

Fawad sent to jail
F.P. Report
RAWALPINDI: An Accountability Court on Thursday approved the judicial remand of the former federal minister, Fawad Chaudhry in a case related to financial fraud in Jhelum Development Projects, the police produced Fawad Chaudhry before Judge Muhammad Bashir, in which the court after approval of the judicial remand granted class B facilities to the accused.

@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

NSC meeting today
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar ul Haq Kakar summon a meeting of the National Security Committee today (Friday). Sources said that Pakistan-Iran tensions will be the focal point of discussion during the meeting. The NSC meeting will be attended by COAS General Asim Munir, CJCS Gen Sahir Shamshad Mirza, heads of the air force and the navy and federal ministers.

Vol. XXXIX No. 362 Regd. No. 241 RAJAB 07 1445 -- FRIDAY, JANUARY 19 2024 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES PRICE. 30



DAVOS: Caretaker Prime Minister witnessing the signing of inter-government framework agreements between ministries of Communication, Railways and Maritime Affairs of Pakistan and Dubai, represented by DP World.

PM, FM cut short visits; Pak's action against terrorists, not Iran

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch on Thursday said that Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani had cut short their foreign visits in light of the developments, hours after Pakistan carried out a strike targeting the terrorists' hideouts in Iran.

The spokesperson, in her weekly briefing, told the media that Pakistan's action was against the terrorist outfits, not Iran as it desired peaceful relations with the neighboring country and always sought to address the challenges through dialogue.

"Pakistan fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The sole objective of today's act was in pursuit of Pakistan's own security and national interest which is paramount and cannot be compromised," she reiterated her remarks already issued a short after Pakistan carried out a series of "highly coordinated" and "specifically targeted" precision military strikes in Siestan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran.

She said the prime minister who was currently in Davos to attend the World Economic Forum and the foreign minister attending the NAM Summit and Third South Summit in Uganda, have cut their visits short "in view of the ongoing developments."

Asked about any third-party mediation to de-escalate the situation, she said that she was not aware of any such development. She said Pakistan considered the Iranian people as friends and brothers and had no interest in escalating the situation and hoped that "our adversaries under-

stand this". Pakistan had always chosen the path of dialogue and would continue to engage with neighbours including Iran to ensure peace prevailed, she remarked.

She said that 'Marg Bar Sarmachar' was an Intelligence-based operation that killed a number of terrorists. The spokesperson told the media that over the last several years, Pakistan had consistently shared its serious concerns and shared multiple dossiers with concrete evidence about the safe havens and sanctuaries enjoyed by Pakistani-origin terrorists calling themselves Sarmachars on the ungoverned spaces inside Iran.

"However, because of lack of action on our serious concerns, these so-called Sarmachars continued to spill the blood of innocent Pakistanis with impunity. This morning's action was taken in light of credible intelligence of impending large-scale terrorist activities by these so-called Sarmachars," she remarked. She said the action was also a manifestation of Pakistan's unflinching resolve to protect and defend its national security against all threats besides being a testimony to the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces.

"Pakistan will continue to take all necessary steps to preserve the safety and security of its people which is sacrosanct, inviolable and sacred... Pakistan will never allow its sovereignty and territorial integrity to be challenged, under any pretext or circumstances." Spokesperson Baloch said as a responsible member of the international community, Pakistan upheld the principles and purposes of the UN Charter including territorial

integrity and sovereignty of member states.

"Absolutely not" was the spokesperson's response when asked whether the Iranian side had given prior intimation before violating Pakistan's airspace. She said Pakistan had remained engaged with Iran on multiple subjects like trade and energy citing the Mand-Pishin border market and Polan-Gabd transmission line, but it was "surprising what happened two days ago."

Coming to the Gaza situation, she said January 14, 2024 marked a painful milestone for the human conscience. "It was the 100th day of Israel's war on Palestine, which has taken over 24,000 lives in Gaza - a toll that is escalating with each passing day. The indiscriminate violence by Israel has to end. Humanity must prevail. The international community must play its part in saving the people of Palestine from the barbaric acts of the occupation authorities."

She also mentioned three massacres committed by the Indian forces in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in January during 1990s including Gaw Kadal, Handwara town and Kupwara town in which around 100 people were martyred. Paying rich tribute to the martyrs of the massacres and calling for action against the perpetrators, the spokesperson reiterated that Pakistan would continue to extend political, diplomatic and moral support to the Kashmiri brothers and sisters for the just and peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions.

China proposes mediation amid Pakistan-Iran tensions

BEIJING: China has expressed willingness to facilitate mediation between Pakistan and Iran in the aftermath of a series of attacks on militant targets by both governments across the respective borders, leading to loss of lives on both sides.

During a press conference in Beijing, China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said the Chinese side sincerely hopes that the two sides can exercise calm and restraint and avoid an escalation of tension. "We are also willing to play a constructive role in de-escalating the situation if both sides so wish," she added.

"China always stands that relations between countries should be handled in accordance with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and international law and that countries' sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity should be respected and safeguarded." — Agencies

PM witnesses signing of Pak-Dubai agreements

DAVOS (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday witnessed the signing of Inter-Governmental Framework Agreements between the Ministries of Communications, Railways and Maritime Affairs of Pakistan and the Government of Dubai, represented by DP World.

The signing ceremony was held after a meeting between Prime Minister Kakar and Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, Group Chairman and CEO of UAE-based DP World, a multinational logistics company on the sidelines of the 54th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The agreements cover potential opportunities in Pakistan for the development of a dedicated freight corridor, multi-modal logistics park and rail freight terminals on Pakistan's railway network, as well as, inter alia, the development of coastal economic zone and dredging works of navigation channels at Port Qasim. The prime minister expressed satisfaction at the growth of exchanges, interaction and cooperation between businesses in Pakistan and UAE and highlighted their transformative potential.

He welcomed DP World's interest in expanding its Pakistan business and assured the company of the Government's continued support. "Pakistan will continue to facilitate partner enterprises to realise its geo-economic vision as a hub of commerce and industry."

Saudi FM calls on PM: Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah Thursday called on Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on the sidelines of the 54th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The prime minister underlined the strategic importance of close brotherly relations between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, rooted in common cultural heritage and shared interests. The two sides also reviewed regional developments. Prime Minister Kakar noted that close brotherly relations between the two countries were a factor in regional stability.

He said Pakistan desires to deepen bilateral engagement through trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges. The prime minister appreciated the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and underlined the highest esteem the people of Pakistan held for the leadership and the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Operation Marg Bar Sarmachar Pakistan hits terrorist hideouts in Iran

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Army on Thursday shared operation details of strikes against militants in Iran saying hideouts used by terrorist organisations, namely Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), were successfully struck in an intelligence-based operation, code named — "Marg Bar Sarmachar".

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement that in the early hours of Thursday, Pakistan carried out effective strikes against hideouts inside Iran used by terrorists responsible for recent attacks in Pakistan. "The precision strikes were carried out using killer drones, rockets, loitering munitions and stand-off weapons. Maximum care was taken to avoid collateral damage," it added.

The military's media wing said the targeted hideouts were being used by notorious terrorists including Dosta alias Chairman, Bajjar alias Soghat, Sahil alias Shafaq, Asghar alias Basham and Wazir alias Wazi, amongst others. "Pakistan Armed Forces remain in a perpetual state of readiness to ensure safety of Pakistan citizens against acts of terrorism," the statement added.

The ISPR said the armed forces' resolve to ensure that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan are respected and safeguarded against any misadventure, remains unwavering. "We reaffirm our determination to defeat all enemies of Pakistan with the support of the people of Pakistan," it added. The military's media wing also stressed the need for dialogue and cooperation in resolving bilateral issues between the "two neighbouring brotherly countries".

The ISPR's statement comes hours after the Foreign Office confirmed that Pakistan targeted terrorist hideouts inside the Iranian border after Iran violated the country's sovereignty and launched a strike in Balochistan that left two children dead and injured three girls. "This morning Pakistan undertook a series of highly coordinated and specifically targeted precision military strikes against terrorist hideouts in Siestan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

The statement said a number of terrorists were killed during the intelligence-based operation — codenamed "Marg Bar Sarmachar". The development came after Tehran late Tuesday claimed it launched "missile and drone" targeting the Jaish al-Adl group's headquarters in Balochistan's "Green Mountain" area. Pakistan denounced the strike near the nations' shared border. "Last night's unprovoked and blatant breach of Pakistan's sovereignty by Iran is a violation of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations," FO Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in a statement on Wednesday.

The FO, in its statement post-strikes today,

Biden says clash shows Iran is not well-liked in region

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Joe Biden said on Thursday that the clashes between Iran and Pakistan this week show that Iran is not "well-liked" in the region.

The development comes after Pakistan launched strikes against hideouts inside Iran used by what it called "terrorists responsible for recent attacks in Pakistan", two days after Tehran said it struck the bases of Jaish al-Adl group within Pakistani territory. "As you can see Iran is not particularly well liked in the region and where that goes, we're working on now. I don't know where that goes," Biden said.

said over the last several years, in our engagements with Iran, Pakistan has consistently shared its serious concerns about the safe havens and sanctuaries enjoyed by Pakistani-origin terrorists calling themselves "Sarmachars" on the ungoverned spaces inside Iran. Pakistan also shared multiple dossiers with concrete evidence of the presence and activities of these terrorists, it added. However, because of a lack of action on our serious concerns, these so-called Sarmachars continued to spill the blood of innocent Pakistanis with impunity. "This morning's action was taken in light of credible intelligence of impending large scale terrorist activities by these so called Sarmachars," read the statement.

Islamabad said the action is a manifestation of Pakistan's unflinching resolve to protect and defend its national security against all threats. "The successful execution of this highly complex operation is also a testimony to the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces. Pakistan will continue to take all necessary steps to preserve the safety and security of its people which is sacrosanct, inviolable and sacred." "However, the communiqué said Pakistan fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran and the sole objective of today's act was in pursuit of Pakistan's own security and national interest which is paramount and cannot be compromised. "As a responsible member of the international community, Pakistan upholds the principles and purposes of the UN Charter including territorial integrity and sovereignty of member states. Guided by these principles, and in exercise of our legitimate rights within international law, Pakistan will never allow its sovereignty and territorial integrity to be challenged, under any pretext or circumstances." Terming Iran a brotherly country, the FO said the people of Pakistan have great respect and affection for the Iranian people.

Bilawal pledges to issue 'Kisan Card'

F.P. Report

NAUSHAHRO FEROZE: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that his party's election manifesto is, in fact, a "People's Economic Agreement," representing a 10-point agenda to eradicate inflation, unemployment, and poverty from the country.

According to the press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, the PPP chairman, while addressing a grand Jalsa at Tharu Shah Chowk bypass in Naushero Feroze, as part of his party's election campaign for the polls to be held on February 8, said that with the people's support, there would be "people's governments" in all four provinces, including the Center, after the elections. "I have been nominated by the party's Central Executive Committee (CEC), and I am the PPP's prime ministerial candidate. If you make me the prime minister, I will fight against the inflation, unemployment, and poverty," he vowed.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari mentioned that Naushahro Feroze was one of the districts severely affected by the floods in 2022. He further stated that during his visits to flood-affected areas, the primary demand from affected women was, "Help us build our houses." "I promised them [flood-affected women] that I would build houses for them. I then toured the entire world, bringing the UN Secretary General to Pakistan. I asked

him to witness the severe suffering of my people due to floods. Thanks to their support, we have now initiated the world's largest house-building project," he pointed out.

The PPP chairman noted that 50 percent of schools in Sindh were destroyed due to the floods, adding, "After my persistent efforts, the Center had agreed to fund the reconstruction of those schools. However, progress is slow due to the caretaker governments. If you (the people) support PPP on February 8, we will rebuild our schools. I have learned that there is no university in Naushahro Feroze; we will establish one."

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari emphasized that the current election is contested "between the Arrow and the Lion." "People should not waste their vote; they should give their vote to the Arrow to ensure PPP's victory with a landslide majority. I want PPP representatives in every part of the country. You have to secure 100 percent of the seats for PPP. We need to win the few seats that were left in the last election," he said.

Addressing the Jiyalas, he urged them to make people aware of the People's Economic Agreement, saying, "Go door-to-door with my manifesto in your hands."

The PPP chairman stated that if his party forms the government after winning the elections, they would provide 300 units of solar

power free of cost to poor families. Additionally, Benazir Kisan Card for farmers, Benazir Mazdoor Card for laborers, and Benazir Youth Cards for youth will be issued to provide financial support. "People's Youth Organization (PYO) and PSF should inform the youth of the country that PPP will issue youth cards when its government comes into power. We will provide financial assistance to the youth and take responsibility for their employment," he said.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari took oath from PPP candidates nominated for national assembly and Sindh assembly seats in Naushahro Feroze district—Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar, Syed Abrar Shah, Sarfraz Hussain Shah, Hassan Ali Shah, Zulfiqar Ali Behan, and Mumtaz Chandio to serve the people after getting elected.

He called on the people of Nowshera Feroze, saying, "Before seeking your votes for my candidates, I am taking oath that they should raise their hands in front of you and the whole country, promising to serve you after winning the election, fulfill your needs, and provide jobs not only to their families but to the people of Nowshera Feroze."

The PPP chairman appealed to the people to vote for Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, Ghulam Qadir Chandio, and Dr. Bahadur Daheri in the Benazirabad district, who were present on the stage.

PTI to kicks off election drive from 20th

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is set to kick-start its election campaign, on January 20 (Saturday), senior party leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said, as the general polls approach fast.

The embattled PTI's major rivals — the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) — have already commenced nationwide campaigns and distributed tickets for national and provincial constituencies. Founded by Imran Khan, the party rose to power in the centre in 2018 but was ousted in April 2022 via a no-confidence move. It has since been reeling from the back-to-back setbacks.

The party's founder was jailed in May last year, its electoral symbol — a major voter driving force was taken away this month, and the party — PTI-Nazriati — with which it sought an alliance also backtracked from its commitment. However, the party has vowed not to boycott the polls and run without its iconic electoral symbol. Since the 'bat' symbol has been taken away, all its candidates will be running with different signs.

"The PTI will begin its full-fledged election campaign on Saturday [...] workers should bear hardships till then and await victory on February 8.

IHC seeks reply from NAB on Imran's pleas

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday issued a notice to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and secretary interior on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's pleas challenging his jail trial in the references pertaining to Toshakhana gift and £190 million embezzlement.

Declaring the pleas admissible, the IHC has sought a reply from the NAB and secretary by January 22 (Monday). The high court directed to fix the case for hearing on Monday before the available bench.

IHC Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Arbab Tahir conducted the hearing of the petitions. The PTI founder's lawyer, Latif Khosa said the National Accountability Court (NAB) filed the Toshakhana case in the accountability court on November 20 and the prison trial notification was issued a month prior to the filing of the reference. "Hearing into the Toshakhana reference has been being held daily since December 23, 2023. The relevant court's judge has to begin the jail trial process as per the law and this court has issued an order regarding implementation of that process," he said.

Justice Miangul Hassan asked why he challenged the notification so late as it was issued in November and he

filed a plea against the notification in January. The PTI founder's lawyer replied they came to know about the reference after a summons was issued to his client.

Justice Miangul Miangul said they only had to ensure that the case's process was right. It did not matter for them if the trial was held in the court or jail, he said. Khosa said there was no suggestion from the concerned judge and he did not direct to hold prison trial for security reasons. The IHC judge said a short order in this regard was already available. It was a judicial order that should have been seen, he added.

Khosa asked if the federal government was positive that reference would be lodged, while it could have been dropped too. On this occasion, Imran Khan challenged the appointment of the accountability judge as well. Khosa said the judge was appointed on deputation and his retirement was closer. The judge was holding hearing on a daily basis to settle the trial, he said.

The lawyer said only the former prime minister's cases were being expedited, while there was no progress on the rest of the cases. Justice Miangul said Toshakhana was a safe of the government and the federal cabinet secretary was its keeper. The cabinet secretary had opened Toshakhana's door for all,

he said. He said the articles kept in Toshakhana were put on sale, from 20% to 50% off. An order would be passed regarding this issue, he said adding that the gifts were state properties and they should remain with it.

Pak won't compromise on national security: Alvi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said Pakistan would not compromise on its national security and territorial integrity and would take all necessary measures to defend its soil.

In a statement, he lauded the professionalism of the Armed Forces of Pakistan that targeted the terrorist hideouts in the Siestan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran, while avoiding civilian casualties. He stated that terrorism was a common challenge that required global efforts for its elimination. He said that Pakistan fully respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states and expected the same from other nations not to violate international law.

S Arabia envoy calls on Punjab governor

LAHORE (APP): Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) Nawaf Bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman and discussed matters of mutual interest, promotion of bilateral relations, and mutual cooperation during a meeting at the Governor's House here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor Punjab said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have long historical brotherly relations. He said that the ties between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are deep rooted due to common religion and culture.

He said that the Saudi government is taking very good steps regarding tourism. He said that the simplification of the visa policy by the Saudi government for foreign tourists is a good initiative. The Governor Punjab said that the Saudi government's new investment initiatives in Pakistan are encouraging. He said that it is good to see that more Saudi business delegations are visiting Pakistan. He said that there are favourable opportunities in Pakistan for Saudi investors.

The Governor further said that there should be maximum exchange of student delegations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. He said that Saudi companies are also investing in semiconductors, which are the basis of all technologies. He said that Pakistani universities are providing quality education in medical and various other disciplines.

He said that Pakistani doctors are known for professional competence all over the world. He said that Saudi students should come to study in Pakistani universities.

On this occasion, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman and the Saudi Ambassador also discussed the situation in Palestine. The Governor said that the destruction caused by the bombing of residential areas, refugee camps, hospitals, schools in the Palestinian Gaza Strip is painful, adding that plight of Palestinians especially women and children is heart wrenching.

Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki said Pakistan is like his second home, adding that he was greatly touched by the love and respect given by the Pakistanis. He said Saudi Arabia is giving scholarships to Pakistani students, adding that the student exchange program will be further expanded.

The Ambassador said quality of Pakistani products like the textiles is very good and need to be marketed better.

China donates 10,000 doses of FMD vaccines to Livestock Department

LAHORE (INP): The Government of China has donated 10,000 doses of the Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccine to the Livestock and Dairy Development Department, Punjab. A Chinese delegation, consisting of experts in animal vaccines and poultry, delivered the vaccines to Secretary Livestock Muhammad Masood Anwar.

The invitation for the visit to the province was extended by Secretary Livestock to the Chinese experts.

Mr. Anwar briefed the delegation about the potential of the Livestock sector in Punjab, adding that the purpose of the visit was to promote Chinese investment in the Livestock sector and vaccine production.

The Chinese delegation expressed its interest in contributing to the well-being of livestock in Punjab along with enhancing trade cooperation. "We want to protect Punjab's cattle from diseases along with trade cooperation," the delegation was quoted as saying in the statement.

The Chinese experts also briefed Pakistani officials on MFD vaccines manufactured by Shanghai Shenlian Biomedical Corporation. Shenlian Bio is a high-tech enterprise specializing in the research and development, production and sales of veterinary biological products.

The Chinese delegation also visited the Mouth and Foot Disease Research Center on Barki Road, Lahore. Secretary Livestock presented souvenirs to the delegation during their visit.

In September 2023, the Livestock Department declared Royal JW Buffalo Farm Sheikhupura as a FMD free compartment. The FMD-free compartment offers numerous significant advantages by securing export of livestock and animal products as well as serving as a vital safeguard for the local agricultural industry, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday.

Motorways closed as dense fog blankets parts of Punjab

LAHORE (INP): Dense fog again blanketed different cities of Punjab, including Lahore on night between Wednesday and Thursday, paralysing routine life and disrupting road traffic.

The thick fog has badly affected the flow of road traffic in several cities of Punjab. According to a Motorway spokesperson, the Motorway M2 from Lahore to Farooqabad, Motorway M3, Motorway M4 from Shershah to Faisalabad, and Motorway M11 from Lahore to Sialkot have been closed for all kind of traffic.

The Motorway police have appealed the drivers to use Grand Trunk (GT) Road for travelling. They have also urged the drivers to drive slowly and switch on fog lights. The Motorway police have also requested the people to stay home and avoid unnecessary travelling. Dense fog has also disrupted traffic at several places in the province at the National Highway due to low visibility.

Five female teachers injured in bus-van collision

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Five female teachers were injured when a passenger bus hit a staff van of a private school here on Thursday.

According to details, due to poor visibility caused by dense fog a passenger bus rammed into staff van of private school on Faisalabad Road near Khurrianwala.

Five female teachers including Mehak Munir, Samra Shaukat, Ahida Mansha, Nimra Shafiq and Sawaira Shaukat were injured in the accident.

The injured teachers were shifted to hospital and police after registering a case against bus driver started an investigation.

KDA takes action against land grabbers

KARACHI (APP): Karachi Development Authority (KDA) is taking vigorous action against encroachments on government lands across the metropolis.

According to the KDA Spokesperson on Thursday, Director General KDA Naveed Anwar has a clear stance that he will not tolerate the illegal occupation of government land under any circumstances.

In this context, the Anti-Encroachment Department took action against the land grabbers in Korangi Sector-27 with the help of manpower and heavy machinery.

Director of Estate and Enforcement. Arshad Abbas, Additional Director, Anti-Encroachment staff, local police, and administration participated in the operation.



LAHORE: Canadian High Commissioner (HC) to Pakistan Leslie Scanlon calls on Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi.

Canadian HC calls on Punjab CM Naqvi

LAHORE (INP): Canadian High Commissioner (HC) to Pakistan Leslie Scanlon on Thursday called on Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi and discussed matters of mutual interest, especially the proposed agreement between Canada and the government of Punjab on sending workforce from the province to the commonwealth country.

Views were also exchanged over the efforts being made for the protection of the environment, especially enhancing cooperation for controlling smog in the urban centers of Punjab.

Canadian HC, on the occasion, termed the experiment made by the provincial government of an artificial rain in Lahore a good omen. "You, Mr. Chief Minister has done remarkable work in various sectors," she said to the CM.

Scanlon expressed the hope that the chief minister's upcoming visit to Canada would further strengthen ties between the two countries.

"Similarly, an exchange of delegations between the two countries will also help further strengthen these relations," she said, and expressed the resolve to increase cooperation between her country and the Punjab government in various sectors.

Speaking on the occasion, CM Naqvi said that extremely friendly ties existed between both Pakistan and Canada.

He said for the first time in history, youth from Punjab would be sent to Canada for employment. "A delegation of the provincial government will visit Canada in the ongoing month to sign an agreement," he said, and expressed the optimism that the agreement would help youth of the province earn their livelihood through honourable means.

The chief minister told the visiting dignitary that he and his team had delivered in several sectors. "We are upgrading 114 hospitals of Punjab. Since most of them were in a pathetic state."

He went on to say that the provincial government ensured the completion of development projects in Punjab ahead of deadline. "The government is giving 26,000 electric bikes and electric rickshaws to the youth on interest-free and easy installments," he said, adding, "Ban has been imposed at the government level on the purchase of bikes that run on petrol."

The CM went on to say that for the first time, the government planned to install five anti-smog towers in Lahore. "The first tower will be installed in the beginning of February."

The chief minister told the Canadian HC that development schemes that had been awaiting completion for the last several years were completed at a brisk pace and without compromising on quality courtesy untiring efforts by the government.

Federal minister announces to organize awareness sessions on interfaith harmony in rural areas

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Thursday announced that the government under its endeavour to promote interfaith harmony will organize awareness sessions on the subject in rural areas especially in schools and colleges across the country.

He was addressing a seminar titled "Religious Minorities and Interfaith Social Tolerance in Pakistan" organized by Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony in collaboration with Iqra University Karachi.

The Federal Minister, speaking at the occasion, said that all human beings were family of Almighty Allah and he taught mankind through his last Prophet Muhammad SAW to be kind and polite in their dealings.

Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) teachings on tolerance, embedded in the conquest of Mecca and Treaty of Hudebia, should always be kept in mind while dealing with the people of different faiths, Aneeq Ahmed stated adding that the hearts of non-Muslim brothers could be won through kindness and politeness rather than misplaced arguments.

