

PTI to knock SC's door
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) announced on Monday that it would approach the Supreme Court against rejection of nomination papers of its leaders. PTI leader Babar Awan told media here on the premises of the Islamabad High Court that none is permitted to stop anyone from contesting election under the 1973 Constitution.

 @thefrontierpost

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

Notice to ECP issued
ISLAMABAD (INP): Islamabad High Court has issued notice to the Election Commission on ex-minister Fawad Chaudhry's appeal against the jail trial in contempt of the commission case. IHC Justice Saman Raffat Imtiaz heard the case while Fawad's counsel, Faisal Chaudhary, was also present in court. During the hearing, Faisal Chaudhry said he had filed a plea to end the jail trial in contempt of the election commission case.

Vol. XXXIX No. 345 Regd. No. 241 JAMADI-US-SANNI 20 1445 -- TUESDAY, JANUARY 02 2024 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES PRICE. 30

Baloch militants being funded by RAW: PM

— Issue of Baloch protesting families being painted wrongly

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar on Monday said Baloch militant outfits were being funded by Indian intelligence agency Research Analysis Wing (RAW) for carrying out terrorist acts in the country.

He said that issue of Baloch families from Balochistan was being projected in negative and in sharp contrast to realities as Balochs were standing with the state of Pakistan.

Responding to different media queries during his visit to Business Facilitation Center, the prime minister said that terrorists and armed militants had been involved in the killing of people of Balochistan. They were killing doctors, lawyers and teachers, he added. He reassured the State would fight with them with all force as they could not be given license to kill people. The prime minister, referring to criticism by a section of the media, said that the government was not fighting with the Baloch families and regretted that efforts were made to spread confusion and mingle things together. The issue of families of Balochs had been blown out of proportion, he said, adding these terrorists had been taking money and funding from RAW and killing people in the province.

The caretaker prime minister said that about 90,000 people had been killed in the fight against terrorism but hardly nine accused had been convicted so far. The prime minister opined that the criminal justice system in the country required improvement. To a question, he mentioned that there was no restriction on free-

dom of expression.

Replying to another question regarding an alleged firing incident in DI Khan over vehicles of Maulana Fazlur Rehman Amir of JUI-F, he said that it was alarming, adding the government was responding to security threats in the southern parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with all the available resources. The caretaker prime minister said that all the resources and security apparatus would be utilized to ensure the holding of peaceful polls on the election date and expressed the hope that they would be successful in this regard.

Govt-private sector liaison crucial for economic development: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that the development model, featuring a close liaison between the government and private sector, could yield positive results for national economic growth.

The prime minister, interacting with the business community at the Business Facilitation Center (BFC), said the enhanced interaction between the business community and the government, would help increase employment opportunities, taxation as well as GDP growth. He said that owing to the mutual cooperation between the government and the business community, the country was heading towards achieving economic stability and revival.

Lauding the idea of the BFC, he said the federal government would also play its part by establishing a liaison with the facility that would also be extended to Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces. He also assured the federal government's all-out facilitation for

the business sector through multiple measures.

The prime minister said that the establishment of the institutions like Lahore's BFC in other cities, would be beneficial for the national economy. He said that the facilitation of business community was among the priorities of the federal and provincial governments. During the visit, the prime minister was briefed about the functioning of the facilitation center.

Prime Minister Kakar appreciated the efforts by Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi for facilitation of the business sector as well as the role of the Punjab chief secretary and other provincial secretaries in the BFC's establishment that would serve as a one-window facility for the business community.

PM directs enhancement of Afghan Transit Trade tracking system: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar directed to take additional steps for enhancement of foolproof tracking system concerning Afghan Transit Trade.

Chairing a review meeting over Afghan Transit Trade and anti-smuggling measures, he also asked for the formulation of an immediate mechanism for the establishment of an integrated transit trade management system. The meeting was attended by Caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamsad Akthar, Caretaker Minister for Trade Ejaz Gohar, senior officials of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, representatives of the sensitive departments and other relevant officials, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

(Continued on Back Page)



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar talking to media persons during his visit to Business Facilitation Centre.

ECP's acceptance of Nawaz's papers challenged
F.P. Report

LAHORE: The acceptance of PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif's nomination papers from Lahore's constituency NA-130 for the upcoming Feb 8 general elections was challenged on Monday.

Last week, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had approved the candidature of the former premier while rejecting the same of PTI bigwigs, including Imran Khan and Shah Mahmood Qureshi. Advocate Ishtiaq Ahmed Samsialvi, who also goes by Ishtiaq Chaudhry, the chief organiser of Pakistan Awami Mahaz's (PAM) lawyers' wing, filed an appeal before the Lahore High Court's appellate tribunal under Section 63 (appeal against scrutiny order) of the Elections Act 2017.

Chaudhry, also a candidate for NA-130, challenged the rejection of his nomination papers as well. The constituency's returning officer (RO), the ECP and Nawaz have been made respondents in the case. In his petition, the PAM leader urged the tribunal to strike down the acceptance of Nawaz's papers as "illegal and unlawful" and that the papers be rejected due to his 2017 disqualification in the Panama Papers case, which the Supreme Court ruled was for life.

The appeal, also requested that he be allowed to contest the upcoming polls. The SC advocate asked whether the apex court's judgment was "not binding upon all the institutions", including the ECP. The appellant further wondered whether he could be "restricted from contesting election in absence of any adverse order passed" by the RO.

Chaudhry stated that he filed his nomination papers on Dec 23 and that the RO accepted them "without any objection" upon scrutiny a few days later. He was told his name would be included in the list of eligible candidates issued on Dec 30, he added. The PAM leader claimed that when he asked for copies of Nawaz's nomination papers so he could file objections against them, the RO refused to provide them.

He argued that his name has been excluded from the list "illegally and unlawfully in absence of any order" and that the former prime minister's lifetime disqualification, "still holds the field" under Article 62 (1)(f) (qualifications for membership of parliament) of the Constitution.

Senate hails forces sacrifices for peace — adopts resolutions about negative propaganda against armed forces

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Monday unanimously passed a resolution seeking "severe punishment" for "malicious and negative propaganda" against the armed forces.

The resolution, moved by PPP Senator Bahramanad Khan Tangi, earlier demanded a decade-long disqualification from public office for those "found involved in negative and malicious propaganda against the armed forces and other security agencies of Pakistan".

However, during the session on Monday, Tangi said he had amended the resolution to remove the demand for a decade-long disqualification and sought action as per the law. The resolution expressed deep concern over the "negative and malicious propaganda against the armed forces and other security agencies on various social media platforms".

It highlighted the "huge sacrifices of armed forces and other security agencies in the war against terror and for the defence and protection of the country's borders" and acknowledges that a "strong army and other security agencies are indispensable for the defence of the country especially in view of the hostile neighbourhood".

The Senate of Pakistan,

therefore, recommends that the government takes necessary steps to award severe punishment as per law for all those found involved in negative and malicious propaganda against the armed forces and other security agencies of Pakistan, the resolution added. Earlier, the day's agenda — said caretaker ministers would present a number of bills in the Senate, besides laying resolutions and motions before the Upper House of the Parliament.

Among the bills were the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill, 2023, Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023, Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2024, Wapda University Islamabad Bill, 2023, Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (Amendment) Bill, 2023, Civil Servants (Amendment) Bill, 2023, Fatal Accidents (Amendment) Bill, 2023, National Excellence Institute Bill, 2023, Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and Civil Servants (Amendment) Bill, 2023. At the previous Senate session, which was convened on Friday, the house was adjourned without transacting any business. The reason was the lack of quorum or in other words lack of interest in the proceedings by members.

Meanwhile, the

Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjran referred 22 private members' bills to the relevant committees for further deliberation and consultation.

The Chairman Senate's referred bills included, "The Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2024", "The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The Fatal Accidents (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The National Excellence Institute Bill, 2024", "The Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The Civil Servants (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The Guardians and Wards (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The Service Tribunals (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The General Clauses (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The Pakistan Commissions of Inquiry (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The Islamabad Capital Territory Watersides Safety Bill, 2023", "The Higher Education Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2023", "The Pakistan Nursing Council (Amendment) Bill, 2023".

Dasti claims his wife tortured in house raid

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARGARH: PTI leader Jamshaid Dasti has claimed that law enforcers broke into his house in Muzaffargarh in the wee hours of Sunday and manhandled his wife, as the party which he belongs to insists the state machinery is being used to intimidate them ahead of the February 8 elections.

In a short video clip posted on the social media platform X, Dasti, a four-time parliamentarian, claimed that personnel belonging to the counter-terrorism department (CTD) and intelligence agencies "brutalised my family members and kept them hostage for three hours".

"My wife was manhandled and tortured," the former parliamentarian said in the post, appealing Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa to take notice of the incident. Dasti also claimed that the law enforcers acted "like thugs and criminals". "They beat my children [...] my 10-month-old son kept crying," the PTI leader said.

"Immense cruelty has been committed against me. The only sin that I've committed is support Imran Khan," he lamented, telling the chief justice through his video message that "my mind isn't functioning anymore [...] they are torturing me just because I will run in elections.

Pak-India exchange nuke installations, prisoner lists

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India Monday exchanged their lists of prisoners and nuclear installations and facilities, following up on a years-long agreement between the two arch-rivals who have fought numerous battles since their independence in 1947.

Both nations, who parted ways after ousting the Britishers, exchange the lists of prisoners on the first of January and July each year, while they share details of nuclear installations and facilities on the first date of each calendar year. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between Pakistan and India, inter alia, provides that both countries shall inform each other of their nuclear installations and facilities, falling within its definition.

Signed on December 31, 1988, the agreement entered into force on January 27, 1991, the statement mentioned, noting that the two countries have been exchanging the lists since January 1, 1992. Pursuant to Article II of the agreement, the list of nuclear installations and facilities in Pakistan was

officially handed over to a representative of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on Monday.

"Simultaneously, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs also handed over the list of India's nuclear installations and facilities to a representative of the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi," the statement read. In another hand-out, the Foreign Office said today, Pakistan and India exchanged the lists of prisoners in each other's custody through diplomatic channels.

The simultaneous exchange of lists took place in pursuance of the Access Agreement of 2008. Under the agreement, both countries are required to exchange the lists of prisoners in each other's custody on January 1 and July 1, every year. The Government of Pakistan handed over a list of 231 Indian prisoners in Pakistan (47 civilian prisoners and 184 fishermen) to a representative of the High Commission of India in Islamabad, the statement read.

The Indian government shared the list of Pakistani prisoners in Indian jails with an officer of Pakistan High Commission, New Delhi. According to the list,

there are a total of 418 Pakistanis in Indian jails (337 civilian prisoners and 81 fishermen). The Indian side, it mentioned, has been urged to release and repatriate all those Pakistani civilian prisoners and fishermen, who have completed their respective sentences and whose national status stands confirmed. "A request for a grant of consular access to missing defence personnel of 1965 and 1971 wars, and special consular access to 77 civil prisoners has also been made," the Foreign Office added.

Shehbaz summoned

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former prime minister and President of PML-N Shehbaz Sharif was summoned by commission probing Faizabad sit-in on Monday.

According to details, Shehbaz Sharif has been summoned by the Faizabad probe commission as the then-Punjab chief minister. The PML-N President has been asked to appear before the probe commission on January 3 to record his statement. It should be mentioned here that the government formed a new commission to probe the Faizabad sit-in after report of the fact-finding committee was rejected.

Israel is pulling thousands of troops from Gaza

TEL AVIV: Thousands of Israeli soldiers are being shifted out of the Gaza Strip, the military said Monday, in the first significant drawdown of troops since the war began as forces continued to bear down on the main city in the southern half of the enclave.

The troop movement could signal that fighting is being scaled back in some areas of Gaza, particularly in the northern half where the military has said it is close to assuming operational control. Israel has been under pressure from its chief ally, the United States, to begin to switch to lower-intensity fighting.

Word of the drawdown came ahead of a visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken to the region and after the Biden administration bypassed Congress for the second time this month to approve an emergency weapons sale to Israel. But

fierce fighting continued in other areas of Gaza, especially the southern city Khan Younis and central areas of the territory. Israel has pledged to charge ahead until its war aims have been achieved, including dismantling Hamas, which has ruled Gaza for 16 years.

The military said in a statement Monday that five brigades, or several thousand troops, were being taken out of Gaza in the coming weeks for training and rest. In a briefing Sunday that first announced the troop withdrawal without specifying how many forces were leaving, army spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari did not say whether the decision meant Israel was launching a new phase of the war.

