said Frozan Daudzai, a women's rights activist.



Fake news - a biggest threat to democracy, says Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday said that the fake news had become the biggest threat to democracy and journalism.

Highlighting the issue of fake news, disinformation and misinformation on the social media platform 'X', the minister referred to the doctored notifications and statements of institutions being circulated on social media regarding elections.

Condemning a fake press release issued in the name of the Election Commission of Pakistan, he said such unethical moves were on the rise as the date of elections was nearing in. "Today, a fake directive was forged and circulated in the name of Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. Now the Chief Election Commissioner is being targeted. Today fake news is the biggest threat to democracy and journalism," the minister remarked.

Israel army reports killing top militant

JERUSALEM (AFP): The Israeli army said it killed a top Palestinian militant in an air strike in the occupied West Bank early Wednesday, averting a "terrorist attack" he was planning.

Ahmed Abdullah Abu Shalal had been responsible for a "number of terrorist attacks" over the past year, including one in annexed east Jerusalem, the army said. He was "eliminated in a precision air strike," it said in a statement that had a video link showing the strike on a vehicle.

The Palestinian health ministry in Ramallah said the body of an "unidentified martyr killed by the occupation (Israel) in a bombing of a vehicle" had been received by a hospital in Nablus. The army said Abu Shalal was killed following intelligence "of his cell's intentions of carrying out an imminent terrorist attack."

The army did not offer details, but said he was responsible for carrying out a shooting in the Shimon HaTzadik neighborhood of east Jerusalem in April last year in which two residents were wounded. Abu Shalal was also responsible for a bomb attack on Israeli troops in October in which one soldier was wounded. The army did not specify where the soldiers were targeted.

"Under Abdullah's leadership, the terrorist infrastructure in the Balata (refugee) camp in Nablus has received funding and guidance from Iranian sources," the army claimed. Since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza on October 7, the West Bank has experienced a level of violence not seen since the second Palestinian uprising or intifada between 2000 and 2005. Israeli army raids and attacks by settlers have killed around 350 people in the territory, according to an AFP tally based on sources from both sides.

Pathway to a Palestinian state is imperative: Blinken

DAVOS: The US' Secretary of State Antony Blinken said a "pathway to a Palestinian state" is imperative to achieving genuine regional integration and ensuring Israel's long-term security.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos on Wednesday, Blinken said Israel "will not get genuine integration, genuine security absent (a Palestinian state)." He noted the changing mindset of leaders in the Arab and Muslim world who, he said, were more open to integrating Israel into the region, but the question remains: "Is Israeli society prepared to engage on these questions? Is it prepared to have that mindset?"

He pointed to the "profound opportunity for regionalization in the Middle East," urging quick action toward integration in the face of the human tragedy faced by "Israelis and Palestinians alike." Blinken said that integration, with a Palestinian

state, would unify the region and isolate Iran and its proxies, which includes Yemen's Houthi militia who have been attacking and seizing commercial ships in the Red Sea.

However, he stressed that "a stronger reformed Palestinian Authority that can more effectively deliver for its people has to be part of the equation," and needs to operate with the help of Israel, rather than its opposition. "Even the most effective authority is going to have a lot of trouble if it's got the active opposition of any Israeli government," he said.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu leads a right-wing government that is opposed to Palestinian statehood, with Netanyahu himself recently saying his actions over the years prevented the formation of such a state. Blinken said it is up to the Israelis to decide whether the country can "seize the opportunity that we believe is there."

He noted that the

"Palestinians are looking hard at how they can come up with more effective governance that deliver what people want," noting that the Palestinian Authority was working to address fundamental issues including eliminating corruption and improving transparency. Asked whether Jewish lives matter more than Palestinian lives, Blinken answered: "No, period." He described the scenes in Gaza as "gut-wrenching" and noted that "the suffering we're seeing among innocent men, women and children breaks my heart." "The question is what is to be done," he said.

Israel began its latest war on Gaza — after the militant group Hamas launched a series of attacks on Oct. 7 — killing more than 24,000 Palestinians and injuring over 61,000, with many more buried under the rubble. The intense bombing has left the majority of Gaza in ruins and pushed the population to the verge of famine. — Arab News

Meeting discusses traffic issues of Abbottabad

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An important meeting to discuss traffic issues of divisional headquarter Abbottabad, was held here on Wednesday with the Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah in the chair.