While expressing condemnation on incidents like Jaranwala, he said that if anyone receives information about any act of blasphemy one must verify and report it to higher authorities instead of taking the law into hands and resorting to violence.

The Minister commended the role of Ulama for raising voices against the intolerable acts in society and uttered that the message of interfaith harmony should be disseminated through knowledge and evidence.

Aneeq Ahmed said that the ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony was organizing a series of awareness events on interfaith harmony in cities, particularly in higher education institutions.

Naib Raees Dar ul Ufta, Jamia Islamia Karachi, Mufi Abubakar Mohiuddin, while sharing his thoughts said that subjects like social tolerance were crucial to be discussed among new generations. He stressed that no religion

New PEC Punjab takes charge

LAHORE (APP): Newly-posted Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Punjab Aijaz Anwar Chohan took charge of his office here on Thursday.

According to a spokesperson of PEC Punjab, Joint Provincial Election Commissioner Sain Bakhsh Channar welcomed the provincial election chief on his arrival at the PEC office. Aijaz Anwar Chohan also chaired an introductory meeting of the officers wherein the director elections gave a detailed briefing regarding the preparations for the general elections, to be held on February 8, 2024.

Addressing the meeting, the PEC Punjab urged the officers to perform their duties with hard work, honesty and integrity and establish a strong chain of communication with their field officers to ensure timely completion of all stages of the general elections.

He said that punctuality and dedication should be ensured in the office so that all the affairs were completed in a good manner.

He further said that the conduct of transparent elections in the province of Punjab would be ensured at all cost and any kind of negligence in this regard would not be tolerated.

All the PEC Punjab officers should perform this important national responsibility as an organized team, he added.

RE-TENDER NOTICE

Ref # NIDA/TDA/NT-02/Jan-2024

A non-profit and a non- governmental organization is implementing donor funded Project in Kohistan Lower Pakistan. The Organization invites sealed re-tenders from registered construction companies/contractors for construction of Suspension Pedestrian bridges

Lot No	PARTICULARS	LOCATION
01	Construction of Suspension Pedestrian Bridge	Jan Bela UC Ranolia Kohistan Lower
02	Construction of Suspension Pedestrian Bridge	Faqir Patti UC Dubair Pyeen Kohistan Lower

Terms & Conditions:

The tender pack can be collected through email address (procurement@nidapakistan.org) and also can be collected from the NIDA Head Office Township Besham Shangla

Sealed tenders should reach NIDA Head Office Township Besham Shangla on or before Feb 05, 2024 before 11:00AM

The tender will be opened on the same day i.e. February 05, 2024 at 2:00PM in the presence of supplier or their representatives, who wish to witness the tender opening.

Tender committee reserves the right to change the quantities or cancel/reject any or all offers without assigning any reason.

Only registered and license contractors with experience in bridge construction are eligible to apply/participate including PEC bridge code

The terms and conditions are mentioned in Tender Pack which will be applicable.

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

NATIONAL DATABASE & REGISTRATION AUTHORITY

Regional Head Office Peshawar (KP)

EOBI Building, Plot#31, Sector B-1, Phase-V Hayatabad Peshawar

Invitation for Open Auction

Auction of NADRA Used Unserviceable/Scrap Items

No. RHO/Pesh/Proc/Auction/2023-24

1. Open Auction of the following 20 x used/unserviceable items on the basis of "as and where it is" will be held at NADRA Store/Plot at Ring Road, Near Achinee Chowk, towards Wadan CNG, Peshawar. The detail of actionable items is as under:

Sr#	Item Name	Unit	Total Qty	Sr#	Item Name	Unit	Total Qty
1.	AC Out Door	No	29	11.	Pedestal Fan	No	21
2.	AC Indoor	No	31	12.	AC Window	No	2
3.	Acid Batteries	No	23	13.	Steel Almira	No	8
4.	Amplifier	No	10	14.	Safe Locker	No	5
5.	Electric Heater	No	3	15.	Officer Chair	No	55
6.	Gas Heater	No	5	16.	Computer Chair	No	305
7.	Air Cooler	No	27	17.	Wheel Chair	No	8
8.	Refrigerator	No	1	18.	Table + Wooden Scrap	No	60
9.	Electric Water Dispenser	No	8	19.	Visitor Stools/Chairs	No	110
10.	Electric Water Cooler	No	17	20.	Bracket Fan	No	21

2. Registration fee of Tender documents having terms & conditions @ Rs. 1000 (Non Refundable) along with CDR of Rs. 50,000 must be submitted to Procurement section on or before 6th February 2024 at 1100 HRS. Open auction activity will be held on 6th February 2024 at 1130 HRS at NADRA store/plot. Only registered and active tax payers bidders will be allowed to participate.

3. Items can be checked/inspected on working days during office hours from 18th January, 2024 to 5th February, 2024.

4. The successful bidder will be responsible to clear all expenses within 72 HRS after order from this RHO.

5. The contractor will be responsible to bear all expenses of labor, carriage, weightage of Auctionable items and all applicable taxes.

6. The above mentioned quantity may increase or decrease as per physical existence.

7. Tender is also available on PPRA Website: - WWW.PPRA.ORG.PK

8. Competent Authority reserves the right to accept/reject, any/all offers as per the clause 33 of PPRA Rules.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ADMINISTRATION)

NADRA REGIONAL HEAD OFFICE, PESHAWAR

EOBI BUILDING PHASE 5, HAYATABAD PESHAWAR

PHONE # 091-9217840-41

PID(I) 4325/23

سولہ ماہ وار گیس

Sul Northern Gas

10000

SHNGP Official

4hm³

3hm³

2hm³

0.9hm³

0.6hm³

0.3hm³

بل کو پروٹیکٹڈ بنانے کا راز جانیں!

NOV

DEC

JAN

FEB

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

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

گیس کا استعمال 0.9hm³ تک کیسے رکھا جاسکتا ہے

• گیس میٹر کا استعمال برقرار رکھیں

• روایتی گیز میٹر کی جگہ نوڈل میٹر لگائیں

• روایتی گیز میٹر کی جگہ نوڈل میٹر لگائیں

• روایتی گیز میٹر کی جگہ نوڈل میٹر لگائیں

PID(I) 2260-D

PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

TENDER NOTICE

1. Applications are invited for tenders in sealed cover by Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority duly supported with documentary evidence from contractors having valid registration with Pakistan Engineering Council in Category C-6 or above for the work mentioned below

Name of Work	Tender Fee	Earnest Money	Tender opening date & Time
REHABILITATION OF BOUNDARY WALL AND PROVISION OF BARBED WIRE FENCE DI KHAN AIRPORT	Rs. 3000/-	Rs. 350,000/-	06-02-2024 at 11:30 hours in under mentioned office

2. Bidding document, for above mentioned work on will be issued to those contractors / firms having valid PEC certificate in category C-6 or above with specialization code CE-10.

3. The bidding process shall be based as per PPRA Single Stage-Single Envelop bidding procedure.

4. The firm shall have valid registration with FBR having active NTN certificate. The firm shall also submit declaration as sole proprietor / partnership deed and copy of CNIC of owner (s) / proprietor.

5. Tender documents shall only be issued to authorized representative of the contractor / firm / company having valid and genuine proof of authorization of the firm / company which he represents against a written application on letterhead of firm.

6. Tender documents will not be issued to those firms / contractors whose past performance with PCAA at any airport / location is found unsatisfactory or currently under litigation / debarring / blacklisting process with PCAA.

7. Tenders will be received in the office of the DIVISIONAL ENGINEER SE (CIVIL) BKPAP PESHAWAR ON 06-02-2024 AT 11.00 A.M AND WILL BE OPENED ON THE SAME DAY AT 11.30 A.M.

8. Earnest money amounting to Rs. 350,000/- (Three Hundred Fifty Thousand) shall be deposited in the shape of Call Deposit / Bank Draft (prepared in favour of Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority).

9. Tenders can be purchased from the office of the undersigned on payment of prescribed tender Fee (Non-refundable) as mentioned against above work.

10. No tender document shall be issued by post or on the opening date of tenders.

11. The authority may reject all the tenders as per PPRA rule in vogue.

12. Tenders are also available at PPRA Website www.ppra.org.pk and CAA Website www.caapakistan.com.pk.

13. "WARNING" Pay orders / Bank Drafts or any other financial instruments to be submitted by Bidders and Contractors as Tender Cost, Earnest money / Bid Security and Bank Guarantees, if found fake or dishonoured by issuing bank / financial institution at any / post contract stage of the

PID(K)#2060/23 DIVISIONAL ENGINEER SE (CIVIL) BKPAP PESHAWAR www.caapakistan.com.pk



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chairing progress review meeting of Livestock Department.

Nadeem chairs meeting of reforms committees

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Local Government and Rural development Amir Nadeem Durrani has said that the caretaker government's mandate is limited but our effort is to give a better roadmap to the next elected government.

He said it is my desire to work for the betterment of the people adding that reforms in local government are the need of the hour. Appreciating the efforts of the Reforms Committee, he said the local government department should develop long and short-term plans.

He expressed these views while presiding over the joint meeting of the Reforms Committees formed to review the problems and challenges faced by Urban Area Development Authorities, TMAs, WSSCs and Peshawar Development Authority here on Thursday. The meeting was held in the conference room of the local government which was attended by the members of the reforms' committees.

At the meeting, the Provincial Caretaker Minister for Local Government was brief about establish-

ment of the reforms committees and was told that Urban Area Development Authorities, TMAs, WSSCs and Peshawar Development Authority are facing various issues. The Reforms Committees were formed on November 29, 2023 to find a long-term and short-term solution of issues and challenges.

TORs of reforms committees were to bring forward the problems, challenges and make suggestions for their solutions. Several meetings of the committees were held and a detailed review of the existing system and opinions of experts were taken. The heads of the committees gave a detailed briefing to the caretaker provincial minister on the recommendations of the committees that reforms in the existing system are the need of the hour.

There is an urgent need for reforms to financially stabilize Urban Area Development Authorities, TMAs, WSSCs and Peshawar Development Authority. Recommendations were given regarding Urban Area Development Authorities to create service structure, pension and service rules for employees. Lease period

should be extended. In the light of the decision of the fifth meeting of the Urban Area Development Authorities' Board, the MD office should be made fully functional. Thus, it has been recommended to create a business model for Urban Area Development Authorities.

In this way, water and sanitation services companies should be financially independent and elected mayors should be represented in the boards of the company. Permission should be taken from the finance department for the recruitment of employees so that there is no excessive recruitment. A comparative review of the employees and income of TMAs was presented in the meeting. In recommendations a committee was proposed to be formed to determine the number of employees of TMAs. Engineers should be recruited according to the quota.

On this occasion, the caretaker Provincial Minister for Local Government Amir Nadeem Durrani directed that the vacant posts of engineers should be sent to the KPSPC for recruitment, saying that the inclusion of engineers will increase the efficiency of the department.

Prioritization of special children at schools stressed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A seminar on prioritizing special children at educational institutions held at Peshawar to portray their deprivations and challenges in routine.

The seminar was arranged by Handicap International and argued the participants for assisting special children with disabilities to make productive citizens of the nation. The speakers stressed upon on special assistance to disable students.

The participants from education department including Executive Officer Sajjad Akhtar Iqbal Dr. Mian Arif, Dr. Mian Saeed, Syed Sakawat Shah, Principal Government Higher Secondary School Umar Payan Irshad Ahmad Qureshi and Zia-u-Rehman Kalachvi along with others were present on the occasion.

The speakers stressed that protection of special persons with disabilities is need of the hour due to multiple challenges in the society. They added that collective efforts would bring positive impact in the uplift of marginalized community which can hike national productivity.

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 337 connections; Rs 4.47 million fine imposed

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 15 connections on illegal use of gas while another 11 on use of compressor and 1 FIR Lodged against gas thief. The team also imposed fine of Rs 0.55 million against gas theft cases. In Rawalpindi the team disconnected 53 connections on illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 0.35 million have been booked against gas theft cases. In Multan 12 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas while another 29 on use of compressor and 1 FIR Lodged against gas thief. The team also imposed fine of Rs 0.02 million against gas theft cases.

In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 97 connections on account of direct use of gas and and 5 FIRs lodged against gas thieves.

NPO urged to conduct forensic audit of IPPs

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq urged National Productivity Organisation (NPO) to conduct a forensic audit of Independent Powers Producers (IPPs).

The SCCI chief demanded participation of chamber members and the business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in training programs should be ensured conducted under the NPO.

He also called for uninterrupted electricity and gas supply to industries and businesses in the province. The chamber president lauded the role of NPO for inclusive, innovation-led productivity growth under APO Vision 2025 Outreach Program.

Fuad Ishaq was addressing as chief guest at the launching ceremony of APO Vision 2025 organised in collaboration with National Productivity Organization at chamber house on Thursday. Besides, the SCCI senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ijaz Khan Afridi, executive members Haji Ghulam Hussain, Qurat Ul Ain, Ismail Safi, and Aurangzeb, Ihsanullah, Nisar Ahmad, Faiz Rasool, Intiaq Muhammad, NPO General Manager Wajih Abbasi, Head of Agro-Food, NPO Fahat Imtiaz, Regional Officer NPO Wasiullah Khan, members of business community, traders and industrialists were present in a large number on the occasion.

During the launching ceremony, NPO GM Wajih Abbasi in his comprehensive multi-media presenta-

tion informed the participants regarding Vision APO 2025, which is meant to achieve "inclusive, innovation-led productivity growth in Asia and the Pacific. Senior officials said NPO has planned to organise 60 events throughout the country in this year, and in this regard, today the organization started by arranging this launching ceremony at SCCI house.

The NPO officials assured in the light of SCCI president recommendations, the organization will take initiatives for conducting forensic audit of IPPs and to ensure KP business community participation in training programs and arranging more sensitization events to enhance national productivity. Fuad Ishaq addressing the participants said that the energy crisis is a major issue of the country.

He said the power crisis would be addressed by thorough review of IPPs. KP is currently deprived of its constitutional rights on gas and electricity, the SCCI chief said. He added KP is surplus in gas and electricity production despite that gas unavailable to industrial, commercial and domestic consumers in the province whereas gas tariff increased exorbitantly for KP and it also put into basket of RLNG, which is completely unjust, which couldn't be acceptable.

Fuad Ishaq asked the federal and provincial governments to take steps on an emergent basis and ensure electricity and gas supply to consumers in KP. On the occasion, the SCCI chief emphasized the need of adopting modern and innovative tools and methods to enhance productivi-



PESHAWAR: A traffic police official removing fancy number plate from a car during campaign.

Observers urged to follow ECP issued code of conduct

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Joint Provincial Election Commissioner, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Aziz Bahadar has urged the domestic observers to follow the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) during the process of the observation of electoral process in the country.

He was addressing an awareness session for election observers regarding Code of Conduct for the General Elections here on Thursday. Director (Elections), Asif Ali Yasin, Deputy Director (Media Coordination), Sohail Ahmad, Deputy Director (Monitoring & Training), Mohammad Imran, Assistant Director (Protocol), Qaiser Khan and representatives of Gender & Disability Electoral Working Group also attended the session.

Addressing the awareness session Aziz Bahadar highlighted the role of observers in conducting transparent elections. He said that registered organizations can apply for Accreditation Cards as per prevailing procedure.

On this occasion, the Director Elections Asif Ali Yasin gave a meticulous presentation on the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission and the related constitutional and legal framework and comprehensive and trusted steps for elections, including the election laws regarding the minority community and marginalized classes of the society. The participants took keen interest in the session and asked various relevant questions which were answered while several women representatives also shared their experience and presented suggestions.

UNHCR delegation calls no CS

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary was called on by a delegation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) under the leadership of Ms. Phillipa Candler on Thursday here.

Additional Chief Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs Department Muhammad Abid Majeed and Commissioner Peshawar Division Muhammad Zubair were also present on this occasion. The delegation was accompanied by Ms. Shoko Shimozawa, Director of DESS, UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva, Ms. Elizabeth Tan, Director of the Division of International Protection, UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva, Mr. Hy Shelow, Head of Bureau Protection Services, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, discussed in detail issues related to the repatriation of undocumented immigrants. A detailed discussion was also held on support, coordination and cooperation regarding the repatriation of undocumented foreigners residing illegally in the province.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary said that a clear and coherent policy has been adopted regarding the repatriation of undocumented foreigners staying in Pakistan. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is making this process easier by following the instructions given by the federal government in the best possible way. He further said that the entire process has been made transparent by the government and in this regard the government will continue to provide all possible support to the Refugees.

He further said that during the process of the repatriation of the undocumented foreigners, medical aid and food items are also arranged for them so that they do not face any kind of problem. He said Afghanistan is our brotherly neighbor country. We have good relations with Afghanistan and this is the reason that the voluntary returnees are satisfied with the arrangements made by the government and have no complaints.

Very cold weather likely in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Regional Meteorological Center Peshawar on Thursday predicted that very cold and dry weather is likely to occur in most districts of the province, however partly cloudy weather is expected during evening and night.

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 19/03, Chitral 17/-02, Timergara 19/00.

Reforms essential for promotion of business: Dr. Aamer

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Dr. Aamer Abdullah has said that bringing useful reforms in the governance system with the passage of time is essential for the promotion of business and investment activities.

Speaking as a chief guest at a consultation workshop held in a local hotel regarding possible reforms in the rules and regulations for the business and investment sector here on Thursday, the Caretaker Minister said that he wants to improve the rules and regulations while keeping the public interest and rights in mind.

The workshop was jointly organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (KP-BoIT) and the Federal Board of Investment (BoI) (Prime Minister's Office). Besides, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretary Industries Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, High ups of KPBoIT, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Oil and Gas Company Limited, Nasir Khan, officials of the Board of Investment (BoI), Muhammad Ali, Ali Waheed and Mahmood Tufail, focal persons from various provincial government departments also participated in the workshop.

He said that in bringing reforms, it is important to pay special attention to the principle of balance between the needs of the economy and the public interest, because the imbalance condition in this regard may lead to the neglect of the rights of the people.

The caretaker minister added that for promotion of business activities and investment, the world has gone a long way in providing a friendly environment for work and bringing rules and regulations. Therefore, he said that we should also have to take effective steps in this regard and try to reach global standards.

In the workshop, various ideas were presented to make the service delivery system friendly in connection to business and investment, while suggestions were given to include these ideas in the rules and regulations.

The provincial minister said public sector reforms and bringing positive changes in the service delivery system is necessary measure, which should have been taken earlier. He said that in such kind of reforms, the views of the stakeholders and their point of view should be taken into account, while maintaining a balanced between the interests of the people and the needs of the economy is also indispensable for the effectiveness and efficiency of these rules and regulations.

He said that holding such consultative workshop in collaboration with KP-BOIT and the BoI regarding regulatory reforms and capacity building is an exemplary effort. He said that the caretaker provincial government will provide all possible support in this regard and expressed the hope that the next elected government will also maintain this continuity.

In the workshop, the officials of KP Board of Investment and Trade informed the participants about the ease and facilities provided for doing business and investment in the province. Later, the organizers of the consultative workshop presented shields to the Caretaker Minister and Secretary Industries.

ANP demands transparent elections on time

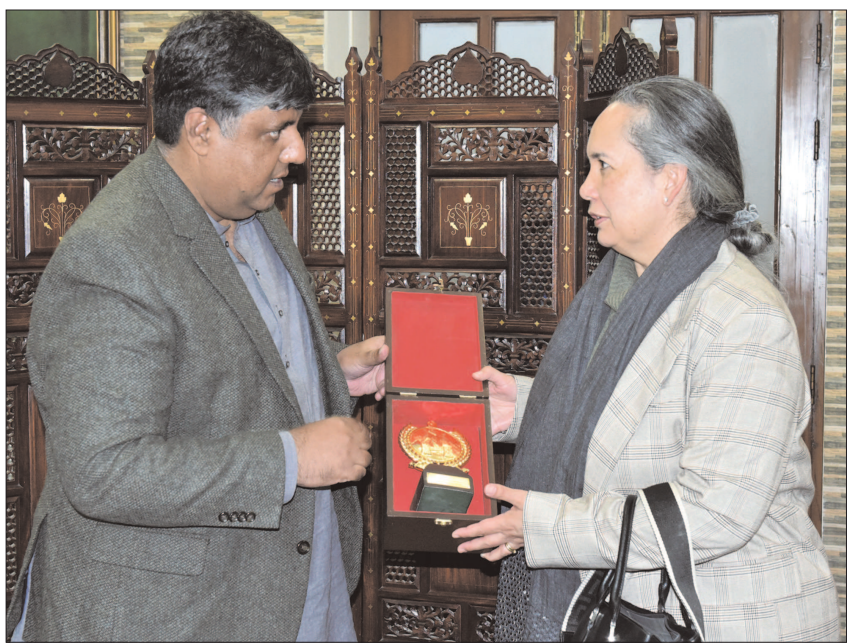
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Awami National Party senior vice president and former chief minister Ameer Haidar Khan Hoti has said his party wants timely and transparent elections in the country. He was addressing a party gathering at Khall as chief guest here on Thursday. The rally was also addressed by the ANP candidate for NA 6 Haji Bahadar Khan, NA 7 Zahid Khan, PK 14 Malik Muhammad Zeb, PK 16 Sajjad Yousafzai, Malik Muhammad Ayub Khan and others.

Mr Hoti said that any selected government imposed on the country would not be able to overcome the existing crisis. He alleged the previous government led by Imran Khan had destroyed the country socially, politically and economically. He said that during the PTI rule the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa owed 1 thousand billion rupees in nine years. He said the ANP leaders and workers were also treated with cruelty and excesses and carried funerals but they did not do shameful and anti-national acts like the May 9. "Those who throw people's turbans are locked up in Adiala Jail today", Aimal Khan.

Haider Khan said, adding that if the Awami National Party succeeded in election, it would support the party in the center that will give its full rights to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said that two former Chief Ministers were involved in Malam Jabba, Billion Tree Tsunami and BRT scams who would be taken into account if ANP formed government in this province. He said the ANP would achieve great success in the general elections and would form the government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the leadership of Asfandiar Wali Khan and Aimal Khan.



PESHAWAR: KP Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry presenting souvenir to UN Representative for Refugees Elizabeth Teen.

Setup of toothless LG system flayed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Due to unavailability of power, funds and other incentives large number of village and neighborhood chairmen and councilors have discouraged and inattentive in their legal responsibilities in tehsil office due to ignorance of the provincial government.

According to the tehsil chairman office out of 36 VCs and NCs heads in Landi Kotal only 10 to 12 are available to verify necessary legal documents for the residents.

It is to be mentioned here that following election of councilors under local bodies' structure, the VCs and NCs chairmen were officially authorized to verify essential documents of their council's residents including death and birth and marriage certificates, identity card, domicile certificate, farm-B, police and for job clearance certificates etc.

Suhail Ladla, a xerox machine runner in the tehsil premises and elected chairman from VC 09 said that he had contested the election with spirit to serve the people but ironically the ignoring attitude of government restricted them to work for the welfare of people. Subsequently with the least expectation for supply of funds and other incentives, he preferred to resume his old job (photo state machine runner) to keep his kitchen functional.

Deputy Chairmen tehsil Landi Kotal Wali Muhammad Shinwari said that it was irony of the time that with passage of two years that they had been elected, office was unavailable for them and they had a small room in the office of Tehsil Municipal Authority, Landi Kotal to serve their electorates. Majority councilors of the tehsil are ready to tender their resignations, he mentioned.

Because of a lack of privileges, a number of council's chairmen were permanently absent from their duties and preferred to engage themselves in personal jobs to earn three times meals for their families, he remarked. He went on that 12 female chairpersons in councils had also been elected in the local bodies' election to facilitate the women folk however due to short of their interests they had not even attended the tehsil council meeting.

For the last two besides representatives of LBs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, they protested for provision of power and funds but to in avail, he added and said with consultation they would formulate future strategy for them. Tasleema Bibi from VC-7 Shiekmal Khel said that she took part in the local bodies election in spirit to represent women folk in the development process and to encourage the tribal women, the most neglected portion of the society, to seek for their rights.

But ironically, no development schemes and funds especially for females had not been approved to materialize the promises she made during her election. She went on beside negligence from the government; she would contest the election to represent the poor ones in future to win their rights for them.