"The objectives of the war require prolonged fighting, and we are preparing accordingly," he said.

Israel has vowed to crush Hamas' military and governing capabilities in its war, which was sparked by the militant group's Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel, which killed 1,200 people. Roughly 240 people were taken hostage. Israel responded with a blistering air, ground and sea offensive that has killed more than 21,800 people in Gaza, two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count.

Israel says more than 8,000 militants have been killed, without providing evidence. It blames Hamas for the high civilian death toll, saying the militants embed within residential areas, including schools and hospitals. The war has displaced some 85 percent of Gaza's 2.3 million residents, sending swells of people seek-

ing shelter in Israeli-designated safe areas that the military has nevertheless bombed. Palestinians are left with a sense that nowhere is safe in the tiny enclave.

In Khan Younis, where Israel is believed to have thousands of troops, residents reported airstrikes and shelling in the west and center of the city. The military and the militant group Islamic Jihad reported clashes in the area. The Palestinian Red Crescent said on X, formerly Twitter, that it transported several dead and injured following a strike late Sunday in the Beach Street in Khan Younis. It posted nighttime footage showing medics carrying casualties to ambulances.

Combat was also reported in urban refugee camps in central Gaza, where Israel expanded its offensive last week. "It's our routine: bombings,

massacres and martyrs," said Saeed Moustafa, a Palestinian from the Nuseirat camp. He said he could hear sporadic explosions and gunfire in Nuseirat and in the nearby Bureij and Maghazi camps.

"Just as we speak, there is a big explosion not far from my home," he said in a phone call Monday morning. The military said an airstrike killed Adel Mismah, a regional commander of Hamas' elite Nukhba forces, in the central city of Deir Al-Balah. Hamas fired a large barrage of rockets toward Israel, including at its commercial hub Tel Aviv, as the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve.

Israel has said the war will last for months. It has argued that it needs time to clear Gaza of militants' weapons and infrastructure and to prevent Hamas from being able to stage more attacks. Israel has resisted

international calls for a long-term cease-fire, saying doing so would amount to a victory for Hamas. Shlomo Brom, a retired brigadier general once in charge of strategic planning in the Israeli military, said the troop changes may be a result of the US pressure.

He said it indicated a shift in how Israel was conducting the war in some areas. "The war is not stopping," said Brom. "It is the beginning of a different mode of operation." Israelis still largely support the war aims, even as the cost in soldiers' lives is mounting. Over the weekend, the military said that of the soldiers killed since the ground operation began — as of Monday, 172 in total — 18 were killed by friendly fire while another 11 died by weapons or equipment malfunctions or accidents. — Arab News

dynamic atmosphere. In the spirit of the New Year, Executive Director Alhama Tariq Mehmood Chaudhry shared his excitement for the spectrum of vibrant programs organized by Alhama. Highlighting the commitment to a book-friendly culture, the "Alhama Free Book" series invites book donations, which will be graciously distributed to participants in various programs, fostering a culture of literary appreciation. With hope and prayers, he anticipates a year of continued growth and success for both Alhama and the community.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the friendly nations that have responded to our invitation and envision this exercise as a learning opportunity. The collaborative nature of the Ex BAR-RACUDA hold the potential to foster a valuable exchange of knowledge and experiences among participants. As we join hands together for this exercise the collective and collaborative efforts of all stakeholders will help to achieve the objective of shared response against disaster management to marine pollution and SAR. I look forward to welcome all national stakeholders and maximum international participants/ observers at the inaugural session of exercise BARRACUDA-XII as I remain hopeful of a rewarding and mutually beneficial exercise.

Body reviews progress on implementation of decisions

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Dr. Aamer Abdullah chaired a meeting of the Special Steering Committee, formed for Newly Merged Districts here on Monday at the Cabinet Room at Civil Secretariat.

Besides, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah, Secretary Health Mehmood Aslam Wazir, Secretary Communications and Works Muhammad Idrees Khan, Secretary Relief Inayatullah Wasim, Secretary Industries, Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, Special Secretaries Home and P&D Departments Muhammad Zubair and Kamran Afridi, Officers of Police, Pakistan Army and other departments attended.

In the meeting, the progress and implementation of the tasks given to various departments in the decisions of the previous meetings of the steering committee and provincial task force formed under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister were reviewed.

On this occasion, the forum was informed that the process of capacity building of police in NMDs is on progress. 19 DSPs and 85 inspectors of police have been promoted to the next grades while recruitment of 1571 police personnel through Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA), will also be completed soon. Similarly, 513 ghost employees have also been removed from the police in these districts.

The forum instructed that the identified sites for construction of various police infrastructures in some districts may be handed over to C&W department so that to start the construction work at the earliest on it.

On this occasion, it was also directed to speed up the process of establishing judicial offices in North Waziristan, South Waziristan and Orakzai.

The caretaker minister directed to take up the case regarding stipend scheme for the children of the merged districts with finance department within two days while further directed the education department to present reasonable proposals in the next meeting of the task force for the purpose of

running the Governor Model Schools in the merged districts with better management and quality.

He said that the department should present models of various private educational chains who working on public private partnership with reasonable costs in other provinces in terms of running the government institutions.

He instructed to update the land settlement and digitization project in the merged districts on proper project management tool.

During the meeting Accelerated Implementation Programme and rural development projects were also discussed.

The caretaker minister said that the release of the remaining 75% of the funds to the outsourced hospitals in the merged districts should be ensured within a day. He also directed the P&D Department to forward the new HIEP economic plan for the merged districts to the Islamic Development Bank for possible financial cooperation.

The caretaker minister directed to keep in touch with the Advocate General's Office for the purpose of consultation and guidance regarding the necessary legal and technical

matters. He said that the concerned department should take necessary steps to bring the small irrigation dams in the merged districts into use for the purpose of promoting fisheries.

He said that in connection with the establishment of Small Industrial Estate in Bajaur, payments to the land owners should be ensured soon. As a result of the division of South Waziristan district into two districts, he directed for posting the staff on new posts created in the new district and to present their statistics before the task force meeting in this regard.

The caretaker minister said that the industry and agriculture departments should prepare a joint plan by January 10 regarding the revitalization of Agricultural Park in Wana.

In the meeting, a briefing was also given on the plan of the 5-year educational program "Ilam Da Tolo Dapara" to be launched for the merged districts. In order to make the plan effective and useful, the caretaker minister directed to make it complete in every aspect and to include all the factors required for good governance in it.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chairing a meeting regarding training and employment of youth.

3 persons charged for demanding ransom

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As many as three persons were booked in First Information Report (FIR) for harassing, threatening and demanding ransom from female gynecologist at Shah Qabul police station, on Monday.

According to details, police has registered a case against three culprits on complaint of lady gynecologist Dr. Samdana Wahab and demanding money from her. She was present in her clinic when the Shams-Ur-Rehman, Haq Nawaz and Imtiaz residents of Dara Adam Khel entered her clinic and threatened him to pay Rs 7 lakh or else she would be implicated in false cases and to be harassed.

The complainant told to the police that last day the culprits came to her clinic and treated the patients there forcibly stopped them and prevented them from entering the clinic.

During which the accused also prevented the patients from treating the woman and also provoked the patients. Police has started investigation after registration FIR.

Adulterated milked discarded

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority during a special three-day campaign against adulterated dairy products discarded over 3000 liters across the province.

The spokesman of Food Authority said that the teams of Food Authority checked milk containers and other vehicles of dairy products at the toll plazas of the motorways and main highways besides visiting the local markets.

During the checking the teams checked 671 milk samples at modern mobile food testing lab and took into custody more than 3,000 liters of adulterated and sub-standard milk which was discarded on the spot while heavy fines were also imposed on the shopkeepers and dealers.

Director General KP Food Authority Shafiqullah Khan appreciating the performance of the special team said that "the authority believes in zero tolerance against milk adulteration and takes action against the adulteration mafia."

Hamza Foundation issues report

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassaemia Hospital Peshawar issued annual performance report 2023, on Monday.

According to details, the number of patients reached to 1487 while in last 18 years Hamza Foundation had provided more than one lac 61 thousand blood bags to thalassaemia victims.

A meeting regarding annual performance chaired by founder Ijaz Ali Khan in which Director Medical Dr. Tariq and Dr. Kashmala along with other were present. The participants discussed different aspects for further improvement of facilities in Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassaemia Hospital.

It is worthy to mention that Hamza Foundation is providing 50 to 60 bags of blood along with launch to patients free of cost to serve the humanity.

1179 nominations approved: PEC

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Election Commission (PEC) said on Monday that 1179 nominations were approved for the National Assembly (NA), while 3094 were for the provincial assembly.

According to the spokesman of PEC, as many as 1331 candidates submitted their nomination papers for 45 seats in the NA, out of which 152 nominations were rejected on various grounds.

Similarly, 3461 candidates filed their nominations for 115 seats in the provincial assembly, out of

which 352 were male candidates and 15 were female.

It said, "The scrutiny of nomination papers for the National and Provincial Assembly seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has been completed."

Election Tribunal starts accepting appeals against rejection of nomination papers

The Election Tribunal has started accepting appeals against the rejection of nomination papers for the National and Provincial Assembly's seats.

According to the

spokesman of the Provincial Election Commission, eight candidates of PTI had filed appeals against the rejection with the Election Tribunal.

PTI candidate Mujahid Khan from NA-21 Mardan, Zahir Shah Toru PK 57, Abdul Salam Afridi PK 58, Iftikhar Mashwani PK 60, Ameer Farzand Khan PK 56, Aftab Alam NA 35 Kohat, Yousuf Khan NA-31 Hangu and Abu Tarab from Hangu had filed their appeals through Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah and Shah Faisal Atma khel Advocate.

Association congratulates newly cabinet of PPC

PESHAWAR (APP): The office bearers of Abaseen Column Writers Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have congratulated newly elected cabinet of Peshawar Press Club led by prominent journalist, Arshad Aziz Malik.

According to a press statement issued here on Monday, the office bearers of Abaseen Column Writers Association met under the chairmanship of its president, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi.

The participants of the meeting were of the opinion that landmark victory of Arshad Aziz Malik and his panel including General Secretary, Irfan Mosazai, Vice President, Tayyab Usman, Joint Secretary, Gul Rehman and Finance Secretary, Rizwan Sheikh is testimony of confidence of journalist community in them.

They expressed good wishes for the new cabinet of PPC and expressed the

hope that Arshad Aziz Malik and his team will continue their efforts for the betterment and capacity building of journalist community of Peshawar.

Zia Sarhadi said column writers and journalists are two parts of a same coin and both will continue their cooperation in contribution of developmental based write ups, programmes and stories in different newspapers and TV channels.



PESHAWAR: Secretary Information Syed Jabbar Shah and DG Information Department Muhammad Imran with newly cabinet of PPC.

Clean & Green Peshawar drive launched

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration with the collaboration of all stakeholders has initiated the Clean and Green Peshawar campaign as part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Khushhal Program.

Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Afaq Wazir, chaired a meeting attended by officials from key departments, including the Regional Transport Authority, Traffic Police, Capital Metropolitan Government, TMAs, WSSP, PDA, and others.

The meeting addressed the issue of environmental pollution in Peshawar, specifically focusing on smoke emissions from vehicles, including two-stroke rickshaws, buses, and other sources.

It was highlighted that brick kilns and factories

also contribute significantly to environmental degradation.

The deputy commissioner declared the official commencement of the month-long Clean and Green campaign. The district administration, in collaboration with relevant departments, will carry out daily actions against smoke-emitting vehicles.

Additionally, daily operations targeting kilns and factories contributing to pollution will be conducted.

Afaq Wazir provided insights into the campaign's details, emphasizing the daily efforts of administrative officers, TMA, and WSSP personnel.

The focus will be on cleaning up trash and garbage, clearing drains,

and maintaining overall cleanliness in the city. The public's cooperation is sought, with emphasis on the daily waste collection by TMA and WSSP officials.

The DC urged public awareness to refrain from littering streets and roads.

He encouraged active participation from citizens and traders in the campaign for a cleaner Peshawar.

Afaq Wazir appealed to the public to collaborate with the initiative, highlighting the collective role of everyone in making the campaign successful and transforming Peshawar into a clean and vibrant city.

He underscored the importance of collective efforts and cooperation to achieve success in the cleanliness campaign.