Spokesperson to Chief Minister Brigadier (R) Syed Mujtaba Tirmizi and high ups of the transport department and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mobility Authority (KPUMA) attended the meeting.

The meeting was briefed about the proposed Urban Mobility Plan for Abbottabad and, it was told that under the Urban Transport Package-II, consultancy services are under process to develop Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPS) for three major cities of the province including Peshawar, Abbottabad and Mingora.

Sustainable Urban



Mobility Plans (SUMPS) will have concept designs of priority urban mobility projects for aforementioned cities. The participants were also informed about different options for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service in Abbottabad on the model of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project of Peshawar.

The chief minister on this occasion, has directed the KPUMA's authorities to prepare a master plan for traffic management in Abbottabad adding that the initial concept of the plan should be finalized keeping in view the ground realities, objective conditions and prevailing vehicular traffic problems in the city.

"A realistic and viable traffic plan should be pre-

pared in consultation with all the stakeholders", he said and directed to have a joint meeting of all the relevant departments and authorities to be presided over by commissioner Hazara Division, for this purpose.

He said that the traffic issue in the city is getting worse with each passing day and needs to be addressed once and for all. "We need to have a comprehensive plan keeping in view the future requirements of the city as well as requisites of urban mobility," the chief minister remarked and added that all the stakeholders should have to play their proactive role in this regard.



LANDI KOTAL: A view of closed Torkham border.

PM optimistic about stability

(Continued from Page 1)

As regards the issues of trade and business, he said the private sector should be encouraged to boost investment. Additionally, the private sector should take a lead to help the government in resolving the challenges of trade and business.

"The government does think in a different way and manner when it approaches towards challenges of trade and business, while the private entities and the business people have different opinions," he said adding the private entities should become the opinion-maker and influencing and contributing more towards it.

Pakistan needs to be more competitive, attractive to benefit from industrialisation: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that Pakistan needed to be more competitive and attractive to facilitate the process of industrialisation in the region.

The prime minister, addressing an event titled "20th Pakistan Breakfast at Davos 2024" held by Pathfinders Group on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, said a trading activity of around \$ 336 trillion trade was happening in China, and GCC countries were also entering into the manufacturing industry. He said China had acquired the transformation stage to relocate some of its industry and Pakistan might be one of those destina-

tions.

Similarly, the GCC countries were rich with capital but had geographical disadvantages with the options of either importing the manpower or taking their capital to countries with a conducive environment and inexpensive energy and labour. He told the gathering of intellectuals, writers and representatives of welfare organisations, that Pakistan was a unique place owing to its diversified culture, geography and topography with the eight highest peaks, deserts of Thar and Balochistan and the plains of Punjab.

"I am quite sanguine that people are feeling a deep sense of positivity," he said and mentioned the structural changes and revamping of the taxation system. He said "spend less on government and earn more" were the two lessons or takeaways of the incumbent government which was also facilitating the private sector to earn money and pay taxes. Referring to the ideal geographical position of the country, he said the whole of Central Asia was looking to have connectivity through Pakistan which had the highest population in the ECO region. The prime minister also gave a historical background of Pakistan's identity rooted in centuries-old civilizations, diversified culture and languages and said that it was not a story of any specific religion but a way broader than that with its own ambiance, colors, and cuisines.

CEO Coca-Cola Company calls

on PM: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Coca-Cola Company, James Quincey called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

During the meeting, the prime minister highlighted the steps taken by the government of Pakistan to facilitate the businesses and investment in the country. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. He also mentioned the establishment of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and the business-friendly measures taken under it to facilitate the investors.

PM, Belgian counterpart express satisfaction over growing trade, economic ties: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and Prime Minister of Belgium Alexander De Croo, while noting the completion of 75 years of establishment of diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Belgium, expressed great satisfaction at the growing trade and economic relations between the two countries.

The two leaders met on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF). PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. They reaffirmed their commitment to enhance high-level exchanges and bilateral cooperation in all areas of mutual interest, including, trade and investment, migration and mobility and higher education. Important regional and global developments were also discussed.