In brief

As many as 12 butchers held F.P. Report

KHAR: As many as 12 butchers were arrested as well as fined Rs40 thousand during a drive against illegal profiteers by violating official price list, on Thursday. Assistant Commissioner Khar Mohibullah raided Tangi Charming and Patak areas while checking edible items. He arrested 12 butchers by violating official price list. Moreover, ten shopkeepers were also fined for violating official prices list. AC argued that administration is committed for ensuring official prices under 'Khushal Pakhtunkhwa' initiative launched as per directive caretaker Chief Minister.

Nine members dacoit gang held F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Police arrested 9 alleged members of dacoit gang, including the ringleader, who committed road robbery and robbery at gunpoint in the Per-mahal police station and surrounding areas. The alleged dacoits identified as Ramzan, Kashif, Aniq, Wasim, Saddi Ahmed, Imran, Farmaan Elahi, Arshad Abbas and Osama. The alleged culprits revealed that they had committed robbery road robbery in the Per-mahal police station area and surrounding areas during interrogation. The police team raided the accused at different places and found 2 motorcycles, tube well motor shaft pulleys worth 8 lakhs, Cash 47 lakh and illegal arms 4 pistols 30 bore, 1 pump action with bullets have been recovered. Legal action has been taken against the accused.

Drive against encroachments F.P. Report

HANGU: An anti-encroachment drive was conducted in different areas of Daoba including Narayab, Tora Wara and Karboghra roads to ensure smooth flow of traffic in the premises. According to details, Assistant Commissioner Daoba Nawab Khan Bangash supervised anti-encroachment operation on the instruction of district commissioner. AC given instruction strictly to shopkeeper to keep cleanness and fiend those who violated laws of encroachment. Moreover, an illegal Auto-rickshaw stand was also removed from the jurisdiction of Daoba and warned encroachers for stern actions for any violation in future.

Three minor kids found dead

SAHIWAL (INP): A horrific incident was reported from Sahiwal where unidentified suspects slit the throats of three minor kids and poisoned their mother, police said on Thursday. According to the rescue sources, the woman was shifted to the hospital in critical condition due to the poisoning, while three children were found dead in Sahiwal. The rescue officials revealed that the deceased children were identified as seven-year-old Alisha, five-year-old Sadiya, and two-and-a-half-year-old Farhan.

Dacoit gang busted

SIALKOT (INP): The district police busted a dacoit gang and arrested its two members including the ring leader. SHO Muradpur Police Station Inspector Mian Abdul Razaq, along with a police team, traced the accused and arrested them. Rs. 200,000, five motorcycles, two pistols and several bullets were recovered from the accused, said the spokesman.



CHARSADDA: Chairman of Qaumi Watan Party, Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao talking to media persons.

US Consulate delegations Islamia University

Saqib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: A team of United States of America (USA) Consulate Lahore comprising of public diplomacy team visited the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The purpose of the visit was to promote linkages and partnership in educational affairs between the two institutions.

The visiting team, led by Head of Public Diplomacy Office Karl Rogers, discussed issues of cooperation and mutual interest related to scholarship and exchange programs between the Islamia University of Bahawalpur and related institutions of higher education in the United States.

The Office of Public Diplomacy will also create programs to support and fund Pakistani entrepreneurs through venture funds in the US and Pakistan. The delegation met Vice Chancellor Prof.



Dr. Naveed Akhtar, Dean Faculty of Management Sciences Prof. Dr. Jawad Iqbal and his team as well as alumni of the Fulbright program. Tahira Akhtar Hubert Humphrey Fellow was the focal person on this occasion.

Rogers and Prof. Dr. Naveed Akhtar discussed the various ways in which the university is providing opportunities for its students in entrepreneurship and higher education programs as well as the collaboration between the two institutions and the youth of Bahawalpur in their future

paths were also discussed to help them achieve their education and career goals.

Additionally, Mr. Rogers met with a group of students to discuss their ideas, problems, opportunities and shared their vision of possible future collaborations. The session was organized by the Executive Training Center the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. Rogers also inaugurated a Display Center which has been set up in the Faculty of Management Sciences to develop and implement business ideas of business students.

Achakzai warns to crush BLF, BLA terrorists F.P. Report

QUETTA: Caretaker Minister for Information Jan Achakzai said that the entire nation stood united by Pakistan Army, and terrorists belonging to Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) and Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) would be swiftly and decisively crushed.

Taking to X, formerly known as Twitter, he stated: "The people of Balochistan express their deep gratitude to Pakistan Military for its unwavering protection. The entire nation stands united with you, yesterday, today, and tomorrow." He said that the terrorists belonging to BLF and BLA would be swiftly and decisively crushed, whether they attempt to infiltrate our borders or operate from within.

After a recent airstrike in Balochistan area, Pakistan undertook a series of highly coordinated and specifically targeted precision military strikes against terrorist hideouts in Siestan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran Thursday morning. According to a statement by the foreign office, a number of terrorists were killed during the Intelligence-based operation - codenamed 'Marg Bar Sarmachar'.

Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch in her statement said that over the last several years, Pakistan in its engagements with Iran consistently shared serious concerns about the safe havens and sanctuaries enjoyed by Pakistani origin terrorists calling themselves Sarmachars on the ungoverned spaces inside Iran. She said Pakistan also shared multiple dossiers with concrete evidence of the presence and activities of these terrorists.

PTI shuffles candidates F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has once again revised its list of candidates for the National Assembly in Faisalabad. In NA 97, Saadullah Baloch replaces the earlier nominee, Zulfikar Vatto. Additionally, Rana Atif has been nominated for NA 101, replacing the previous candidate, Nadeem Aftab Sindhu.

This marks the third amendment to the list of candidates by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, a decision made during a four-hour night meeting conducted via video link. Barrister Gohar, Shoaib Shaheen, and nine core committee members participated in the session, addressing concerns raised by candidates.

More than a hundred constituencies nationwide witnessed changes in candidate nominations. Core committee members expressed reservations about the allocation of tickets, particularly in dozens of constituencies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. Some constituencies saw the withdrawal of tickets initially assigned to women, with replacements chosen. The updated candidate list of candidates have been uploaded on PTI website. Earlier, Barrister Gohar clarified that no allegiance was enforced on any member, leaving decisions to individual conscience.

Aseefa champions progressive change in campaign

F.P. Report

TANDO MUHAMMAD KHAN: Aseefa Bhutto Zardari has been vigorously campaigning across Sindh in preparation for the upcoming general elections. Her recent rally in Tando Mohammad Khan, accompanied by local candidates Syed Naveed Qamar, Syed Aijaz Hussain Shah Bukhari, and Khuram Karim Soomro, marks a significant highlight in her provincial tour, which so far has included stops in Tando Allahyar, Tando Jam, Nawabshah, Sanghar, and Malir.



During her impassioned speech in Tando Mohammad Khan, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari emphasized the PPP's commitment to addressing key issues such as inflation, unemployment, and poverty. She highlighted the party's dedication to understanding and alleviating the struggles of the poor, a cornerstone of the PPP's ethos under the leadership of the Bhutto family.

Further, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari underscored the party's vision as outlined in Bilawal Bhutto's 10-point

'Awami Muashi Muahida', focusing on economic growth, healthcare, education, and housing. She urged voters to recognize the PPP's genuine efforts in making tangible improvements in their lives, contrasting this with other political entities driven by power motives.

A significant point of pride for the PPP, as mentioned by Aseefa, is the reconstruction initiative for the 18,750 houses damaged in recent floods, with nearly 3,000 already underway. This effort reflects the

party's commitment to immediate and effective action in times of crisis, aligning with their broader goals of societal welfare and development.

Aseefa Bhutto Zardari's campaign trail is not just about electoral victory but a testament to the PPP's long-standing dedication to serving and uplifting the people of Pakistan. As the general elections approach, the party continues to reinforce its message of hope, resilience, and progress for a more prosperous future.

PML-N candidate withdraw in favour of Salim Saifullah

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Former Federal Minister and Marwat Qaumi Ittehad candidate for NA-41 Salim Saifullah Khan got an edge over rival contenders as one of the strong candidates and former Provincial Minister Anwar Kamal's son Mansoor Kamal withdrew in his favour on a national assembly seat. Mansoor Kamal was also vying for the national assembly seat on PML (N) ticket and his withdrawal from the poll race will strengthen Saifullah's position.

He made an announcement of his withdrawal from the election arena in the presence of Salim Saifullah Khan at a public meeting held at his residence in Lakki Marwat city on Thursday. Other attendees included his elder brother Nasir Kamal Khan, former district naib nazim Arifullah Khan Advocate, Lakki tehsil council chairman Shafqatullah Khan, MQI candidate for PK-

105(Lakki Marwat-I) and elders from different areas of the district.

On the occasion, Nasir Kamal declared the JUI-F candidate for NA-41 Maulana Asjad Mehmood an imported one and said that local residents would repent if they voted him to power. Maulana Asjad will not take care of you as did by his party's representatives in the past if he won elections", he told the people, saying, "Our wrong decisions on polling day are the main reasons behind backwardness of the district and deprivations of local residents. He said that Salim Saifullah Khan's victory would pave the way for bringing sustainable development to the entire district.

Speaking at the public meeting, Salim Saifullah said that area people were confronted with numerous problems including lawlessness, electricity and gas outages, shortage of drinking water, poor road infrastructure and economic

hardships and all sufferings were because of wrong decisions in the past.

"Our area and its people will fall into the ravine of disaster if they repeat the mistake and elect imported candidates on Feb 8", he maintained. He told the gathering that JUI-F chief Maulana Fazalur Rehman and former Chief Minister Akram Durrani were not interested in uplifting Lakki Marwat district as they always focused on the development of their home districts including DI Khan and Bannu.

"One of the objectives of the formation of Marwat Qaumi Ittehad was that we cannot authorise politicians from Bannu and DI Khan to decide our fate", he revealed. He said that though the district was rich in gas, oil and other natural resources the JUI-F leadership always tried to deprive local residents of its benefits. He promised that he would use those resources for the betterment of people if elected to the national assembly.



QUETTA: JUI-S candidate for NA-263, Mufti Abdul Wahid Kakar addressing a press conference.

Minister inaugurates National Citrus Festival

F.P. Report

SARGODHA: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture (NH&C) Jamal Shah, along with Secretary NH&C Humaira Ahmed, Commissioner Sargodha Division Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti, inaugurated the two-day National Citrus Festival, here at Sargodha Arts Council on Thursday.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Regional Police Officer Shariq Kamal Siddiqui, Deputy Commissioner Capt (retd) Shoaib Ali, Director General Pakistan National Council of the

Arts (PNCA) Ayub Jamali, Executive Director Lok Virsa Uzair Khan, Chairman Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) Dr Najeeba Arif and diplomats.

Addressing the participants of the event, Jamal Shah informed that the National Heritage and Culture Division, in collaboration with the Government of Punjab, was organising the National Citrus Festival on 18th and 19th of January. He said Sargodha served as the perfect backdrop for a grand celebration of the nation's diverse citrus heritage.

The festival would be

crafted not only to showcase the economic and agricultural significance of citrus but also to promote social cohesion and a strong sense of national identity, he added. Jamal Shah said the festival aimed to attract visitors from across Pakistan, promoting national unity through shared cultural experiences. He said that the festival provided a national platform for businesses, farmers, and artisans to showcase and sell citrus-related products, fostering economic growth and national resilience, thereby contributing to a more socially cohesive society.

IGFC Major General Noor Wali stresses empowerment of youth

F.P. Report

KHAR: Inspector General (IG) Frontier Corps North Major General Noor Wali Khan hold consultation session with teachers and students from Bajaur district, representing diverse educational institutions, on Thursday.

IGFC shared insights into Frontier Corps North's responsibilities, emphasizing their commitment to fostering peace and development in the area while addressing the students. He highlighted the significance of the "Illum Tolo Da Para" campaign initiated

by the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps North, stressing that education is a fundamental necessity.

He reassured the students that initiatives promoting education in the tribal districts of KPK would persist, ensuring that no one is deprived of education. Major General Noor Wali Khan encouraged students to pursue education aligned with the demands of the modern era, contributing to the nation's progress. He emphasized the positive use of technology and urged students to cultivate a positive mindset while

raising awareness about its importance. He against the indiscriminate sharing of information on social media, emphasizing the importance of verification.

The session also provided an opportunity for students to pose questions to IGFC North on various topics. Students expressed gratitude for the enlightening meeting, acknowledging its role in creating awareness about the contributions of security forces and instilling a sense of responsibility among the youth for the security and development of the country.



Protests erupt in Tunisian town as search continues for 37 missing migrants

TUNIS: A boat said to be carrying some 37 migrants and asylum seekers has gone missing off the coast of Sfax in Tunisia. Relatives described receiving final phone calls at around 2:30pm on January 11, as the boat was setting out to sea. By around 10pm the same night, all contact with the boat and its passengers had been lost.

Other than three or four people from elsewhere in Tunisia, all of the boat's passengers are reported to be from the small village of El Hencha in the Sfax Governorate. They range in age from about 13 to 35 years old. Frustrated by the lack of news since the boat's disappearance, the families of the missing migrants erected road-blocks and burned tyres around the village yesterday, only withdrawing when the government authorities assured the public that search efforts would continue.

Mohammed Jlaiel's 25-year-old brother Ali is among the missing. "We haven't heard anything about him. Nothing! It's torturous," Mohammed told Al Jazeera by phone.

"We're desperate for a piece of news on them," he continued. "They were all our neighbours and friends. The whole [of] Hencha is in pain. My mom is in a terrible state." The Tunisian National Guard released a statement saying "all field units", including maritime vessels and helicopters, have been mobilised to find the 37 passengers Maltese and Italian units were also reported to have been involved in the search.

The Italian news agency Agenzia Nova indicated that the ongoing search efforts were focused on the coastline between Sfax and the coastal town of Mahdia, some 80 miles (129km) north. Nevertheless, within Tunisia, politicians and the family members of the missing passengers have voiced disquiet about how long it is taking to receive concrete news. "Imagine not knowing anything about a brother for six days. They sent planes, boats, all sorts of things to look for them, but there's no trace of them whatsoever," Jlaiel said. "Tunisians, Italians, Libyans ... Everyone is searching, and yet they can't find anything. It's so strange." Majdi Karbai, a member of parliament responsible for Tunisians over-



seas, told Al Jazeera that the missing migrants and asylum seekers were "the latest victims of Europe's migration policies".

He criticised the European Union's efforts to control irregular migration along its southern border as endangering lives. Karbai added that he was in contact with family members in El Hencha. The continued absence of information about the lost boat was troubling to residents there, he explained. He worried that the situation could trigger unrest, as happened after another vessel sank in 2022.

The southern Tunisian town of Zarzis lost 18 inhabitants in that shipwreck, leading to protests denouncing the speed of the rescue effort and the economic conditions that prompted the fatal voyage. Tunisian President Kais Saied eventually intervened to help quell ill feelings. "This is bad," Karbai said of the current situation in El Hencha. "This could be very bad, like Zarzis."

Poverty and the absence of employment prospects within Tunisia often drive locals to depart for new lives in Europe. Other migrants, however, arrive on Tunisia's coasts from elsewhere across the globe, particularly from impoverished and conflict-stricken areas of sub-Saharan Africa. Both Tunisia and neighbouring Libya are key departure points for those looking to travel irregularly by boat to Europe. However, despite its popularity, the migration route is also one

of the world's deadliest.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2,498 migrants and asylum seekers are known to have drowned while crossing the central Mediterranean Sea in 2023. The true figure is likely far higher. In the first 11 months of 2023, Tunisia's National Guard intercepted almost 70,000 irregular migrants and asylum seekers. Of those, 77.5 percent had travelled to Tunisia from across Africa. The remainder came from Tunisia itself. Ali Jlaiel from El Hencha was as typical a passenger as any. His brother Mohammed described the missing 25-year-old as someone who struggled to settle down after a series of low-wage jobs, none lasting any great length of time.

"He felt cornered," Mohammed Jlaiel said. "He had no hope of a good future." Ali's last job was as an overnight security guard at the Mall of Sfax. But even with a steady wage, his budget barely covered his expenses, Mohammed explained. "He got 600 dinars [\$193] as a salary [a month]. Ten dinars [\$3] would be spent on daily transportation from Hencha to Sfax. Add to that the cost of his cigarettes and coffee. Nothing would be left. It's depressing." "There's nothing in Hencha. And he's not a special case. The boat was full of our neighbours. Even kids as young as 13 and 14," he said. "They all didn't find any chance here." — Aljazeera

Rishi sees off Conservative rebels as MPs back Rwanda bill

LONDON (BBC): Rishi Sunak has succeeded in getting his key Rwanda bill through the House of Commons after a Tory rebellion failed to materialise. The bill, which aims to stop legal challenges against ministers' plans to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, was approved by 320 votes to 276 votes. Dozens of Tories thought the bill was flawed and had threatened to rebel but in the end, only 11 voted against it.

The bill now goes to the House of Lords where it will face stiff opposition. Mr Sunak argues that deporting some asylum seekers to Rwanda will be a deterrent to migrants seeking to get to the UK by crossing the Channel in small boats, but Labour has labelled the plan an expensive "gimmick". Over the past two days MPs on the right of the Conservative Party have tried to change the bill, arguing that, without amendments, the government's Rwanda plan could be blocked by the rebels. Former immigration minister Robert Jenrick tabled an amendment which would permit the UK government to ignore parts of human rights law in relation to sending people to Rwanda. Mr Jenrick also proposed an amendment which would ensure ministers automatically reject last-minute interim orders from the European Court of Human Rights.

Such an order was responsible for blocking a flight to Rwanda back in June 2022. The amendment was not approved by MPs but received the backing of 61 Conservatives - the

biggest rebellion of Mr Sunak's premiership. Some MPs had suggested they would be willing to abstain or even vote against the entire bill if it remained unchanged. The bill could have fallen if about 30 Conservatives had voted against it - an outcome that would have severely damaged the prime minister's authority, potentially fatally.

However, in the event, just 11 MPs - including Mr Jenrick and former Home Secretary Suella Braverman - voted against it. Other Tory MPs on the list include Miriam Cates, Sir Simon Clarke, Mark Francois and Danny Kruger. Eighteen Conservative MPs did not record a vote, however some of those may have simply been unable to attend the vote rather than deliberately abstaining. Two things matter at Westminster - noise and numbers. We have had bucketloads of both these last few days. But numbers, in the short term at least, always matter more - and the government had them, the rebels did not. The story of this week here is this: around 60 Conservative MPs have major reservations with the government's Rwanda plan, which boil down to a central concern - they fear it probably won't work. But the vast majority of those 60, in the end, thought sticking with a plan that might work was better than junking it - and, in their view, guaranteeing it won't. Among the 11 rebels who did vote to junk it - and said they had their own plan that would work -

three recent former cabinet ministers: Suella Braverman, Robert Jenrick and Sir Simon Clarke. Suella Braverman's verdict was blunt. "I could not vote for yet another law destined to fail. The British people deserve honesty and so I voted against," she said. The Rwanda plan lives on - and that is good news for Rishi Sunak. But the real prize for him is demonstrably proving the policy is delivering. And we are some distance from that.

Conservative Danny Kruger, who voted against the bill, said some of his colleagues had opted to support the legislation despite their concerns in order to avoid "political disruption". Sir Simon Clarke, who also opposed the bill said: "All Conservatives want the Rwanda policy to succeed... the profound misgivings some of us hold about the bill are on record, but history will now relate who was right." Labour opposed the bill, with shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper labelling the policy a "costly con" that had so far failed to send any asylum seekers to Rwanda, and shadow immigration minister Stephen Kinnock branding it "unaffordable, unworkable, [and] unlawful". Home Secretary James Cleverly defended the plan arguing that it sent "an unambiguously clear message that if you enter the United Kingdom illegally you cannot stay. 'This bill has been meticulously drafted to end the merry-go-round of legal challenges," he added.

Sierra Leone court allows ex-President to go abroad

FREE TOWN: A Sierra Leone court has allowed former President Ernest Bai Koroma, who is charged with treason, to travel abroad on medical grounds. Koroma, 70, was charged early this month with four offences for his alleged role in a failed military attempt to topple the West African country's government in November.

The High Court ruled in favour of Koroma, whose lawyers had asked it to allow the former leader a trip abroad for medical reasons. The ex-president, who has been under house arrest, will be allowed to travel to Nigeria for no more than three months, the magistrate said before adjourning the case to March 6. "The High Court approved the order, and that was transmitted to the Magistrate's Court where [Koroma] has been appearing since the day investigations started into his case," Al Jazeera's Ahmed Idris said, reporting from the capital, Freetown.

Chernor Bah, Sierra Leone's minister of information, told Al Jazeera the state is "happy to abide by the ruling of the court because we believe in the rule of law", adding that Koroma is leaving for medical attention but his case remains open. "At this stage, the case is still alive. It is adjourned," he said, adding that the court's instructions to the lawyers included continuing to send updates on Koroma's health to the state and the judiciary for the duration of his absence. Nigeria had previously offered to allow Koroma to enter on a temporary basis, which he accepted, according to West Africa's main regional bloc. "We know the Economic Community of West African States has been trying hard to convince the Sierra Leone government to think about releasing Mr Koroma to leave the country - probably into exile - but again, the court said he is going on medical grounds to be checked," Idris said. On November 26, gunmen launched a series of attacks in Sierra Leone, breaking into a key armoury, military barracks and prisons, freeing about 2,200 inmates. More than 20 people were killed in the violence.

The government said later that it was a foiled coup led mostly by Koroma's bodyguards. They summoned the ex-president for questioning at the start of December and charged him with treason on January 3. Koroma condemned the attacks in a statement shortly after they happened and has denied any involvement. His lawyers have called the charges "trumped up" and part of a "political vendetta". There are concerns Koroma's indictment could stoke tensions that arose from a contentious election in June in which President Julius Maada Bio was re-elected for a second term. The main opposition candidate rejected the results, and international partners questioned the vote.

Two months after Bio was re-elected, police said they arrested several people, including senior military officers planning to use protests "to undermine peace". Koroma served as Sierra Leone's president for 11 years until 2018. Although officially retired from politics, he remains an influential figure within his political party. — Aljazeera

Controlling skies 'priority' in war against Russia: Kyiv

KYIV: Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba has said his country's priority for 2024 is to gain control over its skies as Russia's invasion nears its third year. Whoever controls the skies will define "when and how the war will end", Kuleba said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Ukraine has long called on the West to deliver advanced fighter jets to support its troops entrenched in the south and the east of the country. "We are fighting a powerful enemy, a very big enemy that doesn't sleep. It takes time," Kuleba said. "We defeated them on the land in 2022. We defeated them in the sea in 2023 and we are completely focused on defeating them in the air in 2024."

Various NATO countries are currently training Ukrainian pilots on US-made F-16 fighter jets. Denmark said this month it will transfer 19 F-16s in the second quarter of this year. The United States had previously resisted allowing the jet transfers for fear of being deemed by Russia to be a direct belligerent in the Ukraine war. The conflict has ground to a deadlock over the last year as Ukraine's long-awaited counteroffensive failed to push back Russian forces. Kuleba also called for patience from his country's key Western backers and insisted that, with the right support, Ukraine could be victorious. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen expressed confidence that all European Union member states will agree to jointly extend more financial aid to Ukraine. "I am proud that our union has answered Ukraine's call," she told the European Parliament.

EU leaders last month agreed to start accession talks with Ukraine but Hungary vetoed granting 50 billion euros (\$54bn) in aid for Kyiv through 2027. Hungary has resisted agreement on an aid package, raising the possibility of the other 26 countries giving funds to Ukraine under separate bilateral deals with Kyiv. The bloc's 27 leaders will meet in Brussels on February 1 to try to agree on providing more financial assistance to Kyiv. Russia, Ukraine trade fire At least 17 people were injured, two of them seriously, after Russian missiles hit residential buildings in the city of Kharkiv overnight. Regional Governor Oleh Syniehubov said two S-300 missiles hit buildings in the centre of Ukraine's second-biggest city, and 14 people were sent to hospital.

Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov said the missiles struck "precisely where there is no military infrastructure and precisely where there are in fact residences". "There are at least 10 damaged buildings. Rescue teams are continuing to go through the rubble," he wrote on Telegram. "And there is plenty of rubble." In the southern port city of Odesa, at least three people were injured, and residential buildings were damaged in the overnight drone attacks, according to Ukrainian authorities. The Ukrainian military said the Russian attack targeted Odesa and other southern regions for at least three hours. Meanwhile, Russia's Ministry of Defence said its air defence forces destroyed seven Vilkha surface-to-air missiles and four drones over the Russian region of Belgorod. Later, four RM-70 Vampire rockets were destroyed and two drones were intercepted, the ministry added. — Aljazeera

Brazil's indigenous Yanomami again face illegal mining-linked crisis

BRASILIA (AFP): The Yanomami Indigenous group are again facing a severe humanitarian crisis blamed on illegal gold miners, despite Brazil's president deploying the military to wrest back control of their territory.

A year after Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva declared a state of emergency over the isolated group's plight, images emerging from their Amazon rainforest reservation remain desolate: severely malnourished children being fed through IV tubes in hospital and their staple food source, fish, decimated by the toxic mercury used in the mines. At least 308 Yanomami died from January to November 2023, half of them children under five, according to health officials.

That is little better than the 343 deaths recorded in 2022. Cases of malaria among the Yanomami increased by 61 percent last year, and influenza by 640 percent compared to 2022. Those bleak figures are a problem for Lula, who came to office in January 2023 vowing to do a far better job protecting Brazil's Indigenous peoples than far-right predecessor Jair Bolsonaro. One of the veteran leftist's first actions in office was to deploy the military to expel an estimated 20,000 illegal miners from the Yanomami reservation, a sprawling northern territory bigger than Portugal. Indigenous leaders and rights activists accuse miners of raping and killing Yanomami inhabitants, poisoning their water with mercury, spreading disease, tearing down virgin rainforest and triggering a food cri-

sis. Lula ordered the air force to impose a no-fly zone to cut off supplies to the mines, and sent hundreds of police and soldiers to evict the invaders. Thousands of miners fled as the authorities carried out a total of 400 operations last year, seizing 600 million reais (\$120 million) from criminal groups involved with the mines, according to official figures.

But critics say the plan's successes were short-lived, leaving the 30,000 Yanomami vulnerable. According to the Hutukara Yanomami Association (HAY), an Indigenous rights group, 330 hectares (815 acres) of reservation were razed last year by mining. "The Lula administration was n't prepared. There should have been better organization to address the health crisis," said the group's leader, Davi Kopenawa.

It seems this will never end. Everywhere the miners bring in heavy machinery, the river gets destroyed," he told AFP. Kopenawa estimated around half the miners on the reservation have managed to evade authorities. "They're crafty... They know more than the Brazilian authorities," he said. Lula admitted last week that his government has been losing what he called the "war on illegal mining." His administration vowed to redouble efforts and spend \$250 million this year to set up a permanent police and military force to protect the reservation. "I hope the new operation starts this month and not next," Kopenawa said. "It's urgent." The crisis is glaringly visible at Santo Antonio de Boa Vista Children's Hospital,

where some of the reservation's most severe cases are taken for treatment. An AFP journalist saw gravely ill children breathing through tubes and being fed intravenously.

The crisis is not as severe as last year. But "extremely sick patients continue arriving," said hospital director Francinete Rodrigues. The situation "is nothing short of catastrophic," said Fiona Watson, research and advocacy director at Indigenous-rights group Survival International. "Miners are flooding back into the area... Many vital health posts and services that are so desperately needed are not functioning," she said in a statement. "If this situation continues, hundreds more Yanomami people will die, and their land will become uninhabitable." Lula has faced criticism over the crisis.

Indigenous writer and activist Daniel Munduruku lashed out last week at Lula's Indigenous affairs ministry, which the president launched upon taking office. "Creating a quack ministry to put out fires just replicates the old policies of bread and circuses," Munduruku wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "Lots of parties, lots of international trips, lots of talk -- so much of the same, and none of what's actually needed." Affairs Minister Sonia Guajajara, the apparent target of the dig, admitted the administration's measures so far had been "insufficient." But "there were decades of invasion" of the Yanomami reservation, and "it could take decades to overcome," she said.

EU rearms Ukraine as calls mount for higher defence spending

BRUSSELS: As roughly \$137bn in military and financial aid to Ukraine remained stalled in Washington and Brussels, individual European allies began to make bilateral pledges worth billions to ensure that Ukraine will remain capable of resisting Russia this year.

That resistance remained in place during the past week, with ground troops holding a 1,000km (621-mile) line against Russian assaults in what their commander called an "active defence", and Ukraine's Air Force seizing an opportunity to destroy one of only a handful of Russian reconnaissance planes. Ukraine destroyed the Beriev A-50 somewhere over the Sea of Azov, killing all of its crew, its commander in chief said. An Ilyushin-22 command aircraft was also effectively destroyed, though it managed to land. Ukraine's southern command said the A-50 was one of only three operational such aircraft and helped direct missile attacks.

Russia had fired 40 drones and missiles into Ukraine two days earlier. Ukrainian defenders shot down eight missiles and said they disabled another 20 or so with electronic jamming. As if to prove missile capabil-

ity after the downing of the A-50, Russia attacked again, wounding 17 people in central Kharkiv. Events in the air were perhaps the most kinetic in a week of static front lines. Ukrainian commander of ground forces Oleksandr Syrskiy said his troops were on "active defence" as Russia pressed for full control of the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk and the reconquest of Kharkiv and Kherson.

"Our goals remain unchanged: holding our positions ... exhausting the enemy by inflicting maximum losses," Syrskiy said. Syrskiy's remarks appeared to confirm that Russia had taken the initiative in attacking. "The initiative is completely in the hands of the Russian armed forces," Russian President Vladimir Putin said in a meeting with local government leaders. "If [this] continues, Ukrainian statehood may suffer an irreparable, very serious blow," Putin said. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reacted to those remarks the following day as he addressed the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, saying Putin would never give up his maximalist goals in Ukraine.

"If we have to fight Putin together, years in advance, isn't it better to end him now, while our brave men and women are already doing it? They are the world's chance," Zelenskyy said. As the two leaders' defiant positions suggested another year of bitter war in Ukraine and conflict persisted in Gaza and the Red Sea, rearmament was becoming a theme for Europe as well as Ukraine. "We need a warfighting transformation of NATO," its Military Committee chief, Dutch Admiral Rob Bauer, said as he opened a two-day meeting of defence ministers in Brussels.

NATO members were living in "an era in which anything can happen at any time, an era in which we need to expect the unexpected, an era in which we need to focus on effectiveness in order to be fully effective", he said. That thinking was reflected in the European Commission, as well. Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton said last week that he would propose a 100-billion-euro (\$109bn) European Defence Investment Programme next month, to expand capacity in European defence indus-

tries. Last March, the EU pledged a million artillery shells to Ukraine within a year. By November, they had delivered less than a third of that, but Breton confirmed they would fulfil their pledge by early this year, and the European Commission confirmed that EU production capacity would reach a million shells a year by early this year, matching US production capacity.

Russian shell production capacity matched the US and EU combined, said the deputy head of Ukraine's military intelligence Vadym Skibitskiy. Russia's covert mobilisation had also enlisted half a million men last year, meaning that it had been able to overcome attrition to field 462,000 soldiers in Ukraine. Given these Russian capacities, Ukraine's rearmament was an urgent matter, Zelenskyy said. Some \$61bn in aid for 2024 remained stuck in Congressional deliberations in Washington due to Republican opposition, and two packages of 50 billion euros and 20 billion euros (\$54bn to \$22bn) were stalled in Brussels due to Hungarian opposition.

US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said the

US had suspended security assistance to Ukraine as a result of the impasse. In Europe, individual countries chose to move ahead bilaterally.

Estonian President Alar Karis said last week that Estonia would provide 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3bn) in aid including howitzers and ammunition over the next four years. Estonia was committing 0.25 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) to Ukraine's defence over the next four years, Prime Minister Kaja Kallas had said days earlier. A staunch Ukraine ally which also shares a border with Russia, Estonia last November said it was raising defence spending to 3 percent of GDP and urged other European nations to double their expenditure. Latvia on the same day pledged howitzers, shells, drones and helicopters, among other things.

On Friday, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak signed an agreement with Kyiv to help develop Ukraine's drone production capacity, and said he would spend \$3.2bn in defence of Ukraine this year. French President Emmanuel Macron was due in Kyiv to make his own pledges next month. He told a news conference that long-

range SCALP missiles would be included in defence deliveries already under way. "We are going to deliver a lot more equipment and help Ukraine with what it needs to defend its skies," he said.

Germany last month said it would double its military aid to Ukraine in 2024 to eight billion euros (\$9bn). "Russia's war in Ukraine, as a political issue, is slipping from the mainstream, and is now largely a preoccupation for those situated near Europe's eastern border," said the European Council on Foreign Relations. Though still well-resourced, Russia was not without its problems. Skibitskiy said it was having trouble building certain types of missiles due to sanctions. And secretive Russian enlistment of naturalised citizens - suspected to have begun in 2023 - may have contributed to a massive fire that destroyed a seven-hectare warehouse of online retailer Wildberries, in St Petersburg last week. Russian sources said the fire was preceded by a fight among migrant workers there, and a raid by authorities who pressed workers into service with the military. — Aljazeera

The Frontier Post

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

Pak-Iran clash and ethnic militancy

PAKISTAN strongly condemned the unprovoked violation of its airspace and the strike inside Pakistani territory by the Iranian forces which resulted in multiple deaths and injuries in the border region. Pakistan called the Iranian Charge d'affaires to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and lodged a strong protest against the unlawful act of the Iranian military. Following Iran's violation of Pakistani airspace, the Pakistani authorities expelled the Iranian Ambassador to Islamabad while recalling the Pakistani envoy from Tehran. Pakistan expressed utmost frustration and anger over the blatant violation of its sovereignty and reserved its right of self defence and retaliation at the moment of its own choice.

Pakistan and Iran have long had a tense relationship because of the activities of Baloch separatists and religious militant groups in their border regions. The tension between the two neighbours sparked suddenly after Iranian forces made a surprise incursion into Pakistani territory in a false bid to attack Iranian separatist groups allegedly basing on the Pakistani side of the joint border. Pakistan and Iran have over 900 kilometres of common border that lacks proper fencing, border wall or any geographical separation between the two nations. Both neighbours have fought low-level Baloch insurgencies in their areas on both sides of their common border. The terrorists from Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) often attack Pakistani LEAs and return back to their sanctuaries on the Iranian side of the border while Jaish Al-Adel cast the same episode with Iranian security forces and often tried to elude the Pakistani side. Due to the similarity of challenges and issues, comprehensive mechanisms are in place between the two countries at military-to-military and government-to-government levels, for mutual liaison and coordinated action against militant groups, drug peddlers, human traffickers and others. The flag meetings of local military commanders take place at regular intervals to resolve local border issues, remove misconceptions and promote cooperation.

Interestingly, the Iranian leadership has acted irresponsibly in recent days out of frustration following the deadly incident of January 3 that cost more than 80 lives. The strikes in Pakistan came less than a day after Iranian forces launched missile strikes in Syria and Iraq, part of a string of reprisals against Tehran's enemies including Islamic State bases and proposed Israeli Spy agency Headquarters in Arbail, Kurdistan. Iran has long suspected Pakistan of providing a haven for the insurgents and fomenting instability in Iran's south-eastern provinces, whereas Islamabad also owes the same apprehensions because Baloch militants used Iranian soil, for logging, planning and carrying out attacks inside Pakistan. Pakistan has always said terrorism is a common threat to all countries in the region that requires teamwork and cooperation. Such unilateral acts are not in conformity with good neighbourliness and indirectly support terrorists' agenda by seriously undermining bilateral trust and cooperation against bad actors and anti-state elements on both sides of the border.

At that sensitive moment, Pakistan expressed utmost restraint and resilience by not reciprocating Iran with the same coin, as the Pakistan Air Force was competent enough to shoot down the Iranian aeroplanes during that unlawful incursion into Pakistan. However, Pakistan used its right to self defence and Pakistani security forces attacked Baloch insurgents hide outs on the other side of the border in Iran's Sistan province during the early hours on Thursday. Pakistan said its military did not target Iran or Iranian military or civilian installations but Pakistani forces attacked Pakistan's proscribed militant groups involved in terrorism attacks inside Pakistan. Currently, tension mounts high and any adventure or miscalculation from either side could fuel a full fledged war between them. The current situation merits utmost restraint and caution from both sides to avoid further escalation. Both countries must resort to dialogue and use the laid down mechanisms/ procedures against the common threat that will not only forestall such unpleasant incidents but effectively tackle the risk of cross border terrorism in the future.

The pros and cons of alternative dispute resolution

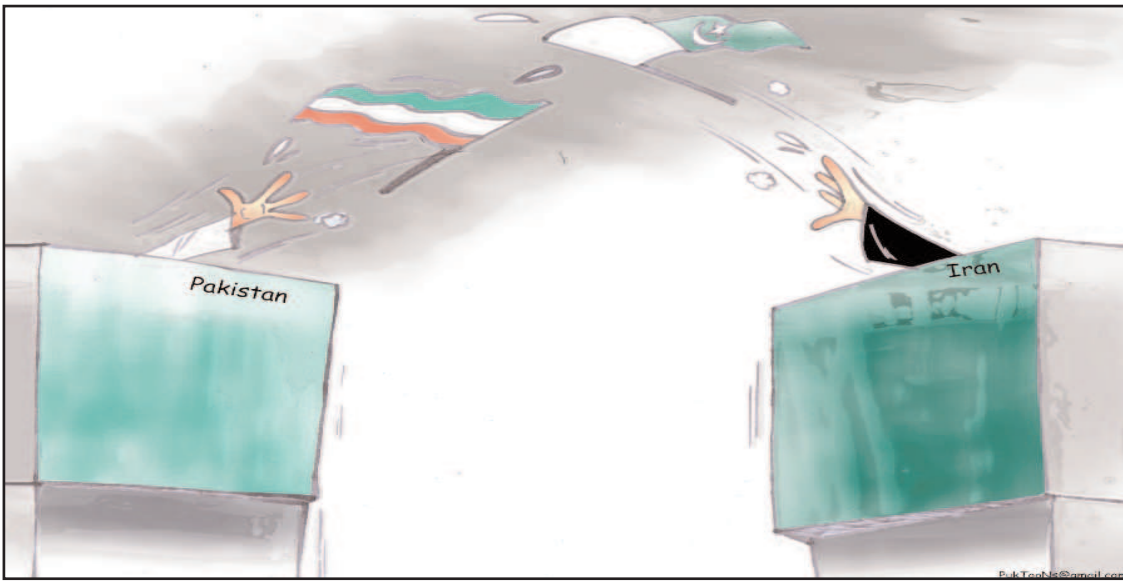
THE Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment informed the masses that Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is gaining considerable recognition in Pakistan due to its potential to alleviate the burden on the overburdened court system. According to her, the ADR had many advantages to benefit from including efficiency, cost-effectiveness, Confidentiality, and Flexibility. As said the Government, the legal community, and various institutions have been taking initiatives to promote ADR and integrate it into the legal framework.

Historically, Pakistan's law and Justice system could not uphold public trust and failed in performing its constitutional responsibility through the timely completion of the investigation, fair prosecution, and dispensation of justice to the public due to the faulty investigation, prolonged delays in under-trial cases, huge backlog of judiciary and upsurge in institutional corruption. According to a previous report, more than 52, 000 cases were pending trial in the apex court in last year while these figures are in the millions in the lower/district courts. The courts are overburdened and the peculiar trial process badly embarrasses the petitioners and respondents who in turn get prepared to settle their cases mutually to get rid of futile and lengthy court proceedings.

The government of Pakistan constituted the Legal Aid and Justice Authority (LAJA) under the Ministry of Human Rights in an attempt to provide relief to the public/complainants whose cases struck unceasing delay due to the failure of the law and Justice System. Under the ADR method, cases are settled through mediation, arbitration, and negotiation between the victims/petitioners and accused based on compromise, give and take. In fact, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is not an alternative to justice and fair trial because victims/complainants use this option as a last resort in utter disappointment with police and courts. The ADR system provides a window for the victims or the family of a diseased person to compromise with assassinations/criminals, and crooks to abruptly end their legal fight for justice against their adversary. Unfortunately, the state gave the ADR a legal shape while Police, judges, and jury advise the victims and their families to use the ADR system to get rid of their mental depression, physical fatigue, and financial loss because such provisions help police elude investigation, facilitate judges' escape from prolonged hearing, and reduce bulk work of the lower staff. Although, the Alternative Dispute Resolution system flourishes unbelievably but the regular law and justice system is gradually laying to the rest in this country.

Important Notice

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



Israel's war on Gaza triggered a war on free speech in West

Tony Greenstein

ON December 20, I was woken up at 7am by the ringing of my doorbell. At the door were two police officers. I was told I was being arrested on suspicion of committing an offence under Section 12 (1A) of the Terrorism Act 2000 of the United Kingdom. The relevant section of the law states: "A person commits an offence if the person - (a) expresses an opinion or belief that is supportive of a proscribed organisation, and (b) in doing so is reckless as to whether a person to whom the expression is directed will be encouraged to support a proscribed organisation."

The officers explained to me that my alleged offence was related to a single tweet I posted about Hamas on November 15. Having only just gone to bed and being somewhat sleepy, the only response I could initially manage was to tell them that my arrest was "Orwellian" and that we are clearly now living in a dystopia. I was struggling to accept that in the 21st-century UK, I was being arrested, not for something I had done, but for expressing an opinion.

I had written the tweet in question in response to a Zionist, who was baiting people online to say they "support Hamas", which has long been proscribed as a terrorist organisation in Britain, and thereby get arrested. Identifying himself only as James, this person told me: "Just tweet, I support Hamas!" 3 words is all you have to tweet and then we know where you stand."

I refused to take the bait and responded "I support the Palestinians that is enough" before going on to say "and I support Hamas against the Israeli army". Looking back, I believe this was, especially for a social media platform like X, a carefully calibrated and accurate expression of my genuine opinion. That day I did not say "I support Hamas politically" for the simple reason that such a statement would not be true.

As a Jewish atheist, socialist and secularist, I naturally do not support Hamas or any other Islamist or religious group. That does not mean, however, that I do not respect and admire the resistance Hamas has been conducting against Israel's genocidal army. I criticised Hamas often in the past. For example, in February 2011, in an article published on my personal blog titled "The lousy Hamas government", I criticised the group for its initial refusal to support the Egyptian people's uprising against Hosni Mubarak. Over the years, I've also

written articles and blog-posts criticising the group for its use of torture, its support for the two-state solution, its repression of women and attacks on secular Palestinian youths demanding their freedom. My blogpost titled "We Support the Palestinian people of Gaza not Hamas" was published nearly 15 years ago, in 2009. I've also written extensively about how Hamas was a creation of the Israeli state - an important fact the West chooses to forget today.

Despite all this, I explained to my police interrogator, I do indeed support Hamas's resistance against Israel's military. This is because when it comes to resisting Israel's murderous war on Palestinians in Gaza, I would support the devil himself - just as in the second world war I would have supported the Polish Home Army's resistance to the Nazis, despite their anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, my experience of being arrested merely for expressing a pro-Palestinian opinion online is not in any way unique. In the past few months, British police have doubled down on their longstanding efforts to stifle free speech on Palestine by equating all expressions of support for the Palestinians with support for Hamas. Mick Napier, the founder of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, was arrested a few days before me, for a similar "offence".

This is because, since the beginning of Israel's latest war on Gaza, and the public protests against it, there has been unprecedented political pressure on the police to keep an eye on, and when necessary silence and sanction, pro-Palestinian voices. These renewed efforts to criminalise pro-Palestinian activism and speech have not in any way been subtle.

The BBC, the voice of the British establishment, for example, casually stated in a news report in October that widespread pro-Palestinian demonstrations in the country were in fact "pro-Hamas" (the corporation had to retract this assessment after a public backlash), and Home Secretary Suella Braverman, defined them as "hate marches" attended by "sick" anti-Semites. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak made his own feelings clear when, during a visit to a Jewish school in London, he announced that the government had handed the police "all the tools, powers and guidance" needed to police these pro-Palestinian protests, adding "anti-Semitism will not stand".

Eventually, Braverman took things a step too far and accused London's Metropolitan Police of favouring pro-Palestine protesters, forcing Sunak to sack her. All this was an extension of the British political and media establishment's longstanding efforts to portray anti-Zionism and support for the Palestinians as anti-Semitic, to protect Israel and to further Britain's imperial foreign policy agenda.

To that end, the misnamed "Campaign Against Antisemitism" even suggested that repeated pro-Palestinian demonstrations in London had forced British Jews to "vacate their homes" and "remove their Star of David necklaces and hide their kippahs". This, despite the Jewish bloc on the last few demonstrations in London consistently being over 1,000 strong. I myself attended many such demonstrations over the past few months and witnessed firsthand the warm welcome extended to Jewish people in these spaces. In one protest, there was even a group of Muslim women chanting "Judaism yes, Zionism no".

Today, the British government, with full support from the Labour opposition under Keir Starmer and much of the mainstream British media, is attempting to use smears of anti-Semitism to legitimise its relentless attacks on the most fundamental democratic freedoms of Britons. All Jews support Israel, their argument goes, thus any criticism of "the Jewish state", including the criticism of its genocidal war on Gaza, is inherently anti-Semitic. Of course it is not pro-Palestinian demonstrators but this argument, which implies all Jews are supportive of Israeli policies of starving Palestinian civilians, bombing hospitals, and slaughtering children merely because they are Jewish, that is truly anti-Semitic. Meanwhile, many Jews who are vocally critical of Israel and its war on Gaza are either ignored and erased by the media and the political classes or, as in my case, subjected to bogus prosecutions and persecution. The same is true in Germany where anti-Zionist Jews are subjected to state repression because they don't play along with the narrative that Israel is the embodiment of what it means to be Jewish.

What made my arrest over a tweet in support of Palestinian resistance possible in the first place was Hamas's status as a proscribed terrorist organisation. The British state designated the military arm of

Hamas as a terror organisation in 2001 and extended this proscription to include the group's political wing as well in 2021.

In its policy paper on the matter, the UK government justified this decision by stating Hamas "used indiscriminate rocket or mortar attacks, and raids against Israeli targets". "During the May 2021 conflict, over 4,000 rockets were fired indiscriminately into Israel," it added, "civilians, including 2 Israeli children, were killed as a result." These reasons, of course, are ludicrous and serve only to expose the British state's hypocrisy. If firing unguided rockets towards an occupying army in possession of state-of-the-art defence systems, and killing a handful of civilians in the process, is enough for Hamas to be branded as a "terrorist" organisation, then Israel, which has dropped tonnes of explosives on a besieged population and murdered some 24,000 people, including more than 10,000 children, in a matter of three months is undoubtedly a terrorist organisation as well and should be proscribed as a terrorist organisation. Yet, those supporting Israel and its attacks on the Palestinians unconditionally are not finding police officers on their doorstep.

The British state is trying to criminalise any support for and solidarity with the Palestinians, and attacking our right to freedom of speech as enshrined in the Human Rights Act 1998 and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, merely to ensure Israel can continue with its blatant violations of international law. In the past three months, the Israeli military has bombed refugee camps, hospitals and schools. It killed more than 100 journalists, many in targeted attacks alongside their extended families, and shot at worshippers shielding in a church. Its total siege of Gaza, coupled with its relentless bombardment of civilian infrastructure, has led to the collapse of the health system and given rise to famine conditions.

I will learn on March 20 whether the police are going to charge me with an offence. Whatever happens, however, I will not be deterred from speaking out against Israel's atrocities and in support of the Palestinian struggle for liberation and dignity. As Palestinians in Gaza face a genocidal war, their supporters in Britain and elsewhere in the West are facing an assault on their right to free speech. But we will not give up our fight - for a free Palestine and a truly democratic Britain.

What will be consequences for suffering Israel has sown?