CCPO congratulates newly elected PPC cabinet

PESHAWAR (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Syed Ashfaq Anwar visited the Peshawar Press Club on Monday to congratulate the newly elected cabinet.

He extended congratulations to President Arshad

Aziz Malik, Vice President Tayyab Usman, General Secretary Irfan Musazai, and other elected cabinet members.

The visit also included inspections of various offices within the Peshawar Press Club,

assessing security arrangements, and reviewing CCTV cameras. He lauded the role of the journalist community in building a peaceful society free of crimes and educating people to be law-abiding citizens.

Farewell ceremony held in honor of retired JPEC Javed Khan



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A farewell ceremony was held in honor of Joint Provincial

Election Commissioner, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Javed Khan, who retired from the office of Provincial Election Commissioner,

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Tuesday.

The Provincial Election Commissioner Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shamshad Khan, Joint Provincial Election Commissioner (Admin) Aziz Bahadur along with officers and staff participated.

Provincial Election Commissioner in his address highlighted Muhammad Javed Khan for his excellent services and expressed his best wishes while paying great tribute to him. On this occasion, Provincial Election Commissioner, officers and staff presented various gifts including shield to Muhammad Javed Khan.

In his speech, former Joint Provincial Election Commissioner Muhammad Javed Khan said that he cannot forget the farewell ceremony on behalf of the officers and staff of the office of Provincial Election Commissioner Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He thanked all the officers and official of Provincial HQs office.

SCCI felicitates newly-elected office bearers of FPCCI

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) termed historic win and clean sweep of United Business Group (UBG) and Businessmen Panel Progressive (BMP) in Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce (FPCCI) elections for the term of 2024-25, as a victory of the real business community.

In a joint statement here on Monday, SCCI president Fuad Ishaq, senior vice president Sanaullah Khan and vice president Ijaz Khan Afridi congratulated UBG former chair-

man Iftikhar Ali Malik, UBG senior leader former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, UBG chairman S.M Tanveer, UBG president Zubair Tufail along with the newly-elected president FPCCI Atif Akam Sheikh, senior vice president Saqib Fayyaz Magoo, and the newly elected vice presidents, UBG KP chairman Ghazanfar Bilour, secretary general UBG Haji Muhammad Afzal, members of general body FPCCI and executive members of FPCCI Zahidullah Shinwari over the overwhelming win in FPCCI elections.

Being a real business

community representative forum, UBG is fully capable of resolving the community issues, the statement said.

Fuad Ishaq, SCCI president in the statement said the overwhelming victory of UBG and BMP in FPCCI elections was fruits and reflection of joint unity and collective struggle.

He said newly-elected president FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh would take steps for resolution for the business community and will play a role in stabilizing the economy by providing employment opportunities in the country.

The newly-elected

office bearers of FPCCI will leave no stone unturned for bringing industrial and business progress in the country, the SCCI chief hoped.

Fuad Ishaq paid rich tribute to UBG senior leaders Iftikhar Ali Malik, S.M Muneer (Late), former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour along with UBG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chairman Ghazanfar Bilour and Secretary General Haji Muhammad Afzal, stating their unflinching and dynamic leadership has played a pivotal role to united the business community throughout the country under banner of UBG.

IGFC commends Cadet College Warsak efforts in education



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Cadet College Warsak proudly hosted its 8th Annual Parents' Day, marked by a blend of simplicity and grandeur. Major General Noor Wali Khan, Inspector General Frontier Corps North, graced the occasion

as the chief guest, on Monday.

The event witnessed a meticulous parade inspection by the distinguished chief guest, who bestowed medals, shields and the coveted sword of honor upon outstanding cadets excelling in academics and sports. The ceremony

showcased a splendid march past by the cadets who saluted the chief guest.

Adding a dynamic touch to the celebration, the cadets exhibited remarkable gymnastics and athletic prowess, earning enthusiastic applause from the captivated audi-

ence. Addressing the gathering, Chief Guest Major General Noor Wali Khan commended Cadet College Warsak for its commitment to providing modern education.

IGFC acknowledged the institution's role in maintaining high academic standards, placing it on par with other esteemed educational entities in Pakistan. Major General Noor Wali Khan credited the success to the dedicated management and faculty of Cadet College Warsak.

The event drew attendees from various sectors, including parents of cadets, civil and military officials, and a diverse cross-section of the community. Established in 2009, Cadet College Warsak has become a beacon of quality education, currently hosting 650 students from across Pakistan, including tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



In brief

Teenager killed in road accident

KAHNA (INP): A 14-year-old boy was killed in a tragic road accident in Suay Asal area of Kahna, near Lahore, on late Sunday night. According to details, 14-year-old boy identified as Ali Raza was crossing a road in Suay Asal area of Kahna when a rashly driven car hit him due to which he died on the spot. Police and rescue teams reached the spot and sifted the dead body to hospital.

30,677 criminals arrested

FAISALABAD (APP): The police claimed to have arrested 30,677 criminals including 5,945 proclaimed offenders (POs) and 3,556 court absconders from various parts of Faisalabad in 2023. Giving the details, police spokesman Muhammad Nawaz said here on Monday that the police had nabbed 5945 illicit weapon holders and recovered 3340 pistols, 163 rifles, 129 guns, 82 repeaters, 72 Kalashnikovs, 47 revolvers, 10 carbines and 13438 bullets/cartridges from their possession. Similarly, the police arrested 4,112 drug traffickers along with 2074 kilogram cannabis (charas), 34. 424 kg heroin, 234 kg opium, 310.65 kg Bhakki (poppy dust), 19657 kg Bhang, 2.354 kg ice, 51,445 liter liquor and 2,262 liter Lahan (undistilled liquor) in addition to unearthing 3 distilleries during this period. The police also nabbed 1860 gamblers, 2098 kite sellers, 163 one-wheelers, 2835 rash drivers, 323 fireworks sellers, 1960 power pilferers, 949 shopkeepers on illegal gas decanting, 175 violators of the Sound System Act, 177 violators of the Tenants Act and 579 drivers on using fake number plates during 2023, he added.

Action against illegal buildings

MULTAN (APP): Multan Development Authority (MDA) Enforcement Directorate conducted an operation against unauthorized constructions here on Monday. The enforcement team took multiple actions on Ghaus Azam Road, Northern Bypass Road, and MA Jinnah Road against non-approved buildings. During the operation on Ghaus Azam Road, illegal commercial constructions of Rana Munib, Haji Jamshed, and Danish Sahil were demolished. On Northern Bypass Road, the shop of Rana Abdul Ghaffar was demolished, while on MA Jinnah Road, illegal and unauthorized commercial constructions of Muhammad Anwar, Salek Javaid, Hashim Awan, Ghulam Abbas, and Farhat Parveen were brought down, said a news release issued here.

Municipal facilities

SUKKUR (APP): Deputy Mayor Sukkur, Dr Arshad Mughal has directed the Municipal Officers of the Sukkur Municipal Corporation (SMC) to improve the situation regarding utility charges recovery with the coordination of all union councils. Addressing a meeting on utility charges recovery at his office here on Monday, the deputy mayor Sukkur said that the union councils (UCs) with better recovery position will be awarded financial benefits. He said we would have to employ all available resources to ensure provision of municipal services to the people of the district and improve our efficiency in this regard. He called for concentrated efforts by all UCs to enhance the municipal utility recovery. He also called upon officials concerned to improve their performance regarding provision of municipal facilities so as to persuade the consumers to pay their bills of utility services charges.

Food packages among needy people distributed

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Al-Khidmat Foundation, a charity and welfare organization in collaboration with the One Ummah, United Kingdom on Monday distributed food packages among 200 families of the area during a function held at the Timergara rest house ground.

The One Ummah, UK chief executive officer Sumair Masood, AKF district president Hafeezullah Khaksar, general secretary Sultan Zeb and vice president Majidullah distributed the packages among the selected families from all village councils of the district.

Talking to local journalists Mr Khaksar said that each package contained wheat flour, rice, sugar, tea leaves and cooking oil worth Rs 7500 per package. The families' elders thanked the AKF and its donors for supporting them.

Rescue 1122 operates 7300 emergencies in 2023: Rescue 1122 District Emergency Officer Ibrar Ali and spokesman Abdur Rehman have said that timely services were provided to the public in a total of 7300 different types of incidents during the outgoing year 2023.

Talking to local journalists at Timergara here on Monday, the officials said that rescue facilities in 3634 medical emergencies, 493 road accidents, 194 fires, 51 gunshots and fights, 03 building collapses

es, 02-cylinder blasts and 51 recoveries during the year. They said that a total of 27 drowning incidents in the Panjkora River occurred in 2023, in which the Rescue 1122 divers saved 6 precious lives and recovered the bodies of 21 victims.

DEO said that a total of 6329 patients were provided with first aid and emergency services. They said that some of the patients were shifted to local hospitals while a total of 2576 patients were shifted from one hospital to another either in the district or outside of the district. The Rescue 1122 on the directives of DG Dr Khateer Ahmad, conducted more than 100 training and awareness sessions in the Lower Dir district during 2023.

PML-N kicks-off election campaign: The candidates of Lower Dir Pakistan Muslim League (N) for the national and five provincial assemblies have started their election campaign.

Former minister Malik Jahan Zeib Khan, PML-N candidate Malik Noman Yousafzai from PK-14, General Secretary of PML-N Lower Dir Javed Akhtar advocate, and candidate Haji Rooh Ullah from NA-6 and Yasir Khan from NA-7. On this occasion, the speakers said that the Muslim League-N, the largest political party in the country, which led the country on the path of development and prosperity under the leadership of

former Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif, but under a conspiracy, Mian abolishing the government of Nawaz Sharif, the country was pushed back instead of progress.

He said that without Mian Nawaz Sharif, the development of the country is not possible. Records of development work have been done, if the people of Lower Dir trust the PML-N, they will change the destiny of Dir district.

Several activists joined ANP: Several workers of the Jamaat-i-Islami, Pakistan Peoples' Party and Pakistan Tahreek Insaaf announced to part ways with their parties and join the Awami National Party during a function held at Bandagai Munjai area. The function was addressed by the ANP candidate for NA 7 Zahid Khan and PK 14 Malik Muhammad Zeb Khan. They said that hundreds of political workers of different parties had so far joined the ANP that showed that people had full confidence in it.

The speakers condemned the PTI and JI for ignoring the Lower Dir district in development. They said the ANP provided gas facilities to several areas despite the fact that people of Dir had never voted for it. The speakers said the ANP would provide basic facilities to people of Dir irrespective of their political affiliation. They asked the participants to give a chance to the ANP candidates so that they could serve the area.



QUETTA: Chief of Balochistan National Party (Mengal) Akhtar Mengal addressing a press conference.

ANP to out Pervaiz from Nowshera, says Iftikhar Syed Waliullah Shah

F.P. Report

NEWSHERA: Awami National Party (ANP) central general secretary Mian Iftikhar Hussain blamed former Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pervaiz Khattak as coward changing political loyalties for personal gains, on Monday.

This he said while addressing press conference at Nowshera press club and added that residents of Nowshera will throw Lota to river Kabul by rejecting Pervaiz Khattak in upcoming general elections.

ANP central general secretary Mian Iftikhar Hussain claimed that Deputy Commissioner Nowshera along with his brother posted in Irrigation's department covering up their corruption conducted during Pervaiz Khattak chief minister-ship in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He argued that ANP workers had granted sacrifices for their ideology and wouldn't be compromised at any cost.

PPP to hold worker convention

F.P. Report

BUNER: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) district president Saifullah Khan, PDF president Dr. Parkash announced that party KPK president Mohamad Ali Shah will address workers convention at Shalbandi House on 7, January.

The party district president with candidates and activists from PK 25 welcome him at Kingargali entry point and bring him to Shalbandi House wherein the key leaders and candidates discussed and finalized the schedule.

PPP leaders claimed that workers convention would prove a big bang in the PPPP electioneering in Buner. They appealed the party ranks leaders and activists for making sure their participation in the procession and convention so as to show strength. They were hopeful this procession and convention would be successful and an eye-opening message for all of political parties and to bring courage the party candidates.

Residents for redressal of issues

F.P. Report

KOHAT: A delegation led by civil society member and political worker Peer Qayum Shah meet with Commissioner Kohat for redressal of public's grievance faced by residents of Tal area of Hangu district.