LAHORE: President Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari clapping with supporters during party's gathering.

Quetta bomb blast leaves eight injured

F.P. Report

QUETTA: As many as eight individuals including children got injured in a bomb blast that occurred near a hospital in Quetta on Wednesday. The police officials claimed that a total of three underage children, a policeman, and pedestrians were among the injured individuals in the Quetta bomb blast, while a bomb disposal squad is called after cordoning off the area.

The rescue officials are shifting the injured individuals to the civil hospital for immediate medical assistance. The Chief Minister of Balochistan strongly condemns the bomb blast in Quetta, which inflicted harm and injuries on innocent civilians, including children.

The Chief Minister assures that the culprits involved in this act will be brought to justice. Last week, two individuals sustained injuries in a bomb blast that occurred in Utman Khel, a subdivision located in Bajaur District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). According to the initial reports, a bomb blast was reported from Bajaur district leaving two individuals injured including a woman.

Meanwhile, the rescue officials shifted the injured to the nearby hospital where the doctors termed their condition, out of danger.

Caretaker Minister of Human Rights Khalil George on Wednesday condemned the blast in the provincial capital Quetta leaving several people including children injured. In a condemnation statement, the minister termed Quetta blast a shameful act of terrorism and said that the elements involved in such activities were the enemies of the country.

Khalil George said that the culprits involved in such activities would not be spared and would be brought to justice. He prayed for early recovery of the injured and providing best treatment facilities to them. It should be mentioned here that eight people including three children were injured when a bomb place in garbage dump near a hospital at Double Road of Quetta exploded with big bang.

Siraj flays PML-N, PPP

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq has said that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) are engaged in friendly wrestling to attain the attention of the masses, emphasizing that they are essentially two sides of the same coin.

While addressing election rally in Fort Abbas on Wednesday, he said that both former ruling parties are attempting to stage a drama of the 90s, creating an artificial rift solely to garner votes.

However, Sirajul Haq said that the people were well-informed and have grown weary of dynastic rule. Referring to the ruling parties as dynasties, he expressed the belief that the public would not accept their imposition on the country by institutions. Accusing the former ruling parties of maintaining the status quo, he claimed that they denied the people their basic rights.

PML-N has 'surprise' in store for rivals: Shehbaz

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has said that it would "surprise" everyone in the February 8 election, as the date for the much-awaited contest nears and electioneering intensifies almost across the country. "The people will decide the fate of Pakistan on February 8 [...], we will take the country forward under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif," PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif told reporters in Lahore on Wednesday.

The PML-N, as per political actors and analysts, has kept its electioneering low-key, however, the party's senior leadership has started holding corner meetings, giving interviews, and providing their narrative on the media. With the party supremo, Nawaz Sharif, back in Pakistan after near-

ly four years of exile, the PML-N believes it has got a much-needed boost — given the dismal performance during the 16-month tenure of the coalition government, headed by Shehbaz.

The party has also fielded 208 candidates for the 266 National Assembly general seats up for grabs. Meanwhile, overall for the five legislatures, the PML-N has issued 671 tickets out of the 859 seats. In the interaction with journalists, Shehbaz said he was confident of his party securing sufficient seats to form government in the centre as his elder brother Nawaz eyes becoming the prime minister for a record fourth time.

Senior PML-N leader Ishaq Dar, talking to media Shahzeb Khanzada a day earlier, also said the PML-N expects to win more than two-thirds of the seats up for grabs in the National

Assembly. "It does not mean that we would not want other parties, seeking to rescue the country from the ongoing turmoil, to join forces with us," Dar, a former finance minister, said, hoping that political parties would strengthen PML-N's position post February 78.

For Pakistan's economic recovery, Shehbaz said under his brother's leadership, the country saw exceptional growth. The former prime minister promised that the PML-N supremo would work "day and night" to ensure that Pakistan sees those days again.

"Nawaz Sharif is of the firm opinion that Pakistan has to be taken forward through consultation," the PML-N president said. He also blamed the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for derailing the economy and hurting Islamabad's ties with other nations.

PHC orders RO for allotment of new symbol to PTI's candidate

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Shakeel Ahmad ordered Returning Officer (RO) for allotment of another electoral symbol Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate Kamran Bangash from PK-82, on Wednesday.