Ray Hanania

AS the world remains focused on Israel's revenge massacre of civilians in the Gaza Strip, where it has killed some 24,000 people, including more than 10,000 children, Tel Aviv has opened an unmonitored front in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Although Israeli soldiers and armed settlers have been engaged in ongoing brutal attacks against Palestinians in the Occupied Territories since taking over the lands in 1967, Israel is using the "cover" of its war in Gaza to increase the violence. Since the Gaza war began in October, armed extremist settlers, backed by Israeli soldiers, have stepped up their illegal campaigns of intimidation and violence to evict Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem.

If you are Palestinian and dare to speak out against the Israeli carnage in the Gaza Strip, you can be beaten, detained without charge and even killed. Israel, which censors media coverage of its military attacks, then issues press releases placing all the blame on the victims. Palestinians have no one to support them or to pressure the Israelis to end their violence. Tel Aviv has international carte blanche to do what it wants. And if you dare to challenge Israel, you are demonized as "antisemitic." The mainstream Western news media largely avoids reporting on Israel's carnage, but always showcases on newspaper front pages and leading TV reports when Palestinians respond with violence. So, uneducated Americans, for example, only see detailed news reports about the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and very little of Israel's violent response.

As a consequence of the news media's widespread complicity, human rights groups that monitor the Israeli violence are struggling to post updated information. There is just so much. Since Oct. 7, there have been at least 24 incidents of Israeli settlers - often with military support - targeting, beating and/or killing Palestinians in the West Bank, according to Israeli human rights group B'Tselem. These incidents have included the firing of weapons at Palestinian homes and mosques, the widespread destruction of civilian homes and property, the destruction of farmland, food storage facilities and harvesting equipment, damage to vehicles, attacks against restaurants and other food establishments, and the uprooting and destruction of olive trees. When the unarmed Palestinians resist, they are often shot. They have no means of legal redress against the Jewish perpetrators.

Meanwhile, Israel does not even need any evidence to arrest and imprison Palestinians accused of similar crimes, which are far less frequent than the violence of the Israeli-backed settlers. Americans often ask me why Palestinians attack Israelis, but they never ask why Israelis attack Palestinians. In fact, most Americans do

not really care when Palestinians are the victims of Israeli violence. This is particularly true of the country's lawmakers, as most of the 535 members of the US Senate and House of Representatives have embraced one-sided denunciations of Palestinians, while only about 40 members have spoken out against Israeli injustices. South Africa seems to be the only nation that is willing to do something to challenge this biased system, which turns a blind eye to violence against Palestinians while exaggerating and augmenting the denunciations of violence against Israelis.

South Africa has the courage to defend the rule of law and to protect civilian rights. Its government - 30 years on from removal of the racist apartheid regime that ruled the country until 1994 - has filed a genocide lawsuit against Israel at the International Court of Justice. Despite claiming to care about civilians, the pro-Israel US administration of President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken has denounced this case as "meritless" in an effort to give Tel Aviv international cover. Despite all their feigned concern for Palestinian civilians, Biden and Blinken's only real concern is to defend Israel's continued attacks in Gaza, while preventing any other Middle Eastern country from entering the conflict to stop the carnage. Biden and Blinken do not want the war to "expand" because that might forcibly curb Israel's indiscriminate violence against Palestinians. They have one concern, which is the same as Israel's concern: to secure the release of the Israelis taken hostage on Oct. 7. They do not care about the thousands of Palestinian civilians who have essentially been taken hostage by Israel over the years.

The majority of the Palestinians in Israel's prison system are denied the right to contest their detentions in open court. They are tortured, beaten and sometimes killed. Family members rarely get a chance to see them and they are denied legal representation. As of Nov. 1, the Israeli authorities held 7,000 Palestinians from the Occupied Territories for a wide range of alleged "security offenses." More than 2,000 of them are held under what Israel calls "administrative detention" - a form of hostage taking in which the detained have absolutely no rights and are often never charged. When will they be released? When will their stories be detailed on the major American television networks' nightly news programs? These shows sympathetically report on and profile the Israeli hostages, ginning up anti-Palestinian hatred and sympathy for Israel to prevent the American public from asking questions about Israeli war crimes. A well-known saying states that you always reap what you sow. Well, Israel has been sowing a lot of suffering recently. We do not know when it will reap the consequences, but we know they must be coming.

Israeli genocide case could be a ramp for de-escalation

Mohamed Chebaro

IN its 100-plus days, the Israeli war on Gaza has clearly split the world. It has also escalated into pockets of proxy wars and wars of will between Israel and its Western allies on the one side and Iran's so-called "axis of resistance" on the other. The latter has been lighting fires on the Israeli-Lebanese border, attacking US bases in Iraq and Syria and targeting military and civilian ships in the Red Sea.

The genocide case against Israel filed by South Africa at the International Court of Justice in The Hague could act as a circuit breaker and should present both sides with a ramp for de-escalation. Any ruling condemning Israel would probably remain symbolic, as the UN Security Council is unlikely to enforce it, given that the US and UK would be able to use their veto power. But such a ruling's moral impact could bring all parties to push harder for a ceasefire, the delivery of aid and maybe talks that culminate in the

release of the civilian Israeli hostages as a first step.

The foundations of today's international humanitarian law rest on legal work undertaken around the time of the Second World War. The concepts of "crimes against humanity" and "genocide" were created by two Jewish law professors from Lviv in modern-day Ukraine, who witnessed persecution firsthand and endeavored to give a name and legal description to the crimes the Nazis committed against the Jews. Those terms were later adopted as the basis for the trials of Nazi leaders at Nuremberg.

It was Hersch Lauterpacht and Raphael Lemkin who developed and advocated for these legal concepts. Genocide was a term first introduced by Lemkin. It identifies those that single out groups of people and attempt to annihilate them, defining it as the most heinous crime. The concept of crimes against humanity is rooted in individual rights, the violation of which was believed

by Lauterpacht to rise to the top of the scale of offenses.

It is clear from the cases presented by South Africa and Israel at the International Court of Justice last week that there is a huge gap in the narrative of the two sides. Yet many experts argue that the case for genocide presented by South Africa was strong enough for the court to issue a provisional ruling against Israel's disregard for harm to civilians caused by its approach to fighting Hamas.

South Africa detailed the horrible conditions suffered by the Palestinians in Gaza, where more than 24,000 have died, which is about 1 percent of the Strip's population. Some 70 percent of the victims have been women and children, while thousands more remain buried under the rubble. Its case also highlighted the displacement of 85 percent of the total population of Gaza, which stands at 2.4 million. About 65,000 residential units have been destroyed and more

than 300,000 others damaged, which could leave half a million Palestinians with no homes to return to. Then there is the damage to hospitals and other vital civilian infrastructure. Israel, for its part, repeated the alleged genocidal plan of Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks and its lawyers blamed Hamas' practice of embedding itself within the civilian population for the massive damage. They said the group continues to display an indifference to civilian life and uses civilians as human shields.

Their arguments were, in the eyes of experts, weak, as the rule of law calls for refraining from firing if harm to civilians is likely. And atrocities committed by one party - even the aspiration to commit genocide - does not justify genocide in response, even in acts of self-defense.

Seventy-five years on from the signing of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, its effectiveness

remains disputed. Since 1948, only three events have been legally recognized and led to trials under the convention: Rwanda in 1994, the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia in 1995 and the crimes committed by Pol Pot's regime in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. Advocates and defenders of human rights have long believed that the list of events recognized under the UN convention should be much longer. As well as the two recent cases related to the killing and displacement of Yazidis by Daesh and the Rohingya in Myanmar, they point to the crimes committed in Darfur, Sudan, in 2004-05, Saddam Hussein's actions against the Kurds between 1988 and 1991 and Stalin's so-called great terror era.

Legal scholars have also argued that the Genocide Convention has failed due to the slowness of the process and the caution used in evoking the term when atrocities take place. There is also the constant failure of the international

community to react effectively following acts of genocide, meaning that too few perpetrators have been indicted for such crimes. Currently - at a junction of history where a conflictive and divided world is testing all moral, ethical and judicial processes, as well as the validity of conventions and norms - evoking genocide and/or crimes against humanity might not be the easiest route to sanctioning those who are committing atrocities or saving the people of Gaza after more than 100 days of Israeli bombardment.

But if the South African case at the International Court of Justice opens the debate and helps focus the world's thoughts and deeds on accountability, then it should be embraced, even for its mere symbolic value. Hopefully, it will focus minds on the need to find a formula to stop the killing and look for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which today risks engulfing the whole region.

Arab News

Gaza will be the grave of Western-led world order

Saul J Takahashi

NO matter how it concludes, South Africa's lawsuit in the International Court of Justice arguing Israel has violated the Genocide Convention will go down in history. It will either be remembered as the first step towards finally holding a rogue state accountable for repeated, longstanding violations of international law; or as the last, dying breath of a dysfunctional, Western-led international system.

For the hypocrisy of Western governments (and the Western political elite as a whole) has finally brought the so-called "rules-based world order" they purport to lead to the point of no return. Full-throated Western support for Israel's genocidal rampage in Gaza has truly exposed the double standards of the West with regard to human rights and international law. There is no turning back, and the West has only its own arrogance to blame.

The litany of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel in Gaza are clear as the light of day for anybody who has access to a smartphone. Social media feeds are overflowing with videoclips of hospitals and schools being bombed, fathers pulling out the lifeless bodies of their children from under destroyed buildings, mothers crying over the corpses of their babies. And yet, the reaction of Western governments - besides seemingly limitless military and political support - has been to label any criticism of Israel as anti-Semitism and attempt to ban outright any expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Regardless of this oppression, tens of thousands of people are coming out on the streets day after day expressing their disgust at Israeli atrocities and Western complicity. Desperate to regain some semblance of credibility, Western governments (including the US) have recently started to be marginally critical of Israeli attacks. However, it is too little, too late. Western credibility has

been shredded irrevocably. Of course, Western hypocrisy is nothing new. According to Western governments, the world should be up in arms about Russian aggression but should be perfectly happy with Israeli brutality and flouting of international norms. Ukrainians who throw Molotov cocktails at Russian occupation forces are heroes and freedom fighters, while Palestinians (and others) who dare to speak out against Israeli apartheid are terrorists. White-skinned refugees from Ukraine are more than welcome, while black and brown-skinned refugees from conflicts in the Middle East, Asia and Africa (most of which the West are behind) can sink to the bottom of the Mediterranean. The Western attitude has truly been: rules for thee, not for me.

The Western position towards China exhibits the same insincerity. China is virtually encircled by American and allied military bases, armed to the hilt. Yet it is China that is guilty of... what? Unable to point to any concrete infraction, Western governments and media can only accuse China of "increased assertiveness", ie, not knowing its assigned subjugate place in the Western hegemonic order. International justice has become a sick joke. Were the International Criminal Court (ICC) functioning effectively, Israeli leaders would be on trial even as we speak, and there would have been no need for South Africa to approach the ICJ. As it stands, though, the ICC only indicted Africans until 2022, when it announced an investigation into the Russian invasion of Ukraine less than a week after its start. The ICC issued indictments, including for Russia's President Vladimir Putin, in less than a year. Conversely, it took over six years for the ICC to open an investigation into the situation in Palestine, and even now, years later, meaningful action has yet to be taken. While Israel continued its orgy of violence

against the people of Gaza, Karim Khan, the British Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, visited Israel and stressed the need for Hamas's crimes to be prosecuted, while going soft on Israeli crimes. Little wonder many civil society organisations are calling for him to be fired.

Of course, Western hypocrisy is nothing new. From the get-go, international legal norms were intended to apply only to so-called "civilised" - read white - peoples. Savages did not count, and the powerful Western states could - and did - do to them what they pleased. Natives certainly did not "own" land or natural resources, and colonial powers were free to steal and exploit those as they wished. Zionism was also founded on such racist attitudes - attitudes that remain at the core of Israeli policies to this day. These double standards are apparent with regard to the right to national self-determination - the fundamental right of all peoples to choose their own political system and control their own natural resources. After World War I, US President Woodrow Wilson insisted that self-determination be the guiding principle of the new world order - but, of course, only for Europeans. Palestinians and other Arab peoples found out the hard way that colonialism was alive and well: They were subject to League of Nations Mandates, which justified colonial rule for "peoples not yet able to stand by themselves". The Charter of the United Nations also included provisions for Trusteeship, essentially along similar lines as the Mandates of the League.

The wars of independence in Asia and Africa put a stop to this. The newly independent countries demanded successfully that self-determination be elevated to a right for all. The two international covenants on human rights, adopted in 1966, both stipulate the right of all peoples to self-determination in their

common Article 1, making it clear that only with political and economic self-determination can any other human right be meaningful. The discussion on the right of self-determination went further, to the chagrin of Western governments. The UN General Assembly has stated repeatedly that armed struggle (including that of the Palestinian people) against colonial rule is legitimate. And the 1977 Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, on the laws of war, also stated that struggles against colonial and racist regimes are valid. International law has definitely developed in the right direction.

On a more fundamental level, these international institutions are not representative. Though civil society organisations can contribute to most of the debates, only governments have a say in the decision-making process - despite the fact that, as we see in the case of Gaza, even the governments of ostensible democracies do not necessarily represent the will of their people. Israeli aggression and colonisation must stop, and abusers of human rights in Palestine must be held accountable - including Western leaders who are complicit in genocide. However, we must not stop there. We must demand a revolutionary reform of international institutions. They must be made truly democratic and egalitarian. They must reflect the voice of the people, through civil society organisations and other democratic modes of representation - not governments that are too often in the pocket of rich and powerful interests.

Creating a world order that will ensure justice and equal rights for all will not be easy. It will require sustained efforts on the part of global citizenry, through putting pressure for change on governments and international organisations. However, it is the only way to ensure that "never again" becomes a reality.

Aljazeera

China can cope with demographic ‘new normal’

Yuan Xin

ON Wednesday, the National Bureau of Statistics released data showing that the total population at the end of 2023 in the Chinese mainland was more than 1.409 billion, a decrease of 2.08 million from the previous year. The total number of births for the year was 9.02 million, and the total number of deaths was 11.1 million.

In the long run, negative growth and aging will be two characteristics of China's demography. In fact, China is undergoing a demographic transition, with its population peaking at 1.41 billion in 2021-22. The total fertility rate, a key indicator of societal dynamics, nosedived to 1.1 in 2022, signaling a seismic shift in China's population. This unfolding narrative will not only shape China's future but also have a profound impact on the global demographic tapestry.

Looking ahead to the next three decades, China's demographic future hinges on the trajectory of the fertility rate: a gradual recovery to 1.8 promises a stable population of about 1.4 billion; a conservative increase to 1.4-1.5 hints at a population of about 1.3 billion; and a decline to 0.8-0.9 would mean China's population dropping to 1.2 billion by 2050.

These scenarios, however, suggest China will remain one of the two most populous countries in the world, with a projected range of 1.2-1.4 billion people by mid-21st century. The peak population of over 1.41 billion in 2021-22 indicates China has reached a significant juncture in demographics. Aligned with China's "two-stage, two-step" approach to modernization, the population peak coincides with the efforts to realize socialist modernization by 2035. China's colossal population, accounting for 14-18 percent of the global total, is poised to embark on a transformative journey toward modernity.

The year 2022 ushered in a period of negative population growth. As a result of the three-year COVID-19 pandemic, diminishing fertility rate and deferred marriages, this trend signals a fundamental shift in social values. Addressing this requires recalibration of social and economic policies. By the end of 2023, the population aged 60 and above is 296.97 million, accounting for 21.1 percent of the total population, among which the population aged 65 and above is 216.76 million, accounting for 15.4 percent of the total population. Projections indicate that by the middle of this century, there will be a peak of 520 million elderly people, leading to an aging population that is likely to approach 50 percent. That poses a great challenge to existing social and economic structures, and demands innovative solutions.

First, the working-age population continues to decrease. The population aged 15 to 59 is projected to decrease from the current 864 million to 650 million by the middle of this century. But shrinking labor force may not necessarily lead to a shortage. On the one hand, the modernization and digitalization of society are deepening, with technology, artificial intelligence, robots, and large-scale equipment increasingly substituting for labor. On the other hand, the annual number of graduates from institutions of higher education exceeds 10 million, and the number of graduates from secondary vocational and technical schools surpasses 5 million, leading to intense competition for employment and long-term pressure on the realization of a full employment strategy.

Second, there is a vast population of younger elderly individuals. Over the next 30 years, population aging will exhibit a typical pattern of aging at a younger age. Those aged 60 to 69, considered as younger elderly, will account for approximately 40-50 percent of the total elderly population, increasing from 150 million to 210 million. This presents a window of opportunity for implementing retirement system reforms and promoting the social participation of the elderly.

Third, there is a shift from a society primarily focused on raising children to one primarily focused on elderly care. Since 2021, the elderly dependency ratio has exceeded the child dependency ratio. Experiences from developed countries indicate that the social investment per capita for elderly care is several times that for child care. With the increasing elderly population, longer lifespans, and improved pension standards, the social pressure for elderly care is growing. Just as the General Office of the State Council's recent document promoting the silver economy indicated, silver economy can also bring golden opportunities. The silver economy refers to the sum of economic activities that provide products or services to the elderly, as well as preparations for the aging stage, involving a wide range, a long industrial chain, diverse formats, and enormous potential. After the launch of reform and opening-up, internal labor migration unleashed a formidable force driving China's economic ascension. In 2023, the urban population was

a threefold approach - scientific understanding, proactive adaptation, and positive response. Scientific understanding entails analyzing population decline and aging from the perspective of demographic principles without exaggerating the negative impacts of population aging and acknowledging its positive impacts.

To overcome the impacts of rapidly rising numbers of elderly people and a shrinking population, adapting to the changing situation is crucial. There is also a need to recognize and explore new opportunities, and adopt a pragmatic approach to overcome the difficulties.

To deal with the challenges created by an aging society, in order to promote sustainable development, we need robust and comprehensive reforms. First, it is necessary to not view the aging society through the lens of declining demographic dividends. Second, it is also necessary to extend the scope of the policies beyond the elderly

On the other hand, the annual number of graduates from institutions of higher education exceeds 10 million, and the number of graduates from secondary vocational and technical schools surpasses 5 million, leading to intense competition for employment and long-term pressure on the realization of a full employment strategy. Second, there is a vast population of younger elderly individuals. Over the next 30 years, population aging will exhibit a typical pattern of aging at a younger age. Those aged 60 to 69, considered as younger elderly, will account for approximately 40-50 percent of the total elderly population, increasing from 150 million to 210 million. This presents a window of opportunity for implementing retirement system reforms and promoting the social participation of the elderly. Third, there is a shift from a society primarily focused on raising children to one primarily focused on elderly care.

932.67 million, an increase of 11.96 million over the end of the previous year. The rural population was 477 million, a decrease of 14.04 million. The proportion of urban population to the total population (urbanization rate) was 66.16 percent, an increase of 0.94 percentage points over the previous year.

The floating population and migrant workers comprise individuals moving from rural areas to urban centers, with young and middle-aged individuals making up the majority. The migration of young and middle-aged people from villages to cities means an inadvertent increase in the aging population in rural areas, and a relative decrease in the aging population in urban areas, creating an inverted demographic pattern wherein rural areas face early, rapid aging, and have a relatively large elderly population. So to address the population aging problem, the authorities have to first address the problems in rural areas.

Intensifying population divergence: According to its urbanization road map, China wants to achieve an urbanization rate of 70 percent by 2030 and 75-80 percent by 2050, with the urban population crossing 1 billion and rural population falling below 300 million.

In the long run, with the fertility rates falling in all regions, human migration may no longer be an effective means to regulate regional population distribution.

Against the backdrop of low birth rates and longer lifespans, the loss of demographic dividends has created a series of challenges. The population aging trend will continue throughout the 21st century, intertwining with challenges created by slower economic development. These challenges will raise social concerns, encompassing, among others, economic, social, health, regional distribution, and gender-related factors. Addressing these challenges requires a paradigm shift, fostering a proactive attitude toward aging society, and adopting

Mass migration is about to sweep away West’s blinkered ruling class

Allister Heath

RISHI Sunak may have defeated his rebels, but it was a Pyrrhic victory that cannot save his government. The Rwanda Bill won't halt the boats, let alone convince exasperated voters to trust the Conservatives again. The Tory wets who prevented Sunak from toughening his Bill have shown themselves to be pathologically unable to grasp the enormity of the challenge posed by mass migration, legal and illegal, to the Western order in the 21st century. Most voters - in Britain, and across Europe - believe immigration to be unsustainably high, and yet the pressure will be on the numbers to rise much further, especially given the West's crippling baby-bust.

Over the coming decades, tens, if not hundreds of millions of people may seek to leave Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa to flee poverty, war and chaos. This would overwhelm almost all host societies, and will force a complete rethink of the West's approach to economic immigration, integration, asylum and refugees. Walls will be built, whether we like it or loathe it, and international law torn up. Politicians who are unable or unwilling to adapt are likely to be swept away, starting with Sunak and Joe Biden in November and extending, in due course, to the leaders of almost every European country, including Germany's Olaf Scholz and France's Emmanuel Macron.

Mainstream politicians must tackle these issues in a civilised way, or truly nasty characters will be propelled to power. Governments need to become much more discerning as to who they grant citizenship, migrant numbers must be cut significantly

and a greater emphasis placed on helping newcomers acquire a love of their new country.

The Rwanda plan is laughably inadequate in this context. It cannot be scaled. It retains our membership of the European Convention of Human Rights. It doesn't question the principle of non-refoulement or any of the post-Second World War refugee conventions, well-meaning yet outdated agreements that bar governments from choosing who can settle in their countries. It does nothing to fix our dysfunctional Home Office and its propensity to lose track of illegal migrants, or the fact that our courts and administrative machinery are so lax at interpreting the law.

I have long been on the liberal wing of the conservative movement when it comes to immigration, an advocate of modern, hyphenated British identities and of a multi-religious, colour-blind society. I am in awe at the astonishing success of so many well-integrated, patriotic immigrants and their children, and it is clear that the British model, on average, has performed far better than the French or German approaches to absorbing newcomers. We should be proud of our multi-ethnic Britain, our Hindu Prime Minister and the great progress we have made in combating racism.

But I now also believe that the volumes of immigration have become unsustainably large, that certain groups have become dangerously insulated from the rest of the nation. Extremism is on the rise and far greater scrutiny of who we let in is needed if we are to retain our social cohesion.

The far-Left's growing influence over our culture has had disastrous

consequences: if Britain is now seen as an evil, "settler-colonial" state, then why would anybody want to integrate? Our immigration success stories have one factor in common: a belief in the British dream, in a meritocratic system where hard work, family values and a commitment to education can allow anybody to rise.

This isn't compatible with critical race theory. The woke ideologies' obsession with identity politics, quotas, pitting one group against another, dividing the world into "oppressors" and "oppressed", and discriminating against white people, is designed to undermine Britain's successful model of integration. It denigrates Britishness, and exaggerates differences. It is soft on Islamist extremism. It has helped fuel a wave of anti-Semitism. Wokeism is incompatible with building a successful multi-ethnic, multi-faith society and thus with high levels of immigration.

The economic case for mass migration - as opposed to the selective admission of high performers - has also weakened. It has propped up GDP, but failed to shift the dial on GDP per capita. The central claim that migration would increase productivity growth has proved elusive. Many migrants aren't boosting the labour force, but are instead moving here for family reunification or to study, categories that are being grossly abused.

We should be focusing economic immigration on those - drawn from any country in the world - most likely to be net contributors to the exchequer. It should be very unusual for migrants to be offered social housing, and we must adopt a contributory welfare state where benefits are only paid to those who

have contributed for years. It has proved easier for the Government to import workers than tackle the fact that millions of existing citizens are stuck on welfare and suffering from low skills and depleted social capital. Our politicians also prefer to keep pay down in social care by importing cheap workers, and to save money by refusing to train doctors.

Given our sclerotic planning laws that prevent more housebuilding, current levels of immigration are driving the housing crisis. An extra 234,400 new homes were built in England in 2022-23; net UK migration in the year to June 2023 was 672,000, the vast majority settling in England. Our crippling shortage of homes is rapidly worsening with these levels of immigration and housebuilding, hammering the young. Germany's IZA Institute finds that each 1 per cent annual rise in the number of migrants in Switzerland increased home prices by 4.3-5.9 per cent. Even Elon Musk, who supports generally liberal migration policies, now believes the housing stock - and by implication, America's 333 million population - can't in practice grow by more than 1-2 per cent a year. The thesis advocated in One Billion Americans by Matthew Yglesias - tripling the size of the US population to maximise global welfare - is rapidly losing support on the pro-capitalist Right. The housing crisis has created a new generation of communists, and until we double or even triple housebuilding means that mass migration is no longer compatible with conservatism. This is a Darwinian moment for the Tories and centre-Right parties everywhere: they must toughen up on immigration, legal and illegal, or face extinction.