The delegation requested Commissioner Kohat to end unscheduled load shedding, initiation of developmental works as per tender of Pakistan Railways and rehabilitation of Daoba to Hangu Road. They also demanded for overcoming shortage of teaching staff at Government Colleges for Boys and Girls as both institutes had obtained highest positions in the recent examinations.

Completion of public interest projects directed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai has urged the officers of nation building departments to ensure the completion of public interest projects on time and as per required standards. He took notice of the unnecessary delay in the completion of certain projects and the use of substandard materials and issued orders to conduct an inquiry in this regard.

He was addressing a meeting of the Monitoring and Evaluation Operational Committee in his office. Besides Additional Commissioner Naeem Akhtar, Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, ADC Finance and Planning Samiur Rahman, ADC Swabi Engineer Shahzeb, Divisional Monitoring Officer Shahzad Khan, DHO Mardan Dr. Javed Iqbal, SE Communication and Works Imran Khan, PD Pihur Canal project, PD Women University, other concerned officials attended the meeting. Various issues were

reviewed on the report of DMO Mardan regarding the ongoing development works in Mardan and Swabi in irrigation, education, health, agriculture and other sectors.

Commissioner Mardan urged to complete this important project costing billions of rupees by removing the obstacles in the way of work on the Pehore Canal project and it's completion within the stipulated period. The meeting noted the slow progress on Girls Cadet College and Women University Mardan and the authorities in this regard were directed to complete the construction work soon.

Addressing the meeting, Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai directed the district officers to monitor the development schemes related to their departments and ensure the completion of these schemes within the stipulated time. He also directed to take actions against the contractors who are lax in the work on some schemes and send some cases to the Anti-

Corruption Establishment. Commissioner Mardan said that government funds are the trust of the people and no one will be allowed to misuse or waste it.

Prominent civil society figure joins ANP to serve the public: Prominent social personality and founder of Clean and Green Pakistan Tariq Khan joined ANP. Central senior vice president ANP and former chief minister Amir Haider Khan Hoti donned him party cap.

Tariq Khan Mardan Medical Complex and WSSCM. He has been a member of the Board of Governors under the Clean and Green Pakistan project, and he has carried out plantation campaigns. He worked day and night, thanks to which he got a lot of acceptance in the government circles. Tariq Khan told the media about his decision to join the ANP that he belonged to a God-serving family, had no personal interest in politics and focused on social work. However, Amir Haider Khan Hoti's personality and his services to have joined ANP.

Swat Press Club, Union elects new cabinet for 2024



Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Swat Press Club (SPC) and Swat Union of Journalists elections for the year 2024 have been completed while Sherin Zada elected for the second consecutive time President of the club and Hazrat Ali Bacha President of the union.

According to details, Mohammad Hayat Chaman Senior Vice President Swat, Vice President Parvaiz Alam, General Secretary Fazal Khaliq Khan, Deputy General Secretary Shiraz Khan, Giant Secretary Umar Farooq, Muhammad Shafiullah Finance Secretary were elected for Swat press club. Hazrat Ali Bacha President Swat Union of Journalist Senior Vice President Javed Iqbal Mir Khankhail, Vice President Muhammad Khaliq Sagar, General Secretary Khurshid Ali, Deputy General Secretary Shahzad Naveed, Joint Secretary Murad Ali and Finance Secretary Shah Asad Ali were elected in

Swat Union of Journalist.

Similarly, members for the Governing Body, Fazal Rahim Khan, Salim Ullah Athar, Niaz Ahmad Khan, Ismat Ali Akhun and Iftikhar Ali have been elected in governing body. On this occasion, an oath-taking ceremony was held, Deputy Commissioner Swat Dr Qasim Ali Khan, DPO Swat Shafi ullah Ghandapur were also present at the occasion. Election committee Chairman Hazrat Bilal, and Saeed Khan president Swat bar announced the cabinet and later on the Chairman Election committee Hazrat Bilal took oath of the newly elected cabinets.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Swat Dr. Qasim Ali Khan, District Police Officer Shafiullah Khan Gandapur said regarding the annual elections 2024 in Swat Press Club that we pay tribute to the mediation committee that reached an agreement between the members of Swat Press Club whom played an important role in ending the two-year-old

dispute, on this occasion the members of the Election Committee, Hazrat Bilal, Saeed Khan Advocate announced the newly elected cabinet officials and congratulated them, saying that the newly elected officials are colleagues of the Swat Press Club and will do their best for the welfare of and will try to live up to the trust that colleagues have shown in them.

President Swat Press Club Sherin Zada, President Swat Union of Journalists Hazrat Ali Bacha, addressing the event. General Secretary Fazal Khaliq Khan, Senior Journalist Dr Mehboob Ali, Saeed ur Rahman, Fayyaz Zafar and Niaz Ahmad Khan said that Swat Press Club is our common home and will work together to solve the problems of journalists associated with it. They added that journalists have played their key role for the promotion of peace and tourism in the region and will continue to do so in the future.

Mushroom farm house inaugurated

F.P. Report

JAMRUD: A mushroom farm house set up by the agriculture department was opened here in late Aftab Alam Afridi Kalley, Shahkas, Jamrud district Khyber last day.

In this connection a gathering was organized that was attended by secretary to National Assembly committee for agriculture Waseem Gohar as chief guest, director agriculture, merged districts Murad Ali, director agriculture,

Khyber Zia-ul-Islam Dawar, agriculture officer Abdul Qader Khan besides farmers and some notables.

Addressing on the occasion, Waseem Gohar said that under the agriculture transformation plan in the merged district mushroom farming was initiated that would benefit the growers.

Jamrud has a favorable atmosphere for mushroom growing and for the last three years mushroom farming has increased, he added. Murad Ali said

that besides mushroom, cultivation of saffron and other crops had been begun in Jamrud to get more profit on farming less land.

He maintained that eight hundred bags of mushrooms had been distributed among the farmers that would certainly change the economic condition of the local growers. Earlier, the chief guest cut the ribbon to formally inaugurate the mushroom farm house and examined various sections of it.



QUETTA: Chairman All Pakistan Mazdoor Goods Transport, Mir Nawaz Mengal addressing a press conference.

Farmers advised to start sunflower cultivation

FAISALABAD (APP): Agriculture experts have advised farmers to start sunflower cultivation and complete it up to mid of February to get bumper crop.

A spokesman for the Agriculture Extension Department told APP here on Monday that sunflower is an important edible oil producing crop which could help Pakistan to trim its import bill of edible bill. He said that maturity of the crop was only 130 days with a comparatively less cost and very high dividend. Therefore, the farmers should cultivate it over maximum space of their land as it would also play an effective role in mitigating their financial sufferings.

He said that the crushing season had started and the

farmers should cultivate sunflower immediately after harvesting the sugarcane crop and complete it by mid of February. They should also prefer sunflower crops instead of late sowing of wheat as sunflower was an oil-seed crop which would not only play pivotal role in catering to our domestic food requirements but also in lessening financial constraints of the growers, he added.

Responding to a question, the spokesman told APP that the growers of Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Khanewal, Multan, Vehari and Bahawal Nagar districts should start sunflower cultivation immediately and complete it by 31st January whereas most suitable time for sunflower cultivation in Muzaffar

Garh, Dera Ghazi Khan, Layyah, Lodhran, Rajan Pur and Bhakkar is from 10th January to 10th February.

Similarly, the farmers of Faisalabad, Mianwali, Sargodha, Khushab, Jhang, Sahiwal, Okara, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Lahore, Mandi Bahaudin, Kasur, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Narowal, Attock, Rawalpindi, Gujrat and Chakwal district should cultivate sunflower crops from January 25 to February 15, he added. He further said that the growers should cultivate approved sunflower varieties like Hi-sun-33, Hi-sun-39, Agora-4, NK-278, FH-331, DK-4040, G-101 and 64-A-93 because these varieties are not only disease resistant but also give bumper yield.



US sinks 3 ships, kills 10 after Houthi Red Sea attack

COPENHAGEN/DUBAI/CAIRO (Reuters): US helicopters repelled an attack by Iran-backed Houthi militants on a Maersk container vessel in the Red Sea, sinking three ships and killing 10 militants, according to accounts by American, Maersk, and Houthi officials.

The naval battle occurred as the attackers sought to board the Singapore-flagged Maersk Hangzhou, Maersk and US Central Command (CENTCOM) said. Helicopters from the USS Eisenhower and USS Gravely joined the ship's security team in repelling the attackers after receiving a distress call, CENTCOM said. Maersk said it was pausing all sailing through the Red Sea for 48 hours after the attack.

A spokesman for the Houthis said the group carried out the attack because the ship's crew refused to heed warning calls. He said 10 Houthi naval personnel were "dead and missing" after their boats were attacked by US forces in the Red Sea. The naval battle underlines the risk of a regional escalation in fighting as Israel continues with its relentless bombing campaign following a Hamas surprise cross-border attack on Israeli towns on Oct. 7 that left 1,200 dead, and took 240 hostages. Israel's air and artillery bombardment has killed more than 21,800 people, according to Gaza health authorities. Yemen's Houthis have been targeting vessels in the Red

Sea since November to show their support for Hamas, prompting major shipping companies to take the longer and costlier route around the Africa's Cape of Good Hope rather than through the Suez Canal. The Red Sea is the entry point for ships using the Suez Canal, which handles about 12% of global trade and vital for the movement of goods between Asia and Europe.

The United States launched Operation Prosperity Guardian on Dec. 19, saying more than 20 countries had agreed to participate in the efforts to safeguard ships in Red Sea waters near Yemen. Maersk, one of the world's top cargo shippers, said on Dec. 24 it would resume sailing through the Red Sea. However, attacks have continued and US allies have proven reluctant to commit to the coalition, with nearly half not declaring their presence publicly. The botched Houthi boarding operation was the second attack on the Maersk Hangzhou in as many days. The ship, which is carrying 14,000 containers en route from Singapore, was hit by a missile about 55 nautical miles southwest of Al Hodeidah, Yemen. The shipping company added that the crew of the Maersk Hangzhou crew was safe and there was no indication of fire onboard the vessel, which continued its journey north toward the Suez Canal. White House national security spokesperson

John Kirby declined to say what options the US is considering when asked on ABC's "Good Morning America" if Washington would consider a preemptive strike on the Houthis. "We have made it clear publicly to the Houthis, we've made it clear privately to our allies and partners in the region, that we take these threats seriously," Writing in the Daily Telegraph newspaper, British Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: "We are willing to take direct action, and we won't hesitate to take further action to deter threats to freedom of navigation in the Red Sea." "The Houthis should be under no misunderstanding; we are committed to holding malign actors accountable for unlawful seizures and attacks," he said.

Earlier, British Foreign Secretary David Cameron said he had told Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian in a call that Iran should help stop the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. The BIMCO shipping association condemned the attacks and thanked those states involved in repelling them. "We are thankful to US, French, and UK efforts so far and hope even more states will support the coalition with naval assets or other impactful means including diplomatic pressure on the Houthis and their sponsors," Jakob Larsen, BIMCO's head of maritime safety and security, told Reuters.

ASEAN FMs concerned over S China Sea tensions

MANILA (Reuters): Foreign ministers of Southeast Asia's regional bloc ASEAN expressed their concern over growing tensions in the South China Sea which they said could threaten regional peace and urged for peaceful dialogue among parties. "We closely follow with concern the recent developments in the South China Sea that may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region," the bloc's top diplomats said in a statement.

The statement came as China and the Philippines have traded accusations in recent months over a series of maritime run-ins and as Manila cited the need to change its approach since diplomatic efforts were headed in a "poor direction". China has described the accusations as "purely false hype", and said it will not turn a blind eye to repeated "provocations and harassment" by the Philippines. ASEAN foreign ministers also reaffirmed the need to "exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes". "We reiterate the importance of peaceful dialogue that contributes constructively to the promotion of regional stability and cooperation in the maritime domain," ASEAN and China have worked towards creating a code of conduct in the South China Sea, a plan dating back to 2002. But progress has been slow despite commitment by all parties to advance and speed up the process. Talks on the components of the code have yet to start amid concerns over China's willingness to commit to a binding set of rules consistent with international law. China claims most of the South China Sea through a "nine-dash-line" that loops as far as 1,500 km (900 miles) south of its mainland, cutting into the exclusive economic zones of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. China named former navy chief Dong Jun as its new defence minister. He previously served as vice-commander in a command which operates in the South China Sea

Armed conflict becoming reality: Kim

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un told the country's military commanders the most powerful means must be mobilized to destroy the United States and South Korea if they choose military confrontation, state media reported on Monday.