Justice Ijaz Anwar while hearing the plea of PTI leader and former provincial minister Kamran Bangash, a candidate from provincial

constituency PK-82, on Wednesday remarked that the party had been deprived of its election symbol on one hand, and on the other the candidates have allotted such symbols which are difficult to distinguish.

The counsel Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah submitted that his client has been given violin as a symbol while his opponent has been allotted guitar. Both the symbols looked similar on the ballot paper. And the name of the opposing candidate is also Kamran, he

added. The lawyer argued that an application was submitted in time but the ECP (Election Commission of Pakistan) rejected it.

However, the counsel for the ECP claimed that both the symbols looked different. Justice Anwar questioned him whether ECP did it deliberately that you allotted such election symbols which look alike. The counsel submitted that ballot papers were being printed. Change in election symbol would cause delay in polling, he maintained.

Pakistan expels envoy

(Continued from Page 1)

Ackazai maintained that the Pakistani government and security agencies are fully prepared to establish peace and order in Balochistan. "We are capable of fully countering hostile forces everywhere."

Meanwhile, former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif said he was "shocked at the Iranian breach of Pakistani sovereignty". Taking to X, formerly Twitter, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz president wrote: "This missile attack is against spirit of our friendship and principles of good neighbourliness, especially as it undermines the historic relationship between our two countries."

The former premier insisted that conducting sincere dialogue and meaningful cooperation between Iran and Pakistan was the need of the hour. He also offered condolences to the families who lost their loved ones in the attack.

It should be noted that Iran offered no immediate official comment but its state-run Nour News agency said the attack destroyed the Pakistan headquarters of a terrorist group, which it has blacklisted after they carried out several attacks on Iranian soil in recent years.

The strike came after Iran launched missile attacks on "spy headquarters" and "terrorist" targets in Syria, and Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region. The Iranian strikes add to multiple crises across the Middle East, with Israel waging a war against Hamas in Gaza and pro-

Palestinian Houthi rebels in Yemen attacking commercial vessels in the Red Sea.

Earlier in the day, reacting to the Iranian strikes caretaker Balochistan Information Minister Jan Achakzai said that the move has damaged the relations between the two countries. Terming Iran's attack as "unacceptable" UK's Lord Tariq said that his prayers are with those who have lost loved ones.

Expressing shock at the Iranian missile attack, former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif termed the development "against the spirit of friendship and principles of good neighbourliness" which undermines the historic relations between the two countries. Weighing in on Iran's strikes, China has called upon Islamabad and Tehran to exercise "restraint" and avoid actions that would lead to an escalation of tension and work together to maintain peace and stability.

Former foreign secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry condemned Iranian air attacks in Balochistan, terming them a breach of the territorial integrity of Pakistan.

"Terrorism is a common threat to both countries, however, territorial integrity shouldn't be breached," the diplomat said, adding Iran shouldn't get involved in such unilateral actions and that it is not a good option for its bid to make things better.

Aizaz recommended both countries stay calm and deal with all issues amicably instead of worsening ties. The ex-foreign secretary said Islamabad

has given a "very tough" and "just" response to Tehran following the unprovoked and blatant breach of Pakistan's sovereignty.

"Islamabad has also had complaints with Tehran. Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav entered Pakistani territory from Iran. Former Taliban top leader Mullah Akhtar Mansoor had also used the Iranian border and the transborder movement of BLA militants," he continued. However, Islamabad had always shown patience on several events to settle things diplomatically instead of escalating matters with unilateral moves.

"Despite a tough response, the matters shouldn't be escalated as we are not going to war." He endorsed the foreign ministry's statement over the Iranian air strikes, saying: "There are several channels between both countries to discuss issues but Iran chose not to use them. However, both sides should not escalate matters."

The diplomat recommended: "Pakistan should seriously take up this matter diplomatically with Iran."

I would not suggest a tit-for-tat response from Pakistan's side." He stressed Pakistan constitute a National Security Council like other countries where civil-military leadership could make concrete decisions. He also suggested the Pakistani government critically review national security policy and diplomatic options to maintain ties with its regional neighbours.