The Telegraph

We cannot go on as we are - ceasefire now, release the hostages

Alistair Burt

LET me make two things clear at the outset. Firstly, the attacks by Hamas and others on Oct. 7, 2023, were barbaric and unjustified, and the perpetrators deserve the harshest punishment. Secondly, I have supported the existence of the state of Israel throughout my parliamentary and ministerial career, and still do.

But we cannot go on with the events that have taken place since Oct. 7. And I now firmly believe that, as part of the fresh thinking that must take place, the UK and the US would be better to urge an end to Israel's ground offensive and call for a ceasefire as part of a process of change, which is both vital and urgent. On the practical side, the reasoning of real friends of Israel should be that the objectives of obtaining the safe release of the hostages and the elimination of Hamas are not being met and have little chance of doing so through present policy. The hostages have, to date, almost invariably been released as a result of negotiation. Evidence would suggest that the present conflict may be removing an element of the current Hamas fighting force, but at the expense of increasing support for it and creating legions of new and likely recruits in

the future, not least those being orphaned and wounded daily in Gaza and the West Bank.

On the wider issues, the scale of the catastrophic humanitarian disaster in Gaza and the loss of innocent life is taking on a new dimension, even in this historic conflict, and radicalizing anew. There were alternative senior voices in Israel warning of the risks of such an invasion, but they were not heard by the Cabinet hardliners. There is a terrible possibility of this going on, interminably, as just another chapter, with a rising threat of escalation in the region and beyond. But it must not. Virtually all diplomats in the region view the events as so serious that there can be no return to Oct. 6, with some false sense of security resting upon a simmering West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. There will be no rebuilding of Gaza this time without a comprehensive resolution of all long-running elements. We cannot go back and we cannot go on.

If they truly believe this, then we must see some actions that reflect the radical thinking that is required. This will be hard for Israel, which sees only Oct. 7 and denies any other context, but it must come. It has not been

able to guarantee the security of its people through force of arms or fences. Nor has its policy of undermining the Palestinian Authority and tacitly condoning Hamas, while working to "manage" the Palestinian issue by marginalizing it, been a success. Both Israel and supportive states also have to confront the taboo of occupation, call it what it is and acknowledge that the routine scolding of settlement announcements followed by no consequences has not been in Israel's interest.

It can be argued instead that the ruling out by too many states of any accountability whatsoever for Israel's infringements of international law has allowed the rise of a sense of impunity among some of its politicians, no longer fringe extremists but Cabinet members. And there is also a section of Israelis who now believe in a form of territorial domination with a vehemence matched only by those who seek their state's eradication. But if Israel and its friends must acknowledge this, others need to rethink and act differently also. Israel and its people are entitled to be secure and cannot simply be asked to cease acting against those pursuing the elimination of the state and its Jewish population without further protection. The hostages should be released, now.

Every Arab state - and any that has given cover to Hamas in the past - has got to tell the group and its leadership that these politics and genocidal ideologies are over, that Israel will continue to exist with their support and that Hamas constitutes such a threat to all that it will be resisted and fought against if it does not end its war.

This can only happen if Israel declares that the occupation is at an end and that self-determination for the Palestinian people in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza is now Israeli policy, with work beginning on it immediately. These are tall orders, but what else is there? It is one state, two states or permanent war. States and their leaders, Western and those in the region alike, have all turned a blind eye for years to things that are too inconvenient to challenge.

The price has been paid by many over time - and now by those killed on and since Oct. 7 and their families. If there are not to be more, then the inoperable equation of justice and security for all Palestinians and Israelis must be recognized, negotiated for and delivered by all those of us who have failed in the past.

The China Daily



Finance Minister lauds digital transformation efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, here on Thursday commended the initiatives undertaken by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Karandaaz for the digital transformation of Pakistan.

Speaking at the 'Pakistan Digital Stake' Workshop here, the Minister said the creation of Digital Stake by these organizations was in line with the government's policy of digitization.

She said digital transactions play a vital role in empowering both urban

residents and business individuals, offering them the flexibility to complete financial transactions promptly and with ease.

The collaborative efforts extend beyond the private sector, with active participation from key government institutions such as the State Bank of Pakistan, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) and the Accountability Bureau.

These entities are contributing significantly to the implementation of the 'Pakistan Digital Stake,' reinforcing the government's commitment to the digitization agenda, she added. Dr. Shamshad

Akhtar underscored the importance of the project for Pakistan's progress, asserting, this initiative was of utmost importance for the development of the country adding the government would use all available resources to ensure its success.

The minister reiterated the government's commitment to financial inclusion, economic self-sufficiency, poverty reduction, and transparency in governance. Drawing inspiration from the positive impacts of digital transformation in the United Arab Emirates, Estonia, and Singapore, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar expressed confidence in

the potential of 'Digital Stake' to bring similar improvements to Pakistan. The 'Pakistan Digital Stake' aims to establish the country on digital lines, creating opportunities for millions of Pakistanis to engage in daily financial transactions seamlessly. Dr. Shamshad Akhtar asserted that the success of this initiative on a global scale reflects its immense potential.

In a move towards further innovation, the Finance Minister highlighted the collaboration between the State Bank and Karandaaz, resulting in the establishment of the 'Raast' platform.

IBA Karachi and CMES-UC Berkeley organize an inaugural lecture on 'Zaban-i-Ghayr'

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi hosted an inaugural lecture in collaboration with the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES), University of California, Berkeley.

The lecture titled 'Zaban-i-Ghayr: Islam and the Work of the Humanities' featured Asad Q. Ahmed, Magistretti Distinguished Professor of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures and Director, CMES, UC Berkeley. Students, faculty, historians and Islamic scholars attended the enlightening lecture.

Executive Director, IBA Karachi, Dr. S Akbar Zaidi shed light on the significant collaboration between the institutions, as earlier IBA Karachi and UC Berkeley signed an MoU to develop collaboration between faculty and students. The IBA will work closely with CMES and develop programs and linkages focusing on the various aspects of Islamic and Muslim societies, enabling a shared landscape for discourse.

Seher Ali Shah, Coordinator, Foreign Languages Program and



Lecturer at IBA welcomed and introduced the distinguished speaker. Enumerating his contributions to the fields of humanities, Islamic history and languages, she invited Professor Ahmed to discuss the impact of humanities on academia and its role in shaping communities of discourse.

Professor Ahmed explored various aspects related to canon, translation, and educational policy, and reflected on the work of the humanities in academia and how certain indigenous discursive elements were subverted to serve modernity, creating

a persistent conceptual contradiction in post-colonial societies.

The speaker opined that modernity has played a role in distancing us from our languages and traditions.

Professor Ahmed talked about how individuals in the Global South could find cultural, political, and social empowerment through Islamic humanities.

Following the lecture, Dr. Azam Ali, Assistant Professor, School of Business Studies, IBA and Professor Ahmed, engaged in a conversation in which the esteemed speaker emphasized on

instilling enthusiasm for our own languages, culture and Islamic history in our students and youth. He further added that learning English was fine as it was a global language, but the significance of learning other languages cannot be undermined. An engaging Q&A session ensued.

The inaugural lecture enabled a thought-provoking exploration of the dynamic relationship between Islam and the work of the humanities, showcasing IBA's commitment to fostering intellectual dialogues and advancing knowledge.



PESHAWAR: Vendor displaying traditional food item locally called "Mukhadi Halwa" to attract the customers at Qissa Khawani area.

Govt releases Rs3,097.50 mln for agriculture sector uplift projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has released an amount of Rs3,097.50 million for various agriculture and livestock uplift projects under the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) 2023-24 as against the total allocation of Rs8.850 billion.

The amount was released during the first 06 months of the current financial year (July-December) for the completion of different ongoing development schemes, besides initiating the new projects of vital importance, said an official in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research.

Talking to APP here on Monday, he said that out of the total released funds, an amount of Rs429.97 million had spent so far on different development

schemes during the period under review for achieving sustainable agriculture growth and economic development of the country. The government has allocated Rs 8.850 billion for the Ministry of National Food Security and Research in its PSDP 2023-24 for different projects relating to agriculture and livestock sectors' development in the country, he added.

He said that under PSDP 2023-24, an amount of Rs8.599 billion would be spent on the completion of 21 ongoing developmental projects, whereas Rs 250 billion was allocated for three new schemes during the current financial year to achieve sustainable agriculture growth.

The government has allocated Rs2,800 million for a national program for

the improvement of watercourses phase-II, and Rs. 900 million for the national program for enhancing the commend area in Barani areas of Pakistan and Rs. 700 million for the promotion of olive cultivation on a commercial scale, he added.

Meanwhile, Rs500 million was earmarked for locust emergency and food security, Rs400 million for water conservation in the Barani areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Rs300 million for promoting research for productivity enhancement in pulses and Rs 248 million was allocated for the production enhancement of wheat during the current financial year.

In PSDP 2023-24, he said that the government has allocated Rs147 million for better cotton initiative, Rs100 million for

cage culture cluster development and Rs 240 million for the establishment of consumer sourcing seed authenticity system and strengthening of labs of FSC&RD.

An amount of Rs500 million was also allocated for the national oil seed enhancement program. Rs130 million for the productivity enhancement of sugarcane Rs235 million for the productivity enhancement of rice and Rs440 for pilot shrimp farming cluster development. Besides, the government has also allocated Rs100 million for the Pakistan-Korea joint program on certified seed potato production system, Rs100 million for professional capacity building in agriculture national reforms and Rs. 50 million for the horticulture support programme.

NCHR and Bank AL Habib join hands to empower women and girls

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and Bank AL Habib have signed a Letter of Interest (LOI) committing to work together and empower women and girls through sport-based human development interventions. Their focus is to mobilize marginalized communities.

NCHR is currently engaged in a project around this theme through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), supported by the High Commission of Canada in Pakistan. However, NCHR has identified the need to support the most vulnerable and marginalized group within this project - the Women United Football Academy in Quetta.

The LOI serves as a comprehensive framework outlining the terms of the agreement for Bank AL Habib's sponsorship of the Hazara Women United Football Academy in Quetta. This strategic partnership aims to bolster the academy's capacity to train and equip more girls, thereby extending



the impact of the ongoing CFLI project. Moreover, the sponsorship is designed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Academy beyond the completion of the CFLI project.

'Empower Her' is an NCHR initiative designed to tackle the challenges that hinder girls and women from participating in sports, particularly football, in Pakistan. Despite significant progress in various fields, girls and women in Pakistan still encounter

numerous barriers to access and participation in sports. These challenges include limited sports infrastructure, inadequate funding, deeply ingrained societal stereotypes and gender biases, a shortage of training and developmental opportunities, and a dearth of female representation at all sporting levels.

'Empower Her' aims to address these disparities by establishing a supportive and inclusive sports ecosystem that empowers women and girls to

actively participate, compete, and excel in football. The project will initially focus on four cities in Pakistan: Karachi, Quetta, Chitral, and Islamabad. To achieve these goals, the NCHR has collaborated with local implementing partners deeply embedded within the beneficiary communities including Karishma Ali Foundation in Chitral, Women United Football Academy in Quetta, and Karachi United Foundation in Karachi.

FFC inaugurates its FACE Center at Sahiwal



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Fauji Fertilizer Company (FFC) has inaugurated its NPO Food Security &

Agriculture Center of Excellence (FACE), Sahiwal Chapter at District Sahiwal to ensure Food Security in the country through enhancing

Farmer's access to latest technology, best farming practices and quality inputs. GGM Marketing FFC, Mr Ather Javed, inaugurated the newly

established center as an important step towards the agricultural community, in affirmation of FFC's pledge of scaling up the program nationwide.

The new facility has a fleet of dedicated 10 agriculture drones to support local farmers, including 14,000 locals that have already benefited from FACE initiatives. The ceremony was attended by the management of FACE, FFC, partner organizations, and the local community to mark the formal commencement of operations in the area.

COO FACE, Mr Hasan Akram highlighted the vision FACE has for the transformation of agriculture in the area and projects in near future targeting vulnerable segments, especially women folk of the area.

Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Maersk Cape Town, Hafnia Myna, Parnassos and AAI Prelude scheduled to load/offload Containers, Condensate oil, Steel Coil and Wheat, berthed at Container Terminal, Oil Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal and Grain Terminal respectively on report periodic.

Meanwhile two more ships, Mookda Naree and Lucky Star to load/unload Corn and Palm oil also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours. A total of eight ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Maersk Cape Town and Beteleur are left the port on Thursday and another ship, Parnassos is expected to sail on same day.

The Frontier Post classifieds

TO ADVERTISE IN The Frontier Post

For Classified advertisements please contact
Mobile: +92-334-1001900
Email: shoaib@thefrontierpost.com

COURT NOTICE BUNER

IN the Court of Tazeen Qazi Civil Judge VII /Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar.Suit No 311/. Institution 2022. Date of hearing. 30/1/2024.Amer Faren Khan VS Ahmed Ali. Notice to no 6.Alam Sher son. 7.Mst Yasmeen.8.Akay ds/o Sakena d/o Husain Shah. 9.Mohammad Imran. 10. Mohammad Alam.11.Mohammad Zubir sons. 12.Rabihat. 13.Riasat. 14.Zamia. 15.Dana ds/o Mst Roja d/o Husain Shah. 27.Gul Samen Khan

s/o Masal Khan. 39.Amer Afsar Khan. 40.Ekhtiar Ali. 41.Muhsin Khan sons. 42.Bakht Afsar son. 44. Mumtaz Begum. 45.Zahidon Begum. 46. Zubida Bibi ds/o Merajan Khan. 24/1. Fazal Amen.24/4.Kafor Khan sons of Shah Room Khan. 38/1.Amer Khan s/o Merza Ali Khan resident of Shalbandai tehsel Gagra 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 30/1/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

BATKHELA

In the court of Mr. Kaleem Ullah Civil Judge-1/I/ Ilaqa Qazi Malakand at Batkheila, Case No

57/1 of 2023, Next date: 26/01/2024. Mr. Shahi Gul and others, Versus Mr. Jehan Ullah and others, Proclamation Against Legal heirs: (02) Sher Zada S/O Muhammad Zaman Resident of Mohallah Shaheedan Thana (5) Mrs Musarat Bibi resident of Barwal District Dir (7) Muhammad Sherin (8) Muhammad Shoaib s/o Muhammad Zaman resident of Pir Khel Present Mohallah Totkey Shaheed Batkheila District Malakand. In the above title case the service of you above named defendants is not possible with ordinary means, hence you are hereby informed through this proclamation to attend this court on 26/01/2024 at 08:00am in person or through appointed agent/attorney or through counsel, otherwise you shall be place and proceed against ex-parte.



LAHORE: A vendor is busy in displaying Matka tea cups to attract the customers at Anarkali market.



In brief

Emma loses to Wang Yafan

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Emma Raducanu says there was "no way" she was going to quit in her Grand Slam comeback as she battled valiantly before losing at the Australian Open. Britain's Raducanu, 21, was beaten 6-4 4-6 6-4 by China's Wang Yafan in a second-round match where she was "throwing up" in her mouth. Raducanu was playing only her fourth match after wrist and ankle surgeries which kept her out for eight months. "Everything I went through last year has made me so much tougher," she said. "There was no way I was going to pull out. She was going to have to beat me - and she did." Raducanu's exit came after Katie Boulter, who has taken over as British number one, lost to Chinese 12th seed Zheng Qinwen on the same Kia Arena court. They were bidding to set up an all-British meeting in the third round, but instead it is the Chinese pair who will meet on Saturday. The defeats for Raducanu and Boulter mean there are no British players left in the women's singles. Cameron Norrie, who fought back from two sets down to win in five sets earlier on Thursday, is the only remaining player from the nation in the singles draws. Positive signs for Raducanu despite defeat For any player coming back from such a long absence, it takes time to reach match sharpness and patience with their progress will be required. With Raducanu, given the long list of physical and mental struggles she has endured since winning the 2021 US Open, even more caution is necessary. Therefore it was unsurprising - but not necessarily worrying - to see Raducanu suffer in the deciding set of an intense battle with 94th-ranked Wang.

Belgium beat GB

VALENCIA (Agencies): Belgium women have qualified for the Olympics for the first time in 12 years, beating Great Britain 3-2 in the FIH qualifiers semi-final in Valencia, Spain. Barbara Nelen, Stephanie Vandenberghe and Justine Rasiar's scores sealed their spot at Paris 2024. GB's Olympic hopes are not over yet as they can still qualify. They will compete against Ireland on Saturday in the third place play-off, with the winner qualifying for Paris. Earlier on Thursday, Ireland were beaten 3-0 by Spain in a shootout after their game finished goalless. London 2012 is the only time Belgium's women have previously competed in hockey at an Olympics. "I am super happy and proud with how my team played," player of the match Nelen said. "After 12 years, it's better late than never." In the first quarter, Britain created the first real chance with Lily Owsley winning a penalty corner but the team could not convert. Belgium then hit back as Nelen scored after controlling a high ball in the circle. Britain started the second quarter in a lively manner and it was not long until Tessa Howard powered home to equalise. Some heroic defence from Belgium just before half-time kept the score 1-1. There was some controversy in the third quarter as Vanden Borre scored from a penalty corner, with Great Britain wanting a video review because the ball was deflected in off Alix Gerniers' shoulder, meaning it should have been disallowed. But the officials did not see Gerniers' touch with the shoulder in real time, and the review appeal was not made quickly enough for them then to go back and check - so the goal stood.



MELBOURNE: Emma Raducanu of Great Britain in action against Yafan Wang of China in the second round on Day 5 of the 2024 Australian Open.

Sri Lanka clinch T20 series after record low Zimbabwe total

COLOMBO (AFP): Wainindu Hasaranga's bottom-order demolition eased Sri Lanka to a 2-1 series win against Zimbabwe Thursday after the tourists were bowled out in Colombo for 82, their worst-ever T20 total. The home skipper's 4-15 included two scalps on his final two deliveries and Sri Lanka cruised to a nine-wicket victory inside 11 overs.

Pathum Nissanka (39 not out) and Kusal Mendis (33) added 64 runs in 46 balls before a deceptive turner from left-arm spinner Sean Williams took the latter off-stump for Zimbabwe's sole breakthrough. Nissanka sealed Sri Lanka's win by launching Sikandar Raza for six over long-on when the scores drew level. Zimbabwe had a creditable start with 56-3 after the first six overs of power play but struggled to score boundaries once fielding restrictions eased. Number three batsman Brian Bennett top-scored with 29 off just 12 balls, including four boundaries in the second over, before a Hasaranga catch off Angelo Mathews sent him back. But a quick collapse saw the tourists lose their last six wickets for just 11 runs including three in the final three balls of the innings. Sri Lanka's fielding stepped up after a shambol-

ic show in the second match handed them a four-wicket defeat and Zimbabwe their first T20 win in the island nation. Hasaranga's 4-15 was backed up with a return to form by ex-skipper Mathews, who shared the new ball and finished with two wickets. Mathews had conceded 24 runs in the final over of the second match to gift Zimbabwe their comeback from behind win. Thursday marked the first T20 series win for Sri Lanka after a drought stretching back to their Asia Cup win in 2022. They next host Afghanistan for a one-off Test and six white-ball matches.

Khubaib picked up pace bowling after being inspired by South Africa great Dale Steyn. Possessing a smooth action with a steady approach to the crease, he has showcased his ability to hit probing lengths regularly and frustrate batters with his line and length. Khubaib has shown promise with the bat too, demonstrating good defence and power-hitting skills. His reliability as a lower-order batter was evident in the net sessions where coaches put their trust in his batting ability. "I'm glad to have represented Pakistan at the recent U19 Asia Cup which was a great exposure for me," Khubaib said. "I've done well in the domestic U19 competitions with both bat and ball which gives me confidence to do well in the World Cup. We have a very good squad that has been mentored by some of the best coaches including Mohammad Yousuf and I'm sure we'll put a great show in the World Cup."

KP's all-rounder Khubaib dedicated to help Pakistan win ICC U19 World Cup

ISLAMABAD (INP): Bowling all-rounder Khubaib Khalil hailing from district Karak of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa dedicated to help Pakistan win the ICC Men's U19 World Cup 2024 in South Africa. Against Afghanistan U19, Khubaib made his One-Day debut for Pakistan U19 in the ACC Men's Asia Cup 2023-24 and bagged two wickets in a promising spell. It should be mentioned here that father of Khubaib was not in favour of enrolling him in a proper cricket facility due to financial constraints. His first coach, Matiullah, earmarked him as a future star and helped him get admission to the Islamia Cricket Academy in Kohat, some 70 kilometers from his hometown. At the academy, young Khubaib was allowed to use the equipment and train every other day, resulting in his selection for FATA Region U13 in the PCB U13 Inter-Regional T20 Tournament 2017 and the subsequent edition in 2018. He shed light on his struggles in the early days in a chat with Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Digital, "I have played cricket in very tough circumstances. I had to work odd jobs to make ends meet, even working as a labourer. My father was struggling with financial issues. I got some money from PCB after playing in the National U19 competitions which helped me sort out a lot of issues. That was the first time I bought my kit bag whereas before that I was using Matiullah's equipment."

Khubaib picked up pace bowling after being inspired by South Africa great Dale Steyn. Possessing a smooth action with a steady approach to the crease, he has showcased his ability to hit probing lengths regularly and frustrate batters with his line and length. Khubaib has shown promise with the bat too, demonstrating good defence and power-hitting skills. His reliability as a lower-order batter was evident in the net sessions where coaches put their trust in his batting ability. "I'm glad to have represented Pakistan at the recent U19 Asia Cup which was a great exposure for me," Khubaib said. "I've done well in the domestic U19 competitions with both bat and ball which gives me confidence to do well in the World Cup. We have a very good squad that has been mentored by some of the best coaches including Mohammad Yousuf and I'm sure we'll put a great show in the World Cup."

Arthur, Bradburn and Puttick resign from their respective positions

LAHORE (PPI): Mickey Arthur, Grant Bradburn and Andrew Puttick, who were assigned duties at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Lahore after a change in their portfolios in November 2023, have resigned from their respective positions.

According to PCB information on Thursday, in April 2023, Arthur was appointed Director of the Pakistan men's cricket team while Bradburn was announced head coach of the Pakistan national men's side earlier last year. Former South Africa cricketer Puttick was Pakistan's batting coach since April 2023. Prior to his recent stint, Arthur was the head coach of the Pakistan Men's Cricket Team from 2016 to 2019 during which Pakistan attained the No. 1 spot in the ICC Test team rankings and won the 2017 ICC Champions Trophy. In



international cricket, Arthur has also served as the head coach of South Africa, Australia and Sri Lanka. 57-year-old Bradburn, who had previously represented New Zealand in 18 international matches from 1990 to 2001, served as the fielding coach of the Pakistan men's team from 2018 to 2020 before taking up the Head of High-Performance Coaching role at NCA till October 2021. Under his tenure as

head coach, Pakistan achieved the No. 1 spot in the ICC ODI team rankings for the first time in May 2023. All three individuals informed the Pakistan Cricket Board of their decision to leave their respective jobs by the end of January 2024. The decision was taken amicably between all the stakeholders. The PCB wishes them well in their future endeavours and is grateful for their services.