Kim said the danger of an armed confrontation on the Korean peninsula is fast becoming a reality because of hostile maneuvers by the enemies including the United States, requiring the country to "sharpen the treasured sword" to protect itself. "If the enemy opt for military confrontation ... our army should deal a deadly blow to thoroughly annihilate them by mobilizing all the toughest means and potentialities without moment's hesitation," KCNA news agency quoted Kim as saying.

Kim made the comments as he hosted senior military leaders at the ruling Workers' Party (WPK) headquarters to congratulate them on the accomplishments made in 2023, the state news agency said. North Korea in 2023 tested its largest ballistic missiles and launched its first military reconnaissance satellite, which Kim has called major advances in modernizing the country's military.

His successor, Li Shangfu, was abruptly removed as defence minister responsible for equipment. "It is a clear sign that they are being purged," said Andrew Scobell, Distinguished Fellow for China at the United States Institute for Peace. Beijing did not explain why the generals were removed. Some analysts say the evidence points towards corruption over equipment procurement by the PLA Rocket Force. "More heads will roll. The purge that centred around the Rocket Force is not over," said Alfred Wu, associate professor, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore. Wei Fenghe, a former defence minister who used to head the Rocket Force, has also vanished. When asked about his whereabouts, a defence ministry spokesman said in August that the military has zero tolerance for corruption.

His successor, Li Shangfu, was abruptly removed as defence minister

Zelenskiy says Ukraine stronger as it moves toward year two of war

KYIV (Reuters): President Volodymyr Zelenskiy in his New Year address early on Monday said Ukraine had become stronger in overcoming serious difficulties as the war against Russia moves toward its second year.

But Zelenskiy's slick 20-minute video message, delivered from his Kyiv office, made almost no direct reference to the situation on the 1,000-km (600-mile) front line or the limited success of a counteroffensive launched in June. Nor did he refer to the political and diplomatic difficulties in securing continued military and other aid from both the US Congress and the European Union.

Zelenskiy said the war had taught Ukrainians to withstand Russian attacks and adapt to hardships, including blackouts, the operation of industry and threats to shipping its exports. "The major result of the year, its main achievement: Ukraine has become stronger," Zelenskiy said in the address, interspersed with footage of cities under attack and meetings with leaders of Ukraine's Western allies. "When, at the beginning of 2023 ... we surmounted, without exaggeration, the most difficult winter in history. When we proved that Ukrainians are tougher than cold and darkness. Stronger than power outages and blackout threats.

"Ukrainians are stronger than any blockades and vetoes, disbelief or skepticism," he said. Zelenskiy pointed to Ukrainian successes in containing and attacking Russia's navy in the Black Sea, confirmed "by their large landing ships, missile-armed and patrol corvettes on the bottom of the sea." Ukrainians were "stronger than any intrigues," he said, in putting together groups of Western countries for improving Ukrainian air defences and pledging to supply F-16 fighter aircraft. "We will definitely see them in our skies," he said of the F-16s, while repeating a promise to boost domestic weapons production and produce at least 1 million drones in the next year. And in a reference to questions of ensuring that the Ukrainian military had sufficient numbers of troops, he urged those who are "still hesitating to make a bold choice next year, to defend their own country, to work for it, to help it."

Reuters Add: Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy honoured his people's resilience in times of bloodshed in a long and lyrical New Year



speech, while Russian leader Vladimir Putin stressed his country's unity in a short and stern message that made only passing reference to the war.

The speeches - traditional Dec. 31 messages in both Russia and Ukraine - came as both countries marked the end of the year with increased air attacks on each other's territories. But neither side can point to any major frontline achievements in 2023. "The major result of the year, its main achievement: Ukraine has become stronger," Zelenskiy said in a televised address interspersed with footage of cities under attack and meetings with leaders of Ukraine's Western allies. Mentioning "war" 14 times in his 20-minute message, Zelenskiy also vowed, just like a year ago, that a free Ukraine would prevail. "No matter how many rockets the enemy launches, no matter how many shelling and attacks - vile, merciless, massive - the enemy carries out in an attempt to break Ukrainians, intimidate, knock Ukraine down, drive it underground, we will still rise," he said, dressed in his trademark khaki outfit.

Comments by Putin, who faces an election in March, provided a sharp contrast to those of Zelenskiy and also to his own speech last year, when he cast the war as a near-existential fight. This year, he called Russia's soldiers "our heroes," but did not mention Ukraine by name and did not refer to the "special military operation" - his term for the war his invasion unleashed in February 2022.

"We have proven more than once that we can solve the most difficult problems and will never retreat, because there is no force that can divide us," Putin said in a four-minute speech, dressed in a suit and a red tie against a backdrop of the Kremlin walls. "We are one country, one big family." The war - the deadliest conflict in Europe since World War II - is nearing its second anniversary, with no end in sight. Thousands have been killed, millions of Ukrainians displaced and countless cities turned to rubble.

Neither Putin nor Zelenskiy referred to the 1,000-km (600-mile) front line where Kyiv's counteroffensive had little success and where Moscow has been pushing on with its most recent but slow offensive along the eastern flank aiming to take control of more Ukrainian territory. And while Zelenskiy spoke of 6,000 or so air raid alerts in Ukraine in the past year, Putin made no mention of any attacks - not even an attack Russia says Ukraine carried out on Belgorod in recent days killing at least 24 civilians. Both spoke of the strength of their countries and their people, with Putin saying the future common effort will make Russia and its people stronger and Zelenskiy saying the war had already showed the strength of Ukrainians. "And just like last December 31, today, we say: 'We don't know for sure what the New Year will bring us,'" Zelenskiy said. "But this year we can add: 'No matter what it brought, we will be stronger.'" — Agencies

Families of Russia's mobilised fight back despite fear

MOSCOW (AFP): It started with a morning knock on the door just days into Russia's mobilisation drive in September 2022. Maria Semyonova's boyfriend was handed his draft papers while she was still waking up.

After getting six weeks of training, he has been fighting in Ukraine ever since. "I remember that day like it was yesterday," said the 26-year-old Moscow resident, her body stiffening at the memory. "I was just shaking," Maria said. Unable to focus, she took a week off work and eventually resigned from her job. As the second anniversary of the Ukraine conflict looms, the female relatives of Russia's mobilised men are becoming more and more outspoken in calling for their loved ones to come home. Their pickets and impassioned appeals have gained traction on social media and the sensitive issue is becoming a difficult one for the authorities to ignore entirely or deal with heavily.

Semyonova has written multiple appeals to President Vladimir Putin and other officials --- all to no avail. One day in December, wrapped up in a white scarf, she laid white carnations at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier by the walls of the Kremlin in an

act of protest together with 10 other women. "I love him. I can't just abandon him," she said. When he came back for his first leave, she found her boyfriend "tougher" than usual. On his second leave, he was drunk half the time and was having nightmares about the campaign.

"Nobody is listening!" - Various social media groups for the relatives of mobilised soldiers have sprung up in recent months. One of them, a Telegram channel called "The Way Home", has over 38,000 followers. Their activism is largely ignored by state media but is a sensitive issue for the Kremlin which is keen to project an image of national unity around Putin ahead of his inevitable re-election in a vote in March. "We're not being heard by our government, by our television stations, nobody is listening to us," said Alexandra, a 34-year-old cook living in the Murmansk region in the far north of Russia. "But I can't not do this," said the 34-year-old pregnant mother of two, who moved to Russia from eastern Ukraine with her husband, a miner, in 2018. He was mobilised in October 2022 -- shortly after Putin announced a partial mobilisation that led to angry protests and a wave of emigration of young men. -

'Everything collapsed' - More than 300,000 men were called up in the end and there is still no indication of when they might return as the conflict grinds on. The salary for mobilised men of around 200,000 rubles (2,000 euros) a month is high for Russia -- at least outside the capital. But the families say a lot of the money goes on extra kit to supplement what the army provides them with and there are extra childcare costs to factor in. The burden is difficult for many women. Antonina, 41, said she had to leave her job and started going to a therapist after her partner was called up. She has gained 25 kilos (55 pounds) and suffered a microstroke. "Everything collapsed," she said. "I try not to watch the news because I know where he is... I just wait for his calls," she said. She said her partner, who is suffering from a peptic ulcer, is being sent out on assaults with other sick and injured men even though they should not be fighting. Nevertheless, Antonina and other women said they were opposed to a second wave of mobilisation even if that was the only way for their loved ones to come back. "I don't want anyone else to go through what I'm going through," she said. "The Way Home" has now published a manifesto

declaring mobilisation illegal since Russia has not officially declared war and is conducting what it officially refers to as a "special military operation". While none of the three women that AFP spoke to said they had faced any legal consequences due to their activism, they know they are treading a thin line in a country where dissent over the conflict is increasingly punished. "I'm scared my husband will be killed for what I'm doing. I'm scared my children will be sent to an orphanage, that I'll be imprisoned," said Alexandra, who is expecting their third child in March. - 'A terrible mistake' - AFP has withheld details about the women and their partners because of their concerns about possible repercussions.

They all said they had received violent rhetoric online -- from both supporters and opponents of Russia's campaign in Ukraine. Alexandra said that in the place where she lives "I am alone in my struggle" and many friends have turned against her. But she said she had no intention of giving up. "I just want this nightmare to end. People should not kill each other. "We have made a terrible mistake. Our whole country has and I really want people to realise that and for there to be peace."

Russia sentenced 200 captured Ukrainians

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian courts have sentenced more than 200 Ukrainian fighters to prison terms since Moscow started its military operation in Ukraine, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in an interview with the state RIA news agency published. "The courts of the Russian Federation have already sentenced more than 200 representatives of Ukrainian armed formations to long terms of imprisonment for committing atrocities," Lavrov told RIA.

Both sides accuse each other of committing numerous atrocities in the war that Russia started with a full-scale invasion on Ukraine in February 2022. The United Nations has found continued evidence of war crimes and human

rights violations committed by Russian authorities, including torture, rape and the deportation of children. In March, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin, alleging Moscow's forcible deportation of Ukrainian children is a war crime. "On our path to justice, the main result of the year is undoubtedly the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court for Putin," Ukraine's Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin said in a statement, summing up 2023. "A historic decision and a clear signal that no one can be above the law." The Ukraine Prosecutor General's office has registered more than 121,000 Russian crimes of aggression and war crimes since

the war started, according to its website.

The UN has also found several cases of Ukrainian authorities committing violations of human rights of people they have accused of collaborating with Russian authorities. Lavrov told RIA that Russia's main investigative organ, the Investigative Committee, has initiated 4,000 criminal cases against about 900 Ukrainian individuals. "They include not only members of radical nationalist associations, representatives of Ukrainian security forces and mercenaries, but also representatives of the military and political leadership of Ukraine," Lavrov said. "Those of them who were charged in absentia have been put on the international wanted list."

Sahel states rally thousands to support alliance

NIAMEY (Reuters): The prime ministers of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali affirmed their commitment to a shared future under an alliance that has seen the three junta-led countries distance themselves from the larger West African political bloc since their coups.

The three neighbouring states are all ruled by military officers who have seized power in coups since 2020. This has put them at odds with the rest of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which is urging them to return to democratic rule. "From now on, we say, whether you're from Mali, Niger or Burkina, we

have the same destiny. We're going in together," said Burkinabe premier Apollinaire Joachim Kyelem de Tambela at a joint press conference in Niger's capital Niamey.

"It is up to us to take control of our destiny," he said. A day earlier the three premiers appeared in front of a crowd of thousands celebrating the recent full withdrawal of French troops from Niger. The juntas have all severed long-standing military ties with former colonial ruler France, dealing a blow to France's influence in the region and complicating international efforts to curb a decade-old Islamist insurgency that has destabilised the Sahel

region. In a show of independence from France and ECOWAS, the three countries have sought to forge closer security, political and economic ties through a new union called the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). "And so AES was born. If you notice, it all started with safety issues. Today, collaboration between our three armies has reached an extremely high level of integration. And that scares some people," said Malian Prime Minister Choguel Maiga. In August, data from US-based crisis-monitoring group ACLED showed violence had soared in Mali and Burkina Faso since their militaries took power.

Sweeping Chinese military purge exposes weakness, could widen

BEIJING (Reuters): A sweeping purge of Chinese generals has weakened the People's Liberation Army, exposing deep-rooted corruption that could take more time to fix and slow Chinese leader Xi Jinping's military modernization drive amid geopolitical tensions, analysts say.

China's top lawmakers senior military officers from the national legislative body, state media reported, a step that typically precedes further punishment for wayward cadres. Many of these were from the Rocket Force - a key arm of the PLA overseeing tactical and nuclear missiles. The purges are a setback for Xi who has pumped billions into buying and developing equipment as part of his modernising efforts to build a "world-class" military by 2050, with Beijing's outsized defence budget growing at a faster

pace than the economy for some years.

The recent downfall of generals and military equipment suppliers, however, has punctured some of this aura, and raised questions over whether there has been adequate oversight over these massive military investments as China vies with the United States in key areas, including Taiwan and the South China Sea. Since Xi took power in 2012, he has embarked on a wide-ranging anti-corruption crackdown among Communist Party and government officials, with the PLA being one of its main targets. The nine PLA generals removed from the legislature hailed from several military divisions; three were former commanders or vice commanders of the PLA Rocket Force; one a former Air Force chief and one a Navy commander responsible for the South China Sea. Four officers were

responsible for equipment.

"It is a clear sign that they are being purged," said Andrew Scobell, Distinguished Fellow for China at the United States Institute for Peace. Beijing did not explain why the generals were removed. Some analysts say the evidence points towards corruption over equipment procurement by the PLA Rocket Force. "More heads will roll. The purge that centred around the Rocket Force is not over," said Alfred Wu, associate professor, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore. Wei Fenghe, a former defence minister who used to head the Rocket Force, has also vanished. When asked about his whereabouts, a defence ministry spokesman said in August that the military has zero tolerance for corruption.

His successor, Li Shangfu, was abruptly removed as defence minister

in October without explanation after also disappearing for months. He had previously headed the equipment department. One of his then deputies was removed from parliament. On the same day, Dong Jun, a Chinese ex-Navy chief, with a South China Sea background, was named Li's replacement as defence minister. Analysts say that while the Chinese military has long been known for corruption, the extent of the latest crackdown and the involvement of the PLA's Rocket Force is shocking. "This part of the PLA would have the most rigorous vetting process for senior officers, given the importance of having highly trusted men in charge of China's nuclear weapons," said Dennis Wilder, senior fellow for the Initiative for US-China Dialogue on Global Issues at Georgetown University. "Moreover, it

seems to have involved several senior men rather than one 'bad apple'."

Analysts say the purge of senior military leaders could leave the Rocket Force temporarily weakened until Xi manages to put the house in order. "The strategic nuclear force is what China relies on as the bottom line of its national security, and the last resort on Taiwan," said Yun Sun, Director of the China Program at the Stimson Center, a Washington D.C.-based thinktank. "It will take some time for China to clean up the mess and restore confidence in the Rocket Force's competence and trustworthiness. It means for the time being, China is at a weaker spot." Sun described Xi's campaign to stamp out military corruption as a Sisyphean task "that can never be completed". In the longer run, analysts expect the chronic problem of corruption to persist in the

Chinese military because some root causes - including low pay for officers and opacity in military expenditure - have not been addressed. Chen Daoyin, formerly an associate professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, said that the ongoing crackdown might dissuade Xi from risking serious clashes with other militaries in the next 5-10 years. "Before realising how rampant corruption was, he drank his Kool-Aid and thought the military can really 'fight and win battles' as expected by him," said Chen, who is now a political commentator based in Chile. "But how can the generals' hearts be in fighting, if they are just busy lining their own pockets? Xi now knows that their proclamations of loyalty to the party and to the military ring hollow. I imagine this would zap his confidence somewhat."

The Frontier Post

FOUNDER
Rehmat Shah Afridi
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

Military’s role in nation-building

THE Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, has expressed unwavering commitment that Pakistan Army, as a National Army, will leave no stone unturned to contribute to the cause of national security and development. On New Year's Eve, the Pakistan Army expressed its resolve that no one can defeat the spirit of Pakistan as the people and armed forces of Pakistan are the ones.

Pakistan Army is the nation's most disciplined, highly organized, well-trained, and responsive institution. Its primary mission is the defence and security of the country; however, it has been called upon for jobs which were well beyond the scope of its duties. Being an ideological and national Army, it remained committed to defending the country's geographical territories while upholding the Country's Islamic ideology. During the last seven decades of Pakistan's history, the Pakistan Army fought three major battles with its eternal adversary besides a decades-long military conflict in Siachen Glacier and a sameer civil insurgency in Balochistan. Pakistan military also fought a successful battle against terrorism in Erstwhile FATA since 2003.

Besides, accomplishment of the primary task and professional commitments, Pakistan Army played a significant role during natural calamities such as floods, earthquakes, locust attacks and the coronavirus pandemic. Pakistan's Military remained available to the government at times of need for maintenance of law and order, national census, election duty, desalination of the irrigation system, recovery of the WPADA and polio vaccination security throughout the past.

The Pakistan Army and its sub-sideries organizations including NLC, FWO and SCO remained at the forefront in nation-building, the construction of roads, and bridges, the provision of educational and communication facilities in certain areas such as Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, FATA and Balochistan. Currently, military leadership is playing a vital role in the SIFC for the economic revival of the country. Undoubtedly, Pakistan's military is endeavouring hard to implement the dreams and aspirations of the nation in all domains. Hopefully, Pakistan will emerge as a successful nation in the future.

Gaza conflict and Hague Court

SOUTH Africa recently filed a case at the United Nations' top court accusing Israel of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, requesting an order for Israel to halt its attacks against innocent civilians immediately. South Africa's petition to the International Court of Justice alleged that acts and omissions by Israel are genocidal in character as they are committed with the intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza as a part of the broader Palestinian national, racial and ethnic group. South Africa asked the International Court of Justice to issue an interim order for Israel to immediately suspend its military operations in Gaza. South African Foreign Ministry has expressed grave concerns at the plight of civilians caught in the present Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip due to the indiscriminate use of force and forcible removal of inhabitants.

The Hamas-Israel conflict in Gaza has entered 12 weeks with unimaginable destruction and an unbelievable story of misery which perished over 21500 lives mostly children and women, while numbers of critically injured and permanent disabilities enlisted over fifty-five thousand. The global community including the United Nations and its executive arm the UN Security Council (UNSC) failed against the world's sole Jewish state and its resolute supporter the United States in realizing a ceasefire and ensuring peace in the war-torn territory. Meantime, the political and diplomatic efforts of the OIC and major Arab nations including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Egypt could not bring any breakthrough except a temporary truce and exchange of dozens of prisoners from both sides. Interestingly, Muslim nations did not move beyond media statements, courtesy calls for a ceasefire and forego diplomacy to end conflict and secure peace in Gaza. How faint voices and feeble requests could impact belligerent decisions in the absence of risks of any serious backlash from adversaries.

Although, Muslim conscious remained asleep over the past almost three months and no single Muslim country threatened Israel for its blatant aggression and planned genocide of innocent unarmed Palestinians who had been bombed from the air and sea while the supply of essential elements including food, drinking water, fuel, electricity and lifesaving drugs was blocked by the Israeli military along with pushing for a forced exodus of millions of Palestinians from their homeland. Currently, the global community views Israeli actions as a planned campaign to push over 2.3 million Palestinians out of Gaza toward Sinai (Egypt) or any other country for onward encroachment/Jewish settlement in newly occupied areas.

Presently, the ratio of human casualties, material and economic losses vis-a-vis human rights abuses and crimes against civilians both for Israel and Hamas stands at 21500 killings, 55000 injuries, over 1.3 million displacements, mass human rights abuses and siege of an entire Gaza enclave by Israeli troops against 1700 deaths of Israelis, a few hundred injuries and over 100 hostages in Hamas custody.

Historically, world leaders, political analysts and human rights experts including the South African President have accused Israel of ethnic cleansing and genocide of Palestinian Arabs in the ongoing conflict in Gaza. Many have compared Israel's policies regarding Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank with South Africa's past apartheid regime of racial segregation. South Africa has been a fierce critic of the Israeli military campaign in densely populated enclave. As far as, Johannesburg's petition is concerned, a hearing into that request is likely to be held in the coming days or weeks. The case, if it goes ahead, will take years, but an interim order for a ceasefire could be issued within weeks.

There is debate whether Israel and its staunch supporter would honour and implement the verdict of the Hague Court if it comes against them. There is the least scope of any such possibility, however, it would be a moral victory for poor Gazans and a political and diplomatic setback for the Jewish state and its allies.

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 teshil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Watching the watchdogs: US media reporting from Gaza

Rami G Khouri

ON December 14, I came across a report on the CNN website titled "Watch Clarissa Ward report from inside Gaza for the first time since war began", which grabbed my attention, as good headlines usually do. The subheading further heightened my interest - "CNN's Clarissa Ward witnessed the horror and humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza during a visit to a field hospital in Rafah operated by the United Arab Emirates".

American journalists had not reported from within Gaza - except a few embedded with Israeli troops - because Israel, as the occupying power in control of the Gaza Strip's borders, has been denying access to foreign journalists and putting pressure on Egypt to do so as well. So I was intrigued by how Ward had managed to gain access and saw her report as a chance to learn if such on-the-spot coverage would compensate for the broadly awful Western mainstream media coverage of the previous nine weeks.

Over the previous two months, I had observed heavily pro-Israeli, distorted, and incomplete coverage, especially on American television. I saw most news presenters and show hosts expressing strong bias for Israel, in their words, tone of voice, and editorial choices. The predominance of military analyses by retired US senior officers was equally slanted towards Israel and against Hamas.

The flood of deeply human, personalised, warm, and emotional coverage of Israeli hostages and casualties contrasted with much shallower and fewer reports on the Palestinian victims and prisoners. So I wondered, would the report from a field hospital in Gaza be better, more balanced, more human? So I clicked on the CNN story link to discover how it was reported from inside Gaza amid the mass murder and human suffering. What follows are a few observations of the strengths and weaknesses of the report. It is important to point them out as an example of the practices that plague the coverage of the Gaza war by most US media outlets.

The report's strength is that CNN and Ward and her team made the effort to enter Gaza, see its human and material conditions for

themselves, and share with the world the images, words, and emotions of a handful of Gaza Palestinians. I salute and thank them, and hope they prompt other journalists to enter Gaza by any possible safe means. The report also exposes the viewers to the range of human suffering, fear, and helplessness that now defines Gaza. It offers snippets of the stories of a number of casualties, including young children and one orphaned toddler.

The video also captures the moment Israel bombs a location near the hospital; it demonstrates the frightening sensation of hearing and feeling the impact of a shell or bomb that Palestinians in Gaza experience on an hourly basis. Ward maximises the powerful combination of images, quotes from people she interviews, and her own descriptions, which television at its best can do so well. She beautifully allows the viewer to feel what any visitor to the hospital would experience when she says that she feels "in every bed another gut punch", as I did when I watched her report. She rightly calls Gaza's mass suffering and non-stop death "one of the great horrors of modern warfare" and "a window onto hell".

But elsewhere the report falls short of journalism's responsibility to give audiences a reasonably complete picture of the situation on the ground in Gaza. Here are a few examples of how an extra sentence, phrase, or just a few words more would have let viewers grasp the full context of these hospitalised young Palestinians' lives, amid the wider conflict's causes, casualties, and participants. Ward only mentions once, at the start, Israel's more than 22,000 military strikes and their "intensity and ferocity". But she fails to say that Israeli bombardment has been so indiscriminate and deadly that legal scholars consider what is happening in Gaza a genocide and there are several major legal cases in the US and Europe to stop it.

The report says that most patients are women and children, who also account for two of every three deaths. But it does not refer to the fact that Israel's bombardment has resulted in more than 80,000 dead, injured and missing

Palestinians, most of whom are civilians killed at home, in hospitals or United Nations-run schools turned into shelters. The report mentions that the UAE hospital is taking patients from other medical facilities, which are overcrowded, but does not say why that is - because Israel has systematically bombed and raided most of Gaza's hospitals to the point that they are out of service. It also makes no mention of the hundreds of medical workers Israel has killed, which has resulted in severe medical staff shortages.

The report points to the improvised tourniquet on one injured man rushed into the hospital, but it does not reveal that this is due to Israel blocking the delivery of life-saving and even basic medical supplies. All the suffering humans who Ward interviews - with their amputated limbs, killed family members, broken bones, and disfigured faces - are mostly presented in passive, almost abstract, contexts that do not capture their full humanity or the full nature of the conflict. Consequently, most of the Palestinians we meet in the story seem like one-dimensional, caricature-like figures, expressing only fear, misery, and worry. We the audience mostly feel sorry for the Palestinians, but we do not really know them, because no other emotions beyond pity link us to them.