Australia edge Syria 1-0 to reach Asian Cup knockouts



DOHA (AFP): Australia followed hosts and holders Qatar into the last 16 of the Asian Cup with an unconvincing 1-0 victory over Syria on Thursday. Jackson Irvine scored the winner on the hour with his second goal of the tournament, swivelling in the box before poking the ball through the legs of goalkeeper Ahmad Madanieh. Graham Arnold's Socceroos are into the knockout with a group game to spare but will have to play better than this if they are to lift the Asian Cup for a second time. India play Uzbekistan in the same group later in the day. Lower-ranked Syria nearly went ahead inside five minutes when their Colombian-born striker Pablo Sabbag pinged the ball off the foot

of Australia's post. Sabbag was left bloodied in the face midway through the half after a stray forearm by Aiden O'Neill, and the midfielder was booked. But Australia, who reached the last 16 of the Qatar World Cup before a 2-1 defeat to eventual champions Argentina, were by now in control. Arnold criticised his side for failing to make more of their set-pieces in their 2-0 opening win over India, and 10 minutes before the break Australia nearly went ahead from a corner. Defender Gethin Jones won the ball with a looping header and midfielder Irvine — who scored in the India victory — just failed to reach the ball on the stretch at the far post. Ranked 91 in the world to Australia's 25, Syria

were hardly in it as an attacking force at the compact Jassim bin Hamad Stadium, despite the best efforts of their fanatical supporters. Hector Cuper's men, who drew 0-0 with Uzbekistan, came to life at the end of the first half. Winger Ammar Ramadan was a constant threat and dragged a snapshot wide, ruffling the side-netting. A Sabbag attempt from outside the box curled over. Arnold trudged down the tunnel for half-time with a shake of the head. By the 57th minute he had seen enough and made a triple change, throwing on the attacking midfielders Riley McGree and Samuel Silvera, plus midfielder Keanu Baccus. It did the trick and three minutes later Australia took the lead through Germany-based midfielder Irvine. They were mostly comfortable after that, but there was nearly embarrassment for goalkeeper Maty Ryan when he spilled a tame effort from distance in the 67th minute, scrambling back to claw the ball off his goal-line. The final round of matches in Group B is on Tuesday, when Australia play Uzbekistan and India face Syria.

Sidra, Sadaf hit tons as Lahore crush Peshawar in National Women's T20 Tournament

RAWALPINDI (APP): Sidra Amin and Sadaf Shams scored undefeated centuries to take Lahore to a dominating victory over Peshawar at the Shoaib Akhtar Cricket Stadium here in the third round of the National Women's T20 Tournament 2023-24 on Thursday.

Lahore's decision to bat first paid dividends as the side put a mammoth 233 for no loss in the allotted 20 overs. Both the opening batters smashed unbeaten centuries. Sidra Amin took 55 deliveries to hit 113, including 12 boundaries and six maximums. She was supported by Sadaf Shams, who scored 106 from 66, showcasing 15 fours and two sixes. Peshawar bowlers toiled hard with the ball, but remained wicketless. In return, Peshawar could only manage 86-4 in 20 overs. Opening batters Aleena Shah (11, 16b, 2x4s) and Momina Riyasat (1, 5b) both fell cheaply to right-arm pacer Fatima Khan. Tehzeeb Shah, who contributed 20 from 21 with four boundaries, was caught Sidra off leg-spinner Ghulam Fatima's bowling. Sidra later ran out Shabnam Hayat (15, 37b, 1x4) as well. Raahima Syed scored an unbeaten 28 from 42, including three boundaries, which went in vain as Peshawar lost by 147 runs. Sidra and Sadaf were



jointly awarded players of the match. In another third-round fixture of the National Women's T20 Tournament, Karachi handed Multan a seven-wicket defeat as they chased the 92-run target in 11.5 overs. Javeria Khan top-scored with the bat, hitting 47 from 37, including six fours and a maximum. Syeda Aroob Shah, the fifth batter in, produced an unbeaten knock of 17 from 10, including a six and a four, to take Karachi over the line. Yusra Amir (15, 19b, 2x4s) was the other contributor with the bat. Tasmia Rubab, Asma Shareef and Rehmat Noreen got a wicket each for Multan. Earlier, Multan were bundled over for a paltry 91. Opening batter Aleena Masood top-scored for the side with a 37-ball 26, including four boundaries. Skipper Gull Feroza chipped in 13 from 11, including two fours, before

she fell to off-spinner Rameen Shamim. Warda Yousaf (11, 12b, 2x4s) and Tasmia (10, 6b, 2x4s) also furthered their side's total. Aroob was the pick of the bowlers for Karachi, grabbing three wickets for just 16 runs in four overs. Rameen accounted for two scalps for 15 runs in three overs. Skipper Fatima Sana, Omaira Sohail and Syeda Masooma Zahra also dismissed a batter each. For her all-round brilliance, Aroob was adjudged player of the match. At Islamabad's Diamond Club Ground, Aliya Riaz and Natalia Parvaiz steered Rawalpindi to a comfortable eight-wicket victory in the third round of the National Women's T20 Tournament. After opting to bowl first against Quetta, Rawalpindi had a strong start when Fatima Shah struck to get opening batter Dua Majid out for just three runs. Fareeha Mahmood and

Tuba Hassan stitched a 58-run second-wicket partnership to bring a semblance of stability to the innings. Skipper Aliya Riaz provided the breakthrough as she rattled Fareeha's (29, 38b, 6x4s) stumps. Jannat Rasheed (13, 14b, 1x4) also chipped in with the bat. Tuba, who scored an undefeated half-century, was the top-scorer for Quetta. Her knock of 70 from 43, showcasing seven fours and three sixes, took the team to 136-5 in 20 overs. Left-arm spinner Tania Saeed picked up two wickets while Fatima Shah and Aima Saleem removed a batter each. Rawalpindi had a faltering start to the chase. Right-arm pacer Khairun Nisa landed two early blows with both the opening batters, Aima (2, 6b) and Fajar Naveed (10, 11b, 1x4), walking back to the pavilion cheaply. Aliya and Natalia built an undefeated 124-run stand for the third wicket, which allowed Rawalpindi to recuperate after the early setback. Natalia hit an undefeated 57 from 44, with seven fours and a six, supporting her skipper batting at the end. Aliya, who was also awarded player of the match, smashed an unbeaten 63 from 49 deliveries, including seven boundaries and four maximums, to take her team over the rope.

Former England spin bowling coach David Parsons joins Multan Sultans

MULTAN (APP): David Parsons, one of the most renowned spin bowling coaches, has joined Multan Sultans for the HBL Pakistan Super League 9. Parsons brings with him heaps of coaching and player development experience after working as England men's side's spin bowling coach and England cricket's performance director. He is currently working as performance director at England Netball. Parsons has also worked at the Multan Sultans academy in Lodhran in 2020 with up and coming spinners in the likes of Faisal Akram and Umer Khan. Faisal, left-arm wrist spinner, is part of Multan Sultans squad for the HBL PSL 9. David Parsons said that "I am very excited to be joining

Multan Sultans for the HBL PSL 9 as a spin bowling coach. I have had the experience of working at the Multan Sultans academy in Lodhran at the invitation of Ali Khan Tareen and I was very impressed by the young talent there. I am especially excited to meet up again with Faisal Akram, with whom I worked in the academy. "I know the immense work that Multan Sultans put in on talent identification and bringing together the various facets of high performance within cricket, including coaching and sports science. This makes working at this franchise an exciting prospect for any coach. I am sure that this is going to be an amazing experience." Owner and chief executive Ali Khan Tareen said that the "David Parsons'

presence in our camp will prove to be beneficial for our spinners and I am delighted that he is coming to Pakistan for the upcoming HBL PSL. Parsons is one of the most qualified coaches around the world and I want our bowlers to make full use of his knowledge and experience. "Parsons is very accessible and eager to pass on knowledge. The players were very comfortable in working with him during his time at the Multan Sultans academy. It is my vision that we work on the technical aspects of our cricketers from the very beginning and provide them world-class facilities. "After this season, Parsons, and all of our coaches will be conducting camps at the Multan Sultans academy.



In brief

Saadat Hasan Manto remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned great Urdu writer Saadat Hasan Manto remembered on his 111th birth anniversary on Thursday. He was born on May 11, 1912 in Samrala, Ludhiana, British India. He migrated to Pakistan after partition in 1947. Some of his publications are, Atishpare, Manto Ke Afsane, Dhuane, Afsane Aur Drame, Laazat-e-Sang, Thanda Gosht, Baghair Ijazat, Burque, Ratti, Masha and Tolah. He also wrote several famous letters to Uncle Sam, which were published in the English language as well. On January 18, 2005, the Government of Pakistan issued a postage stamp to commemorate his services on his 50th death anniversary. For most of his lifetime, Manto resided in Lahore. He died on January 18, 1955. On August 14, 2012, Manto was also honored with the Nishan-e-Imtiaz award by the Pakistani government.

Police arrest drugs peddlers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The district police here on Thursday arrested 12 drug peddlers and other criminals and recovered drugs, illegal weapons from them. The police launched operation against criminals on the direction of Regional Police Officer (RPO), Syed Khuram Ali, said a press release. Saddar police recovered 1.6 Kg hashish for Bilal while 510 gm hashish was recovered from Qadir by Mandra police. Wah Cantt police arrested Amin and recovered 18 liters liquor from his possession. Jatli police arrested drug trafficker namely Ammar and recovered 10 liter liquor from him, while Banni police arrested Rashid and recovered a pistol 30 bore from his custody. The police registered separate cases against the accused and started investigations. Meanwhile Civil Line police took action against kite flying and arrested Usman and recovered 150 kites from him. The police registered a case against the accused.

4-day training workshop

ISLAMABAD (APP): Four-day training workshop for the digitization of community teacher courses concluded at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Thursday. Speaking during the ceremony, UNESCO representative, Aleema Bibi termed AIOU as the most effective platform for bringing out-of-school children into the educational network. "Collaboration with this university will be a focal point for special attention because addressing issues of children outside school is crucial for Pakistan's prosperity", she said. She mentioned that digitizing educational courses for the professional development of community teachers was a UNESCO project accomplished through collaboration with AIOU. She stated that efforts by AIOU to bring out-of-school children into the educational network are commendable. While presiding over the concluding ceremony, Professor Dr. Fazal Rahman, Dean of the Faculty of Education, stated that University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood Khan, is giving special attention to maintaining standards, and under his leadership, we will link the university's educational courses with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for sustainable progress. He emphasized that digitizing educational courses will contribute to the professional development of community teachers.



RAWALPINDI: Ambassador of Egypt H.E. Dr. Ihab Abdel Hamid Hasan called on Minister for Defence, Lt. Gen. (Retd) Anwar Ali Hyder at Ministry of Defence.

‘Systematic framework to benefit from Pakistani diaspora experience’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif, emphasized the need for a systematic framework to benefit from the wealth of experience of the Pakistani diaspora worldwide.

During a meeting with Pakistani professionals in Switzerland, Dr. Umar Saif acknowledged the diaspora as a valuable asset to the country, highlighting their commendable contribution to the stability and growth of

Pakistan's economy, said a news release received here on Thursday.

In addition to engaging with the Pakistani diaspora, Dr. Umar Saif visited the Salesforce pavilion at Davos to explore opportunities for Pakistan to become a hub of Salesforce expertise. He also met with the Chairman of VEON, Terzioğlu, with CEO Jazz Aamir Ibrahim in attendance. Furthermore, the Caretaker IT Minister addressed the CEPI-Global Fund-IQVIA

Session on Disease Surveillance in Davos. He shared insights into Pakistan's use of technology for disease surveillance, citing examples of monitoring dengue, Covid, and TB. The session was attended by several global leaders in public health, including Dr. Jean Kaseya, DG Africa CDC, Richard Hatchett, CEO, CEPI, Peter Sands, CEO, The Global Fund, and others.

Dr. Umar Saif also visited the Crypto Pavilion during his engagements in Davos.

ANF recovers 389 kg drugs in 11 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover 389 kg drugs and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He informed that five hashish-filled capsules were recovered from the stomach of a passenger going to Abu Dhabi at Bacha Khan Airport.

250 grams intoxicated tablets were recovered from two passengers going to Muscat from Multan Airport. 210 grams Ice drug

was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Jinnah Airport Karachi.

88 grams heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Malaysia at Allama Iqbal Airport.

354,400 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a container being sent to Thailand from South Asia Pakistan Terminal Karachi. In seventh operation, 210 kg hashish and 7 kg opium were recovered in two separate operations conducted near Theera Orakzai area.

In 8th operation, 91 kg hashish was recovered from

two suspects netted near RCD Road Hub.

The spokesman informed that 29 kg hashish and 7 kg opium were recovered from an accused rounded up near Kot Abdul Malik.

Interchange Sheikhupura. 18 kg Ice was recovered from an accused arrested near Sona Khan Chowk Quetta while two kg hashish was recovered from an accused nabbed in Toba Tek Singh. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

Over 2,000 cases reported on ICT-15 App in three months

ISLAMABAD (APP): In the past three months, over 2,000 cases have been reported on the ICT-15 app, created to provide citizens a platform to inform the police about any unlawful activities, illegal resident foreigners in urban areas, and criminal elements.

Additionally, the citizens can obtain immediate assistance from the police by sending images, videos, or audio messages related to any incident or occurrence, a public relations officer said. According to the details, following the special directives of the Islamabad Capital City

Police Officer (ICCP), Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, Islamabad Capital Police's "ICT-15" application promptly assists urban residents in emergencies in the federal capital.

He said that this app proves to be extremely helpful in providing immediate assistance to urban residents during any emergency.

In the past three months, 2,158 cases were recorded on the "ICT-15" app, with 43 cases related to the police, distributed as 23 in October, 15 in November, and five in December.

Moreover, Islamabad

Capital Police promptly resolved these cases, considering merit and transparency. The "ICT-15" app ensures that the police can reach the scene of assistance in minimal time upon receiving information. It has proven to be a valuable tool for urban assistance in the federal capital, allowing citizens to contribute to crime prevention. Islamabad Capital Police is committed to ensuring the safety of life and property for city residents, utilizing all available resources, and preventing any elements from disrupting urban peace.

Proactive measures needed to avoid cyber security threats to children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Kaspersky experts have called for proactive measures from parents to protect their children from cybersecurity threats in 2024.

They have developed the Kaspersky Cybersecurity Alphabet, containing key concepts from the cybersecurity industry.

The book aims to educate children about new technologies, cyber hygiene rules, avoiding online threats, and recognizing fraudsters' tricks.

The PDF version of the book is available for download, as per a news release.

According to Kaspersky, parents need the skill to discuss their offspring's online experiences and stress the importance of using parenting digital apps for online safety while respecting personal space.

To ensure children are shielded from downloading malicious files, Kaspersky recommends installing a trusted security solution on their devices. Tools like Kaspersky's digital parenting app, Safe

Kids, provide parents with effective means to safeguard their children against cyber threats in the digital age.

It is crucial to teach children the basics of cybersecurity from an early age, instructing them on avoiding cybercriminal traps, understanding potential threats during gaming, and properly protecting personal data. Usman Qureshi, Country Representative in Pakistan for Kaspersky, said that such knowledge is now a necessity for both adults and the youngest users.

Kaspersky experts delve into key cybersecurity trends that parents should be aware of and provide tips on safeguarding their children's online activities. A UN research indicates that approximately 80 percent of young people claim to interact with AI multiple times a day.

With the advancement of AI, several lesser-known applications, particularly chatbots, can easily provide age-inappropriate content when prompted.

Police arrest 13 lawbreakers

RAWALPINDI (APP): District police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other lawbreakers here on Thursday arrested 13 accused. Police recovered over five kg charras, 53 liters of liquor, three 30-bore pistols, ammunition, 150 kites, kite flying string rolls and other items from their possession.

A police spokesperson said that Saddar Wah, Mandra and Morgah police rounded up five accused namely Zeeshan, Bilal, Waqas, Qadir, and Umair and recovered five kg charras and 70 grams of heroin from their possession.

Civil Lines police rounded up a kite seller namely Usman and seized 150 kites and four kite flying string rolls.

He informed that Saddar Baroni, Wah Cantt and Jatli police netted Sher Ahmed, Amin, Ammar and Adnan and recovered 53 liters liquor from their possession.

Similarly, Bani, Taxila and Dharmal police conducted raids in their respective jurisdiction and recovered three 30-bore pistols and ammunition from the possession of Rashid, Rehmatullah, and Tabasam.

Cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process, he added.

AC cracks down on price gouging in Potohar Subdivision

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a swift response to the directives of Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon, the Assistant Commissioner of Potohar Nahel Hafiz, in a drive to curb price hikes on Thursday conducted a thorough inspection of various localities within the subdivision.

The focus of the operation was to enforce fair pricing and combat overcharging practices that have been a persistent concern, ICT spokesman Dr. Abdullah Tabasam said. Venturing into the heart of the issue, AC Potohar took a proactive approach by displaying an explicit rate list in the bustling vegetable market.

‘Govt initiative in exploration sector to attract investment’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister of Energy, Muhammad Ali, expressed hope on Thursday that the government's initiative in the exploration sector would attract investment in the oil and gas sectors.

During his presentation at the National Seminar on "Pakistan's Economy Crisis: Challenges and the Way Forward," organized by NUST, the minister outlined that the government is set to permit leading oil and gas E&P companies, including OGDCL, PPL, GHPL, Mari Gas, and foreign entities, to directly sell 50 percent of gas to the private sector and the remaining 50 percent to state-owned gas companies. This initiative aims to encourage companies to invest more in oil and gas exploration.

Muhammad Ali emphasized the importance of geographical and seismic studies to enhance onshore and offshore exploration.

He called for investment in refineries, explorations, and terminal infrastructure, stressing the need for research and development in hydrocarbons, renewables, and minerals sectors to meet domestic energy requirements.

The minister highlighted the signifi-

cance of optimizing allocations for natural gas, revisiting priority orders, and revising Petroleum and LPG policies for the conversion of domestic consumers from natural gas to LPG. He also advocated for devolution of power to ease business processes and investment in Genco's for efficiency improvement.

Muhammad Ali emphasized the need for investment and capacity building in transmission lines between the south and north regions.

He underscored the importance of E&P sector reforms, a supportive investor policy, and stakeholder inclusiveness to channel untapped natural resources. The minister further said that indigenous gas is majorly consumed by the Power, Domestic sector, industry, and Fertilizer sector.

The rapid decline in resources is to be met through costlier imports, requiring a significant push to exploration activity and demand destruction.

He said that Pakistan needed to learn from the world's best practices, indigenizing resources, and providing a level playing field to boost investor confidence and affordability in the country for economic stability and growth.

Senate body discusses certificate verification of overseas employees

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sub-committee of the Senate Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development on Thursday briefly discussed the training and certificates verification of overseas employees revealed as challenges faced by them.

The committee was chaired by Senator Engr. Ruksana Zuberi for the third consecutive day at the Parliament House.

The meeting was attended by Senator Shaheen Khalid Butt and senior officials from the Ministry of Industries and Production (MOIP), Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MOFEPT), National University of Technology (NUTECH), National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), Pakistan Industrial Technical Assistance Center (PITAC), Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MOITT), Pakistan Institute of Management (PIM), and Higher Education Commission (HEC). The meeting commenced with the Convenor Engr. Ruksana Zuberi, reflecting on GCC countries and the facilitation of overseas Pakistani workers. The committee members discussed in detail the training and certifications of overseas employees, emphasizing international recognition and compliance with global standards.

In addressing the 650,000 employees who returned from abroad, officials from the ministries said that they have prioritized their needs and committed to enhancing their skill sets. Moreover, Senator Shaheen Khalid Butt inquired from the institutes about data for policy-making regarding short and long courses. PITAC officials explained that, through case studies, they found that 34 percent of overseas employees were jobless.

They also noted the challenges in approaching overseas students outside GCC countries.

Education Ministry officials collectively agreed to regularize conducting thorough research to determine the accurate turnover of overseas employees. The Convenor of the committee suggested merging different databases to make employee data easily retrievable. Officials from HEC apprised the committee members about their initiatives to introduce a portal for worldwide certificate verification.

Furthermore, officials from the Pakistan Institute of Management requested that HEC provide certification to laborers working abroad to mitigate potential issues.

The Convenor recommended that the HEC also incorporate language skills, digital literacy, and knowledge of local laws into the curriculum for overseas employees. The Convenor emphasized the importance of the Dublin Accord and Sydney Accord, highlighting the adverse impact of inactivity in this regard on many people.

Dr Jamal directs BBH renovation by January 31

RAWALPINDI (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare and Population Welfare Dr. Jamal Nasir on Thursday directed the officials concerned to complete the reconstruction and renovation work of the Benazir Bhutto Hospital (BBH) Outdoor Patient Department by January 31.

During a visit to review the ongoing BBH's renovation work, he said that the OPD including pathology, eye ward, ENT, dentistry, skin and blood bank departments would be made functional by the end of this month.

The minister said that available funds would be provided to nursing hostel and college that would be fully functional in February.

He also inspected the hospital's basement and said that work was being carried out to lay a new water supply and sewage system to resolve the issue of water seepage.

Dr. Jamal Nasir said that the repair and reconstruction work of the three blocks of Doctors Hostel was being started for Rs 140 million.

Caretaker Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare and Population Welfare Dr. Jamal Nasir said that the Punjab government was committed to providing the best kind of health facilities to the residents of Rawalpindi and more than three billion rupees had been provided for the reconstruction and repair of Holy Family Hospital.



ISLAMABAD: Panel discussion on "Changing Landscape of Pakistani Electorate & Role of Political Parties in Fair Representation" organized by Press Information Department.

Illegal mining is being prevented

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MoMP) said that currently the process of extracting precious and semi-precious stones is going on transparently. The ministry's spokesman Humayun Afghan, said that the ministry is trying to provide more facilities in the field of mining, especially precious stones in the country. The spokesman added: "We generally have precious stones in the provinces of Nuristan, Kunar, Laghman, Panjshir and Badakhshan.

Four killed in Volleyball game clash

KABUL (Agenices): Officials in Afghanistan's Laghman Province, under Taliban administration, have reported that four people were killed during a dispute between two families at a volleyball game in the Alishing District. Yunus Yusufzai, the spokesperson for the Taliban's Laghman police, stated in a press release that this incident occurred on Wednesday 17th of January, in the village of Nooram, Ali Shing District.

Contract for extraction work of Herat oil field soon: Dalawar



KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Sheikh Shahabuddin Dalawar, recently held a meeting with Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, to discuss the ministry's plans and accomplishments. Dalawar highlighted the signing of contracts for the establishment of three significant cement projects in the provinces

of Herat and Kandahar, with a total investment of four hundred million dollars. He also announced the finalization of agreements for five substantial iron ore mining projects involving both local and international companies. During the discussion, Dalawar stressed the importance of contract transparency, the prevention of smuggling and illegal mining, and the improved management of

the nation's mineral resources. He drew attention to the mining activities in Panjshir, where 450 mining licenses have been issued, creating job opportunities for approximately ten thousand locals. Dalawar also spoke about the active oil wells in the Darya Amu River, which extract 1100 tons of oil daily. Plans for the future expansion of the Herat oil sector, spanning 23 square kilometers

across ten blocks, were also discussed. The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum's efforts in job creation within the mining sector were recognized, with around 150,000 individuals currently employed both directly and indirectly. Mujahid commended the ministry's initiatives, acknowledging their significant contribution to the country's economic growth and job creation.

Taliban poses no security issue to Iran: Iranian Official



KABUL (Agenices): Ali Akbar Ahmadian, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, has stated in his latest remarks that "Taliban" has not posed any security issues in Iran. According to ISNA, the news agency affiliated with the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Ahmadian made these statements on Wednesday, the 17th of January, during a program called "National Excellence" held at the central building of Islamic Azad University. The Secretary of Iran's

Supreme National Security Council has mentioned that the approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards how to interact with the Taliban regime has led to Iran being the only place where security problems have not arisen. In his remarks, he has indirectly compared the Taliban with Hamas in Gaza, stating that the Islamic Republic of Iran has adopted a unified approach regarding its interactions with these two groups. This Iranian official has not made any references to the Taliban's rela-

tionships with other neighboring countries in Afghanistan or the increase in insecurity in the region. However, since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, several skirmishes have taken place between the Taliban and Iranian forces. These conflicts have arisen primarily due to border issues, disputes over water rights, and the influx of Afghan refugees into Iran. While Iran has generally adopted a cautious approach in its dealings with the Taliban govern-

ment, these tensions along the Afghan-Iranian border highlight the complex dynamics and challenges faced by both sides in maintaining stability and security in the region. Efforts to address these issues and foster cooperation between Iran and the Taliban continue to be a critical concern for regional stability. Despite these, the Iranian official believes that the Taliban regime has not caused any security issues in Iran, making it the only place where this is the case.