We are told that one of the patients - 20-year-old Lama, who lost her leg - was studying to be an engineer. But we are not informed that Israel has not only broken her body but her dreams, having devastated Gaza's universities, making it impossible for Gaza's youth to pursue higher education in the years ahead. The report makes clear that Lama and her family fled their home upon Israel's orders, but then were bombed in the home where they sought refuge. But we are not told that 80 percent of Gaza's 2.3 million population have been displaced and are living in appalling conditions, made that much worse by Israel's full blockade that has cut off food, electricity, water, and medicine.

The report discusses Gaza in the context of other conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, but does not mention this as the latest

episode of Israel's 75-year-long and ongoing ethnic cleansing, colonisation, and occupation of Palestinians. It does not refer to the fact that the majority of Gaza residents are refugees or descendants of refugees who were forced to flee their homes by Jewish militias in 1948 to avoid being killed. While the report mentions that Israel and Egypt have made access to Gaza "next to impossible", it appears to indicate that this is so because of the danger from Israeli bombardment. This justification is rather bizarre given the fact that Western journalists have been all over the front lines in the war in Ukraine, where they face Russian bombardment. The report avoids saying that foreign journalists are barred from Gaza because Israel wants to control the narrative of the war.

I do not personally know Clarissa Ward, but I have known many CNN correspondents since the channel's earliest days, and I know they are sincere professionals who aim to do quality journalism. So my comments are not directed at the correspondent or CNN as a whole, but rather seek to highlight the weaknesses of such reports that mirror much of the US's flawed coverage of Israel's assault on Gaza. I raise the issue of poor media coverage of our region because in the United States, United Kingdom, and other Western countries, I've seen the damage it has caused by promoting Israeli and Western governments' views above all others.

Since the media is the public's main source of information on the Middle East, biased reporting over many decades has created a misinformed citizenry. This has perpetuated government support for Israel's colonial apartheid system, which now wants to expel into the Sinai Peninsula more Palestinians from Gaza. This in turn allows Israel to resist any serious peacemaking efforts and refuse to comply with international legal norms. The result is the chronic and ever more gruesome warfare that we witness these days. Our common struggle to create a world of justice and peace goes on. We in the journalism world should step up quickly and forcefully to play a constructive role by using the tools we know so well to communicate truths across frontiers.

I don't care who wins US presidential election

Andrew Mitrovica

IT was a choreographed scene starring the US president and First Lady that was meant to convey the restorative spirit of the festive season. Last week, Joe and Jill Biden emerged from behind a black curtain like giddy celebrities and took their red seats before a large Christmas tree brimming with decorations and gifts at the Children's National Hospital in Washington, DC.

Their excited audience included a gaggle of young patients and their parents anxious to see the commander-in-chief and his wife who would read aloud the popular poem, The Night Before Christmas. "Thanks for letting us come to see you," President Biden said.

Indeed, every First Lady beginning with Bess Truman - 75 years ago - has made the annual pilgrimage to the children's hospital "to spread holiday cheer". In 2022, Biden became the first sitting president to tag along. A frail-looking but animated Biden winked, waved and smiled as the First Lady read from the picture book, holding it aloft.

When the First Lady finished, Biden thanked the hospital staff. "It's special, special what you do." He had this parting advice: "Where there is life, there is hope."

With that, Biden urged the children to return after they had recovered to offer support to other kids spending the holidays in hospital rather than at home. A hospital official applauded the Bidens for "continuing this annual tradition...[that] brings so much joy to all the children, the families and our staff". "God bless you all," Biden said. Their performance lasted less than 10 minutes.

However brief, it was designed in part, I suppose, to burnish "Uncle Joe's" credentials as a kind guy who is all too familiar with the worry, heartache and searing pain of caring for ill children or losing them to a sudden, violent act with awful consequences. But watching the Bidens stage this perfunctory ritual - with television cameras in tow of course - only deepened my contempt for a decrepit president who considers the welfare and lives of some children more valuable than others. Instead of using his powers and influence to try to stop the maiming and killing of thousands of Palestinian children, Biden has, in odious effect, encouraged the maiming and killing of thousands of Palestinian children. In occupied Palestine, Biden is not a harbinger of "joy", but the co-architect of the dystopian carnage engulfing a shattered people and their shattered land. This complicit president, who is fulsome party to a systematic campaign to snuff out life and hope in Gaza and the West Bank, had the near-sickening audacity to share what amounts to a cheap bit of greeting-card-like philosophy that "where there is life, there is hope". Astonishing.

Biden compounded this obscenity by visiting a hospital to praise doctors and nurses tending to the sick while America's proxy, Israel, has ruthlessly gone about occupying, ransacking and destroying hospitals throughout Gaza and forcibly disappearing and killing Palestinian doctors and nurses. What they did and how they did it - to borrow a phrase - was special, too. That Biden and his handlers were blind to this blatant and ugly juxtaposition is a measure of how disposable

and forgettable the promising lives and horrific deaths of Palestinians are in their misanthropic geopolitical calculus. The litany of halting images of the dirt-caked faces of Palestinian children calling out for their lost mamas and babas or small, limp bodies wrapped in white shrouds apparently did not dissuade Biden from playing his part in an agreeable photo op that, given the lethal times and bleak context, stings of indecency. The Bidens' token appearance and all that it revealed about the president's signature nature has served as the exclamation point to a brewing realisation that, like a hurricane, has gathered strength and momentum in me since early October.

I have been such a fool. I have written columns - that I wish I could erase - praising Biden as a literate, if not honourable, alternative to the mayhem and madness embodied by an illiterate, dishonourable charlatan named Donald Trump. I have written other columns - that I also wish I could erase - extolling the wisdom of enlightened Americans who, I was confident, would choose Biden over Trump again this coming November and spare a fretting world four more years of Trumpian madness and mayhem. Enlightened Americans exist. There just aren't enough of them. I chided other, much wiser columnists, who wrote that beyond the rhetorical edges, both Biden and Trump were elected to protect the interests - at home and abroad - of the oligarchs they serve under the risible guise of a phantom "democracy" addicted to war and plunder for profit. On this defining score, Biden has proven to be every bit as useful and reliable a marionette as his predecessor. Trump's offish manners and profanity offend the delicate sensibilities of the liberal and progressive cognoscenti, not his loyalty to the disfiguring status quo.

I could not care less who prevails in the upcoming presidential campaign. I will not worry a whit about America's "future" because if even the recent past is any litmus, history's most efficient killing machine is bound to cause more death, pain and suffering across the globe - whoever is president. This coming year I will enjoy the entertaining spectacle of a country slipping deeper into fanaticism and dissonance while much of it, predictably, turns to muppets with megaphones, such as Joe Rogan and Bill Maher, for a way out of (or into) the impending abyss. Speaking of muppets, a note to the swarm of nitwits who will, no doubt, caution me to be "careful what I wish for". How much worse can it get? A genocide is being perpetrated against millions of innocent Palestinians while dear, old Uncle Joe twiddles his knotty thumbs. Rather than get incensed about that, you'll get miffed at me for writing this "outrageous" column.

Priorities. Finally, I think it would be fitting if Trump returned to the White House. Then, all of the daffy guff about America being a nation founded on a sacrosanct constitution, the rule of law and a shining city on a hill that the rest of us should emulate will be extinguished emphatically. What a moment it will be when Americans - well, 66 percent of eligible voters - make it official on November 5, 2024: electing a career criminal to lead a criminal regime. So, happy jaundiced new year, everyone!

Change in the air as UK gears up for big election year

Andrew Hammond

THE week between Christmas and New Year is traditionally a time for UK politics to take a holiday. However, last Wednesday saw Finance Minister Jeremy Hunt fire the starting gun for the 2024 general election campaign by announcing a March 6 date for his annual budget.

This announcement will fuel speculation that Prime Minister Rishi Sunak could call the election in the first half of 2024. But whatever the timing, the most likely scenario is a significant change in UK politics away from the ruling Conservatives - a shift that will have key international implications, as well as domestic ones.

To be sure, there may be some significant continuity in terms of UK foreign policy to begin with, even if there is a new government. This includes issues such as strong support for Ukraine in its fight against Russia.

However, Labour leader Keir Starmer has said that, if he becomes prime minister, one of his chief priorities would be "the restoration of the United Kingdom and its reputation on the world stage." His argument is that many people outside of the country feel that it has "turned (its) back on the world, and wherever you go people feel almost the absence of the United Kingdom, once a leading voice, now rarely consulted."

This could result in a strong relationship between Starmer and US President Joe Biden, in what the Labour leader has called the opportunity for a "progressive moment." This might even get close to the warmth of relations between Tony Blair and Bill Clinton almost a quarter of a century ago, when they advocated a "third way" between free market capitalism and socialism. Meanwhile, closer to home in Europe,

Labour wants a "much better" Brexit deal with the EU when the current agreement is reviewed in 2025. Starmer believes the current arrangement is "too thin" and he is seeking a closer UK-EU trading relationship.

The fact that Labour is likely to win most seats at the election is shown by recent polls, which indicate that the party could have its biggest electoral success since its landslide wins under Blair in 1997 and Clement Attlee in 1945. The Electoral Calculus prediction tool currently forecasts Labour winning about 459 seats at the general election - a result that would deliver a huge majority. That may exaggerate the outcome, which would even be in excess of the 1997 and 1945 landslides. To put the 459 number into historical perspective, in the 21 elections since 1945, the winning party has only twice gained

as many as 400 MPs. That was Labour in 1997 and again in 2001 under Blair's leadership.

It is still plausible that the polling figures will tighten in the coming months, of course. However, Labour is likely to win more seats than the Conservatives, even if the size of victory is by no means certain to be on a historically epic scale. Labour's current big lead highlights not just the success of its leader in restoring confidence after the huge 2019 election loss, but also the growing discontent with the Conservatives, who have ditched four prime ministers in the past seven years, as Brexit and also the COVID-19 pandemic caused major convulsions across the country.

Increasingly, it appears as if Sunak's position is comparable to that of Prime Minister John Major before the 1997 election. About 18

months before that poll, the Conservatives' standing was as low as it is today, notwithstanding the economy being in much better health. By the time the general election came, the party had regained modest support but not nearly enough to keep hold of power. It won only 165 seats, less than half the number it had in the previous Parliament, from 1992 to 1997 - but significantly more than the 120 that Electoral Calculus currently forecasts for the Conservatives at the next ballot. The growing perception that Labour will emerge with the largest number of MPs in Westminster after the next election is encouraging growing numbers of Conservative MPs to announce their retirement from politics, including former Cabinet ministers, such as ex-Defense Secretary Ben Wallace.

However, as bad as the prognosis is for Sunak, he should escape an imminent

leadership challenge and is most likely to take the Conservatives into the next election. This is, in part, because of the declining political fortunes of former leader Boris Johnson, who has left Parliament with a hugely tarnished reputation. But Sunak still has a steep political hill to climb as he tries to establish himself before going to the polls. The task is so difficult because no party in modern UK political history has won five elections in a row - and he must try to do this in the context of a divided Conservative caucus of MPs, high inflation and sluggish economic growth.

Taken together, this is why Labour is tipped to win, potentially in overwhelming fashion. While Sunak is likely to stay as prime minister until then, the political winds are blowing strongly against the ruling Conservatives, dimming their hopes of winning a fifth straight term of office.

How Sudan’s devastating war can be resolved in 2024

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

IT has been nearly nine months since clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the powerful paramilitary group the Rapid Support Forces broke out in Sudan and there is still no sign of a resolution that could bring about an end to this devastating war. Despite attempts at ceasefires, the power struggle persists. This has unfortunately exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the country.

Intense clashes in various parts of Sudan have caused hundreds of thousands of people to be confronted with the painful dilemma of either abandoning their homes or choosing to remain, risking injury or even death. More than 7 million people have been displaced due to the ongoing conflict in Sudan. About 1.5 million of them have sought shelter in neighboring countries. And nearly 9,000 people have been killed in the war.