Worsening economic insecurity under Taliban rule in Afghanistan: UNDP



KABUL (Agenices): The latest report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Afghanistan indicates a worsening economic insecurity under the control of the Taliban regime. Released on Thursday, January 18th, the organization's report reveals that 69% of Afghanistan's population faces a shortage of necessities, includ-

ing healthcare, essential goods, suitable living conditions, and vital job opportunities. According to this report, the social and economic situation in Afghanistan has darkened since the emergence of the Taliban administration, resulting in severe economic insecurity for the population. The UNDP report states that currently, seven out of

every ten people in Afghanistan are unable to meet their basic life requirements and are grappling with economic insecurity. The findings of this organization continue to highlight the attack on women's rights and its consequences, alongside the collapse of the banking system in Afghanistan, as undeniable setbacks that have raised serious concerns.

Since the Taliban assumed control in Afghanistan, they have imposed severe restrictions on women, including bans on education and working with aid agencies, both domestic and international. These restrictions have further aggravated the economic plight of the Afghan population, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis in the country.

Hakim Bigzaad

Mulla Hibatullah, the Taliban leader, has claimed in his latest statements that women's rights in Afghanistan have been fully secured. Tahira Nasiri, a women's rights activist and founder of the women's liberation movement, however, says that the leader of the Taliban is making these statements while girls in Afghanistan are being detained and transferred to security offices on charges of "dress code violations" and released in exchange for bail. In an audio recording attributed to the leader of

the Taliban, which was released on Wednesday, January 17, during a religious scholars' meeting in Kandahar, it is stated that women's rights have been guaranteed in all areas under their rule. Tahira Nasiri, a women's rights activist, says that the human rights situation of women has significantly deteriorated after the return of the Taliban to Afghanistan, with more than 50 decrees issued to restrict women's lives and work during this time. Nasiri told Khaama Press, "Not only are women deprived of their basic rights such as work and education, but women

have also faced forced and early marriages, murder, detention, and suppression for over two years." Mullah Hibatullah claimed in this meeting that he had issued orders to secure women's rights in areas such as inheritance rights, prevention of forced marriages, and providing a dowry for women. Now, these rights have been guaranteed. The interim government leader claims that women's rights are now better secured than in previous regimes. On the other hand, UN human rights experts say that what women in Afghanistan are going through is sexual harass-

ment and abuse in this country. Meanwhile, Joana Cherry, a representative of the Scottish National Party, recently stated in an article that the situation of women in Afghanistan and Iran is an example of gender apartheid and this should be officially recognized in these two countries. The leader of the Taliban talked about securing women's rights completely while it has been more than two years that educational opportunities for girls are blocked, and a large part of women are deprived of working in government and non-governmental offices.



Afghan women's migration stories; forced expulsion and starting anew



Zahra Rashidi

Migration is a common occurrence that often results from poverty and insecurity, impacting people in different countries. Afghanistan, a country plagued by prolonged conflicts, ranks third globally in terms of

refugee numbers. Over the past two years, Afghan migration has significantly risen. This report shares the story of a girl who abandoned her job, education, and university in pursuit of a better life, leaving Afghanistan behind. Sadaf, who is 22 years old, left Afghanistan like thousands

of others, six months after the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the tightening of restrictions on women's employment and education. Sadaf was a seventh-semester journalism student and worked as a reporter for a media outlet when the Taliban regime took control. As a reporter, she close-

ly monitored the restrictions on women. Sadaf was born in Samangan province and completed her primary education there as well. After gaining admission to Kabul University's journalism faculty, she spent three years of her university period not in a dormitory but in the house of one of her relatives. She also worked as a reporter for a private media outlet alongside her studies to support her family financially. She said, "Despite having more responsibilities in my family, I also had the highest score in the journalism faculty." While taking care of her elderly parents and being part of a twelve-member family, Sadaf entered Pakistan illegally following the return of the Taliban regime and the illegal ban on the education and employment of girls. She hoped to be safe there and have her immigration case pursued in host countries. However, she says that migration is unpredictable, especially when difficulties arise. Lack of knowledge of the Urdu language, lack of housing, excessive rent for homes,

experiencing life in a foreign country, and loneliness were some of the initial challenges that introduced Sadaf to the deeper layers of migration. However, this was just the beginning of the journey. Although migration is usually not a choice but a necessity, Sadaf, after finding a job in a packing workshop for clothes and textiles, was able to send some of her earnings back to her family in Samangan for the first time since her migration. She began to find some satisfaction in her life in migration. Sadaf says, "I was living in Pakistan, completely satisfied with my job and earnings, until I heard in September 2023 that Pakistan was planning to deport illegal migrants." The process of forced deportation added to the difficulties of Sadaf's life in Pakistan, and she faced daily fear on her way from home to work, making her way to the workshop herself. Sadaf recalls the behaviour of her coworkers at her workplace: "While I was the only Afghan working in the clothing workshop, Pakistani citizens repeat-

edly tried to expose me to the Pakistani police." She tells the story of an evening when she was returning home tired, and suddenly, in such conditions, she encountered this: "I was in a car, and I was just a few minutes away from home when suddenly the Pakistani police got into the car and asked the driver if there were Afghan passengers in this car." Sadaf says, "I had a full veil on, and no trace of my face was visible until the danger passed, and I could relax." This is the paradox of life in migration: while fleeing from the constraints and limitations of Afghanistan, in Pakistan, she enforces all these restrictions on herself to stay safe. Sadaf says that when the Pakistani police left and she got out of the car to go home, she faced a very painful scene: "I was on foot, and I was just a few steps away from home, but suddenly the Pakistani police locked my house and sent me a message to leave Pakistan as soon as possible." She was still waiting to see what would happen to her immigration case, but at that

time, she had to work, and occasionally, she faced extremely unusual circumstances: "When I saw the door of my room locked, I thought to myself that I had lost my job, I had lost the university, and today, I was expelled from here, and I had to start life again from scratch." Finally, on a sunny morning, Sadaf headed for the Spin Boldak border with a suitcase containing all her belongings, wanting to return to her family in Samangan. Sadaf described crossing the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan as a tragedy. According to her, "We moved with eight thousand migrants from Pakistan towards the border. The Pakistani police treated Afghan migrants very harshly." While recounting with her own eyes, she said to the reporter, "The Pakistani police ruthlessly beat women and elderly people, showing no mercy towards Afghans. They even insult Afghans with derogatory and offensive names, calling them terrorists. It was the most humiliating feeling I ever experienced in my life."



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Kashmir Education Foundation called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Illegal custody of father, son PHC orders police for provision of record

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan ordered police for submission of reply in illegal custody of father along with son and receiving Rs4 lac from their family as well as stopped from harassing female petitioner, on Thursday.

The petitioner informed PHC that police raided her residence on 18th June 2023 and arrested her husband along with son who is student. She added that police also took Rs4 lac along with documents, gold, mobile phones and passport into their possession during the raid.

Police took her husband and son during the raid into their custody without any allegation and shifted to Khanmai police station, Charsadda district, the applicant pleaded. She argued that police also took into possession documents of her son named Awais who is a student and applied

for scholarship.

The police demanded Rs4 lac for release of her son during visiting Khanmai police station, Charsadda district, the petitioner added. She added that police had tortured her husband and son during custody as well as charged her husband in fraudulent case.

The applicant argued that police is threatening her for provision of money otherwise they {Khanmai police, Charsadda} will kill her son and will throw dead body into Kabul's river. She provided Rs4 lac to police to secure her son's life, the petitioner added.

As well as her husband obtained bail from High Court after charging in baseless case by, she added. The claimant argued that she had knocked the doors of Human Rights, police and other Law Enforcement Agencies for actions against involved policemen but to no veil. The petitioner argued for provision of justice as well

as actions against policemen involved in illegal custody of her husband and son.

Meanwhile, Superintendent of Police (SP) Operation and Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Sar Dheri Sanobeer along with other concerned policemen appeared on directions of PHC after the break.

However, police informed that the petitioner's husband is member of dacoit gang as well as two Afghan citizens are also active their group. They added that the petitioner's husband is also charged in another dacoit offense earlier. The Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan inquired regarding arrest of petitioner's husband earlier in any other offense, while, police requested for provision of time to produce record before court. Chief Justice PHC Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan stopped police from harassing the petitioner and adjourned further hearing till 24th January.

Israel's president calls ties with S Arabia key to ending war in Gaza

DAVOS: Normalizing ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia is a key element of ending the war with Hamas and a gamechanger for the entire Middle East, Israeli President Isaac Herzog said Thursday at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in the Swiss town of Davos.

"It's still delicate, it's fragile, and it will take a long time, but I think that it is actually an opportunity to move forward in the world and the region toward a better future," Herzog said. It comes days after Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, said on a Davos panel that the kingdom agreed "regional peace includes peace for Israel." He said Saudi Arabia "certainly" would recognize Israel as part of a larger political agreement.

"But that can only happen through peace for the Palestinians, through a Palestinian state," he said. US Secretary Antony Blinken also reiterated in a talk at Davos that a pathway to statehood for Palestinians could help improve Israel's security and its relations with other countries in the region.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing government, however, are opposed to the concept of a two-state resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Herzog, whose ceremonial role is meant to serve as a national unifier, said public support for it is low because traumatized Israelis are focused on their own safety following Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 rampage. He displayed a photo of Kfar Bibas, the youngest Israeli held hostage in Gaza whose first birthday is Thursday.

"When nations come forward and say 'two-state solution,' they have to first deal with a preliminary question, which is a core question for human beings: Are we offered real safety?" Herzog said. "Israelis lost trust in the peace process because they could see that terror is glorified by our neigh-

bors." Herzog also used the world stage to stress the global implications of Hamas' attack on Israel, which he said is just one of the proxies of the "empire of evil emanating from Tehran."

Amid the conflict in Gaza, Iran has taken military action against what it called an Israeli intelligence operation in neighboring Iraq. Iran-backed rebels in Yemen known as Houthis also have upended global shipping by attacking vessels in the Red Sea, triggering a series of retaliatory strikes from the US and Britain. "The Houthi issue is a number one priority, because it raises the cost of living for every family in the universe, a little tribe of 50,000 people, amassed with the weapons of an empire," Herzog said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian insisted Iran's strike in Iraq, as well as against an alleged militant base in Pakistan, as part of his country's right to self-defense and accused Israel of "genocide" in its campaign against Hamas, which has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani also condemned the war in Gaza during a Davos talk Thursday, saying "the international community has failed."

At the same time, Sudani sought to balance Iraq's position between the United States and Iran during the war and as Iran-backed militias in Iraq have launched near-daily strikes on bases housing US forces in Iraq and Syria, which they have said is in retaliation for Washington's backing of Israel. Sudani said Iraq has "interests" and "strategic partnerships" with both Iran and the United States. But he did reiterate calls for US-led coalition forces to withdraw from his country, saying their presence is no longer justified because their mission was to fight the Daesh group, which is "no longer a threat to the Iraqi people."

The Iraqi and Israeli leaders were headlines in Thursday's flurry of activity in the warren of rooms at the Davos Congress Center in the third day of the gathering of world leaders, corporate titans and other elites. Other high-profile speakers included OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, who kept his job after a turbulent executive-suite reshuffle late last year.

The four-day confab at Davos has taken up a vast array of topics, not least the concerns about climate change and artificial intelligence that offers economic promise to some and peril to others. "Artificial intelligence is now undoubtedly the most important potential contribution for global development," UN Secretary-General António Guterres told reporters Wednesday. But governments are "to a certain extent, ill-equipped, ill-prepared, to deal with this new reality."

A breakfast panel on the meeting's sidelines Thursday concentrated on Ukraine's fight against Russia, a major theme at Davos. Polish President Andrzej Duda called for the release of confiscated Russian assets in Western banks to help Ukraine, saying \$60 billion earmarked for reconstruction of Ukraine by the United States and 50 billion euros by the European Union were "crucial."

British Foreign Secretary David Cameron urged the EU and US to move forward with stalled aid packages and for allies to remember that together their economies are 25 times bigger than Russia's. "All we need to do is make our economic strength show, make it pay, and we will be able to help Ukraine bring this to a conclusion," said Cameron, who met with Iran's foreign minister at Davos. The husband of US Vice President Kamala Harris, Doug Emhoff, was jetting in Thursday to discuss combating antisemitism, Islamophobia and other forms of hate. — Arab News

Patients in Gaza hospitals beg for food and water: WHO

NEW YORK CITY: More than 60,000 Palestinians injured so far during the war in Gaza, and the more than 200 people added to their ranks each day, not only continue to be deprived of adequate medical care, they are also in desperate need of food and water to survive, the World Health Organization said.

The UN agency painted a grim picture of a healthcare system brought to its knees amid the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in the territory and continuing restrictions on access for humanitarian aid and healthcare workers, particularly to areas north of Rafah where "every movement throughout the Gaza Strip requires coordination. Every movement presents risks and logistical challenges," Sean Casey, the WHO's emergency medical team coordinator, called for a ceasefire as the only way to properly address the new "level of desperation" in the crisis, adding that anything short of an end to the hostilities simply leaves humanitarian groups "addressing needs on a day-by-day basis."

He added: "Every day we're trying to play catch up with the 60,000 injuries and the 200-plus new injuries that are occurring every day, and a health system that is quickly losing its

capacity. "So what I would ask anybody who has any ability to change this dynamic is (for) a cessation of hostilities so that the injuries can stop and the aid can reach the people who need it the most. But short of that: improving access, simplifying access."

Casey was speaking to reporters at the UN headquarters in New York following a five-week visit to Gaza. During the final week of his trip, he said his team tried "every single day, for seven days, to deliver fuel and supplies to Gaza City in the north, and every day those requests for coordinated movements were denied. "That prevents us from bringing medicines to people who need them, from bringing water for dialysis machines to people who were sitting there waiting for care that can be provided. So access and safety are the most important."

Casey spoke of the dire situation he saw during visits to Al-Shifa hospital and six of the 16 other hospitals that are the only ones that remain "minimally" functional out of the 36 that previously provided care in Gaza. "Every time I went to the hospitals I saw evidence, again and again, of the simultaneous humanitarian catastrophe that's unfolding, every day get-

ting worse and worse, and the collapse of the health system day by day, with hospitals closing, health workers fleeing, casualties continuing to stream in, lack of access to medicines and medical supplies, and a lack of access to fuel to run hospital generators to keep the lights on, to keep the machines running," he said.

This is happening alongside a "dramatic humanitarian catastrophe" in which "truckloads and busloads" of people continue to flee each day with all of their belongings to southern Gaza, where shelters made of "plastic sheeting and a couple of pieces of wood on the street now become their new home."

The challenges posed by access restrictions imposed on humanitarian workers and limitations on their movement continue to hobble efforts by the WHO to deliver desperately needed medicines to hospitals that are still open, and to deploy additional doctors and nurses to help meet the "enormous demand of trauma patients, but also patients with every other clinical presentation that you would normally see," such as "the pregnant women who still need antenatal care and who still need to deliver, and the people who require dialysis." — Arab News

ECP releases candidate details for elections

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has unveiled the details of candidates participating in the general elections scheduled for February 8. The list includes hopefuls from various national and provincial assemblies, representing both party foundations and independent aspirations.

In the National Assembly, a total of 3,748 candidates from 1,873 political parties and independents are vying for seats. Meanwhile, for the Provincial Assemblies, 8,537 individuals, including 4,158 from political parties and 4,379 independents, are set to compete.

According to the disclosed information, a significant number of 882 women candidates are contesting, with 312 aiming for National Assembly seats and 570 for Provincial Assembly positions.

The Election Commission highlighted that in addition to the mainstream political parties, Khawaja Sira (transgender community) members are also contesting in four constituencies nationwide. Overall, a staggering 6,031 candidates from 2,315 political parties are participating in the elections.

Notably, there is a nearly two-fold increase in the number of independent candidates compared to political party contenders. Punjab Assembly has 6,710 candidates, Sindh Assembly with 2,878, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly with 1,834, and Balochistan Assembly with 1,273 hopefuls. As the political scene intensifies with diverse candidates, the upcoming elections promise to be a significant and closely watched event in Pakistan's democratic process.

Use of technology vital: Alvi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday stressed the need to increase use of the technology in the education sector of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to increase the overall literacy rate in the area.

He was talking to a delegation of Kashmir Education Foundation which called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The president said the education could be brought to the remote and difficult areas with the help of technology.

He said the use of information technology in the education sector will reduce costs while it would also help increasing the number of students while maintaining the quality of education. President Alvi maintained that around 28 million children in Pakistan do not go to school while thousands of new schools would be needed to educate those children. He said mosques could also be used as educational centers to for the purpose.

The delegation briefed the president about the Foundation's role in promoting quality education and literacy in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and rural Punjab. Azad Jammu and Kashmir Textbook Board Chairman Syed Tufail Hussain Bukhari and Foundation Chairman Muzaffar Muhammad Qureshi also participated in the meeting.

It was informed in the meeting that the foundation runs three schools and a teacher training college in Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The delegation informed the president that the aim of the foundation was to promote education and character building of the youth.

Pakistan is a peace-loving country: Zardari

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Former President of Pakistan and President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari has said that if any country looks at Pakistan with ill-intentions, then it will be given a response accordingly.

President Zardari said that Pakistan is a peace-loving country, but those who wish to target it should think a hundred times before doing so. We have always advocated for peace around the globe and have prioritised it as well.

PML-N to secure majority across Pakistan: Nawaz

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Central Leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif started election campaign of his party from Hafizabad to address public meeting held at Hanif Muhammad Stadium Hafizabad, on Thursday.

Addressing the public meeting, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif said that five judges were terminated representatives of 250 million people of the country and if hadn't been kicked out, no one person has left without employment and Pakistan has been made Asian Tiger so far. He said that I was removed only for not taking salary from his son in 2017 and if my government do not topple, the youth were appointed on the best jobs, business run smoothly, bills of electricity and gas were not inflated and Pakistan grabbed good position in the world.

If Nawaz Sharif did not involve in fake cases than situation become different, today, he said. He said that we were eliminated loadshedding, constructed motorways and provide the best communicational facilities to people. He said that if our government was not toppled, a motorway was also passing through Hafizabad, today.

I came Hafizabad after many years, my memories become fresh and I love very mush with people of Hafizabad, I never beheld such zeal and this scene while I could not control may emotions, Nawaz Sharif emotionally said.

While appreciating participants of the public meeting, he said that I congratulated to hold successful public meeting and I always remembered you in abroad. He further said to stand Pakistan at its own foot and there should not be difference between Lahore. and Hafizabad.

Addressing the gathering, Maryam Nawaz said that I came Hafizabad first time and would not forget this scene forever and present heartily Slam to all people here. She said that Lion would roar in Hafizabad on 8, February and I hope that everyone would consider talk of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

We are people of 28 May, not people of 9, May and we are people to see grooming the Pakistan, she said. She also said t that the people of 9, May were attackers on the state whereas we were made motorways and people of 9, May were attacked the motorway.

She said that people belong to 9, May were carried storm of inflation in the country during four-year regime while we provide cheaper bread (Rooty). She further said that we curb terrorism and dearness from the country and Nawaz Sharif was your compassionate.

IMF debt dilemma looms after polls: ex-SBP governor

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) faces tough choices on how to deal with Pakistan after the February election and how to assess the country's debt situation, former central bank governor Reza Baqir said.

The country, which is operating under a caretaker government, secured a \$3 billion loan programme with the IMF in July that helped pull the cash-strapped nation back from the brink of a sovereign debt default. However, the programme was a nine-month standby arrangement, set to expire this spring. "The IMF will have to decide whether to pull the plug on Pakistan or not, and by that I mean it will have to decide about its assessment of debt sustainability," said Baqir, head of sovereign advisory services at Alvarez & Marsal.

The Fund labelled Pakistan's debt as sustain-

able, but also emphasised the significant and pronounced risks said Baqir, who negotiated Pakistan's 2019 IMF programme and also worked at the Washington-based lender for almost two decades. "That's almost like having it both ways," he said, adding investors would be watching whether the Fund would continue to label the debt as sustainable or whether it would offer its support on a debt restructuring as part of a new programme should Pakistan's authorities chose to go down that route.

The country's public external debt stood at just under \$100 billion by the end of September 2023, according to central bank data, with China and its lenders being the single largest creditor to the country. Pakistan's shorter-dated bonds are trading at 96 cents, fairly close to par, though longer-dated ones maturing after 2030 stand at just over 60 cents, well

below the 70-cent threshold below which debt is seen as distressed. On Thursday, the bonds suffered sharp falls after Pakistan conducted strikes inside Iran amid rising tensions with its neighbour.

Pakistan would also be a potential candidate for a "debt-for-nature"-style debt swap said Baqir, pointing to the deadly 2022 floods that affected more than 33 million people. Debt-for-nature swaps — where countries introduce eco-policies in return for having their debt cut, are growing in popularity after successful recent deals in places such as Belize and Ecuador's Galapagos Islands.

Eugenio Alarcon, who recently joined Alvarez & Marsal responsible for Latin America & the Caribbean, said: "Countries have seen the benefits of these type of transactions because they can take a huge reduction in the stock of debt."

KP CM reviews ongoing developmental activities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting to discuss and review ongoing developmental activities and other important matters related to various provincial departments was held here with caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah in the chair. Besides spokesperson to Chief Minister Brigadier (R) Syed Mujtaba Tirmizi, administrative secretaries of the concerned departments and other relevant high ups attended the meeting.

The meeting was briefed in details about the development projects and other matters of the various provincial departments including Tourism, Culture, Archaeology and Museum, Communication & Works, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperative departments. Briefing about the different projects being undertaken by the Tourism Department, it was

informed that PTDC's properties in the province, have been handed over to the provincial tourism department adding that process for outsourcing these properties under Public Private Partnership has also been initiated which aims to ensure better management as well as making them an effective source of income for the provincial government.

The participants were also briefed about the Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZs) being established under the tourism department, and informed that currently, work on three different ITZs is in progress; 480 Kanal Ghanol Integrated Tourism Zoon Mansehra would be completed at an estimated cost of Rs 5.5 billion, whereas 754 Kanal Mankial ITZ, Swat and 540 Kanal Madaklasht ITZ, Chitral would be established at an estimated cost of Rs 3 billion and Rs 3.8 billion respectively. Other important development

projects including Hund Park, Kumrat-Madaklasht cable car and installation of camping pods at different tourist spots of the province were also discussed in the meeting.

Similarly, the participants took an overview of the various cultural events and facilities being provided to the tourists in the province. Briefing about the development portfolio of the Livestock and Fisheries department, it was informed that a total of 41 development projects with the accumulative allocation of Rs 1.18 billion have been reflected in the annual development program of the department. The chief minister on the occasion, has directed all the provincial departments to go all out to ensure completion of public welfare projects within the stipulated timelines without compromising on their quality so that people can benefit from these projects without any delay.

Maritime security exercise Sea Guard-24 culminates

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy maiden Maritime Security Exercise SEA GUARD-24 concludes with a debrief session at Karachi. Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

While addressing the session, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami appreciated the efforts put in by all stakeholders in making the exercise a success. He also underscored that this exercise clearly demonstrates PN resolve to address prevailing simmering issues with a tangible way head to ensure security in mar-

itime zones of Pakistan. The aim of exercise was to overview response procedures against maritime security incidents and to identify gaps and propose ways to improve the response mechanism. Exercise SEA GUARD-24 gave an opportunity to fortify and rejuvenate the bond of diverse maritime stakeholders of Pakistan ranging from shipping, fishing, law enforcement and private entities through a common pedestal of Joint Maritime Information Coordination Centre (JMICC). EX SEA GUARD served as a platform for all stakeholders to engage in tactical exercises, exchange best practices and foster mutual understanding.

Senior officials of Federal and provincial stakeholders from MOD, MOMA, Mol, MoF, Ministry of Narcotics Control, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation, Anti-Narcotics Force, Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, GPA, KPT, Port QASIM, BYCO Petroleum, in addition to various prominent figures from private sector and fishing community attended the closing session of the exercise. The participants were presented with analytical review of the practical scenarios as well as challenges and recommendations accrued from Table Top discussions conducted at JMICC.