Children are at particularly high risk as Sudan currently faces one of the largest displacements of children in the world. The conflict has recently spread to Al-Jazirah state, impacting its 5.9 million inhabitants, of which about half are children. UNICEF pointed out in December that the escalation in fighting in the state "reportedly forced at least 150,000 children from their homes in less than a week." The UN agency added: "The eruption of fighting in Al-Jazirah means that more than half of the states in Sudan - 10 out of 18 - are experiencing active conflict."

Sudan has also emerged as a focal point for mercenary fighters from various regions. Countries experiencing domestic conflict

often become attractive to individuals who are seeking to participate in or support destabilizing activities for various reasons, including financial incentives and ethnic or ideological factors.

The country's borders with other nations may also provide access for some individuals looking to participate in or influence the conflict. Weak governance or challenges in enforcing laws and border control measures can make it easy for fighters to enter Sudan and join armed groups without significant hindrance.

It is worth noting that Sudan has a history of civil wars and internal strife. Previous conflicts and the presence of armed groups have been shown to create a ripe environment, which fighters from other countries see as an opportunity to become involved. In addition, Sudan's geopolitical position may make it a strategic location for fighters. Finally, we should not underestimate the refugee crisis resulting from the ongoing war. The refugee crisis is already having a significant impact on the social, political and economic dynamics of various nations - especially those neighboring Sudan, such as Libya, Egypt, Chad, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Without the international community seriously addressing the conflict and swiftly achieving a resolution, the humanitarian situation and the refugee crisis are likely to escalate. Bringing an end to the war in Sudan requires a concerted effort and the implementa-

tion of comprehensive measures in order to create a path toward lasting peace and stability for the people of Sudan.

First of all, it is critical to focus on the humanitarian crisis. The international community ought to mobilize humanitarian assistance to address the immediate needs of the affected population. This includes providing food, shelter, medicine, healthcare and education for displaced individuals. But this also requires viewing the establishment of a credible ceasefire as an immediate necessity. All warring factions must commit to a cessation of hostilities, with confidence-building measures then implemented to create an atmosphere conducive to negotiations. International peacekeeping forces could be deployed to monitor and enforce the ceasefire, providing a buffer for the peace process.

Secondly, it is important that the international community becomes more engaged, as global involvement is paramount in resolving such a complicated conflict. The international community, including neighboring countries and regional organizations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development - an eight-member trade bloc consisting of countries in East Africa - along with global powers, should actively engage in diplomatic efforts, as well as effective mediation. Cooperation between the UN, the African Union and IGAD can play a crucial role in the mediation of peace talks. It is important to point out that a successful resolution necessitates the

involvement of all parties and the establishment of a framework for a thorough and inclusive political process. The omission of any party with a vested interest in the Sudan conflict, be it a state or nonstate actor, may ultimately undermine the success of any negotiated agreement. Sustainable peace requires the political grievances underlying the conflict to be addressed.

Renewed peace talks in Saudi Arabia can be a viable path to ending the war. The Kingdom's efforts to resolve the conflict currently represent one of the most promising avenues for de-escalation and potentially concluding the war in Sudan. May's Jeddah Declaration, which commits to safeguarding the civilians of Sudan, is firmly grounded in international human rights law. It prioritizes the clear differentiation between civilians and combatants, guarantees the secure transit of civilians, safeguards medical personnel, facilitates the delivery of humanitarian aid to the population and endeavors to prevent the enlistment of children as soldiers in the war. In a nutshell, the ongoing conflict in Sudan has brought immense suffering to the people of the country, displacing millions and creating a humanitarian crisis. Ending this war requires greater involvement from the international community and regional organizations, the engagement of all parties in negotiations to foster a sustainable peace and the mobilization of humanitarian assistance to address the immediate needs of the affected population.

Arab News

Turkish-US bargain on Sweden remains uncertain

Yasar Yakis

TWO events dominated Turkey's agenda last week. One was the two successive attacks that caused the deaths of 12 Turkish soldiers. They were killed by PKK - the Kurdistan Workers' Party - terrorists in northern Iraq. The second was the Turkish parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee's approval of a motion on Sweden's admission to NATO. This motion will next have to be debated in a plenary meeting of the Turkish parliament, which is due in the second half of January.

Turkish public opinion received with indignation the news of the murder of the 12 soldiers. The parents of some of the victims could not withhold their anger upon the loss of their sons and loudly protested the government's lack of capacity in coping with this event. Several retired generals stated that Turkey has strong cards in its hand but does not use them properly, suggesting that the PKK's bases in Syria and Iraq have to be destroyed entirely. But this is more easily said than done.

Turkiye maintains good relations with Iraq, but the Iraqi authorities do not neglect their duty to record all border violations, as well as all the clashes that take place between the Turkish forces operating in Iraq and the PKK terrorists. A UN Security Council document says that, in the space of only three months between Aug. 1 and Oct. 31, Turkiye violated the border 1,453 times. In response,

Turkiye says that because Iraq fails to deal with the terrorist activities in its territories, it feels compelled to take appropriate measures in line with Article 51 of the UN Charter. Apparently, this altercation will not subside anytime soon. Wisdom requires that a thorough debate be opened, with the participation of all stakeholders, to arrive at a conclusion that is acceptable to the international community. At present, this debate is unfortunately conducted among the Turkish political parties, which accuse each other of being weak.

Beginning with the US, many NATO countries have now started to regard Turkiye as a liability rather than an asset. The US, Germany and France have a negative attitude toward Turkiye on several defense-related issues. Prominent PKK leaders are being hunted down by Turkiye one by one. However, new leaders emerge and continue to cause headaches. The Turkish media regularly reports on the capture or elimination of PKK leaders of various levels, but the recruitment of new volunteers cannot be stopped.

Members of a movement called the "Saturday Mothers" gather every week. They are the mothers of the Kurdish families whose children joined the PKK. Both the government and the families use all their means to persuade these terrorists to return home. There are some who find a way to escape from the PKK, but the number of those who join the group is likely

greater than the number who surrender to the Turkish authorities. Without persuading the governments of countries that provide support to Kurds, such as the US, France and Germany, the elimination of the PKK threat will be difficult to achieve. The solution is probably to use diplomatic channels. Turkish-Swedish diplomatic channels, in particular, could be explored and developed.

The second important event that occupied last week's agenda in Turkiye was the vote on Sweden's accession to NATO in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Turkish parliament. Now, the ball is in the court of the full parliament and the arm-twisting exercise between Sweden and Turkiye will begin - or, more precisely, between the Turkish parliament and the US Congress. Stockholm has made important progress in restricting the activities of the PKK in Sweden.

A constitutional amendment pertaining to the fight against terrorism was enacted in June. Joining the PKK terrorist organization has now become a punishable act in Sweden. Stockholm also appointed a public prosecutor to coordinate with the Turkish authorities. The Swedish mentality is different from that of the Turks; therefore, it may take time for the two sides to get acquainted with each other's working methods. This will not be easy because the Kurdish community is very active in Sweden and it can influence the

decisions of the Swedish government.

Although the subject matter is Sweden's NATO membership, the concrete negotiations are taking place between the US Congress and the Turkish parliament. This subject was upgraded to the level of President Joe Biden and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan when the former reportedly told the latter: "You pass the law in the Turkish parliament (on Sweden's NATO membership) and I will do the same by passing the motion in Congress (on Turkiye's request to buy F-16 fighter jets)." There is now a top-level commitment on both sides. However, it is unclear whether Biden will be able to persuade the majority of lawmakers in both chambers of Congress. In other words, Erdogan's commitment is secure but we do not know whether Biden will be able to keep his promise. If some members of Congress insist on maintaining their anti-Turkiye attitude, the entire scenario will fall apart and Ankara will be left out in the cold. This would be a major disappointment for Turkiye.

During last week's meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Turkish deputy foreign minister informed the committee that Sweden had lifted its embargo on defense equipment exports to Turkiye that was imposed in 2019. This shows that tangible progress has been made in Turkish-Swedish relations, but the distance still to be covered remains significant.

Here are my predictions for 2024 - it will be an unusually uncertain year

Roger Bootle

IT is that time of year again when we begin to make predictions for the year ahead. Perhaps the most difficult thing for forecasters trying to peer into the future is having to put numbers and probabilities on things that are inherently uncertain. In most years, it seems that uncertainty is greater than normal. In practice, I suspect that things are always extremely uncertain.

Nevertheless, I am starting this year's missive by saying that in 2024 things are unusually uncertain. On the geopolitical scene, there are clearly key risks associated with the Russia-Ukraine war, conflict in the Middle East and continued rumblings over Taiwan, where the coming election could intensify tensions.

On the economic front, China remains a big worry and there is the risk of a renewed downturn there, mainly associated with weakness in the construction sector. If this happens, the Chinese authorities will have limited scope to relax policy to counter the effects.

Elsewhere, there are still serious financial risks deriving from the large and extremely rapid increase in interest rates last year which, so far, has had very little adverse financial effect. That may yet change. A second major risk concerns public debt and how the markets will react to it. In just about all countries, public debt ratios have been rising relentlessly into what would normally be regarded as dangerous territory.

That didn't prevent a major bond rally late last year, driven by the view that interest rate cuts were not far away. But there is no telling whether and when the markets will decide that the risks from public debt are unbearable. Within Europe, the most exposed country is Italy, with its combination of high debt and weak growth. What's more, the above list of concerns refers only to what Donald Rumsfeld famously referred to as the "known unknowns". Economies and financial markets are arguably more at risk from

what he referred to as the "unknown unknowns". For reasons that I hope you will understand, there is nothing that I can say about those. Turning to more tractable territory, there are some brighter things on the horizon. Enthusiasm about AI is likely to build across the world over 2024. It is possible that there could even be some positive productivity surprises from this source and that this could boost corporate investment. One of the major negative global themes of this year is going to be the continued drag on economic activity from last year's sharp rise in interest rates. The result is going to be that GDP growth is likely to disappoint across the world.

In this regard, Europe and the UK are likely to underperform the US which, although still facing some sort of recession risk, is likely to carry on growing reasonably. After all, it is an election year. It is rare for the US economy to contract in an election year - although it did in 2020, because of Covid-19. The second major global theme should be sharp falls in inflation. Indeed, the period of the Great Inflation Spike, caused by overly lax fiscal and monetary policy in the wake of the pandemic, and worsened by post-Covid global supply shocks and the Russia-Ukraine war, is now over. This should permit significant cuts in interest rates before too long. Again, the US should lead the way with the Fed being able to cut interest rates as early as March. The eurozone is likely to come next, and then the UK. The key problem in Britain continues to be the stubbornness of pay inflation, which this year will not be helped by another large increase in the National Living Wage in April.

Even so, by the end of the year, CPI inflation should be down to about 1.2pc, but with the core rate considerably higher, at about 2.5pc. There is a good chance that UK interest rates will be falling in the last few months of the year, if not much earlier. Of

course, it will probably be an election year here as well. The improving fiscal scene is likely to permit some attractive tax cuts in the budget. Mind you, this is unlikely to amount to a significant loosening of fiscal policy, nor indeed to give much of a boost to consumer spending, because the scope for tax reductions is derived from the effects of fiscal drag, which is pushing millions of people into higher tax brackets.

It is tempting to think that the election will be a major driver of the economic outcome. In practice, I doubt that it will. And this is not just because, despite speculation that the election may happen in the spring, the most likely date is still October. The fact of the matter is that, with few exceptions, changes of government are usually not the main drivers of big economic developments in the UK or, indeed, in most other countries. The recent election in Argentina is an exception. So too was the defeat of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour here four years ago, as well as Mrs Thatcher's victory in 1979.

As the markets anticipate a Labour victory this year, there is a risk of serious financial weakness, including a much lower pound, not least because wealthy individuals and companies decide to take capital out of the country. In practice, though, I do not think this is likely. For a start, the financial markets, private individuals and companies have surely already discounted the likelihood of a Labour victory and, accordingly, such a result should already be largely priced into current market values. Moreover, the Labour leadership has so far done a good job of convincing both the markets and corporate Britain that they would not do anything significant to rock the boat. It should be remembered that when Labour won in 1997, the pound was steady, equities rose and bond yields fell. Sir Keir Starmer may not be Sir Tony Blair, but he is doing his damndest to make it appear that he is.

Mariners need protection in today’s challenging environment

THROUGHOUT the world's waterways, fishermen make a living, including around the Arabian Peninsula. It is not a glorious life for most. Fishermen and their safety requirements in the wake of some of the events that have taken place in and around the Arabian Peninsula recently require greater attention.

In this region, fishing vessels are used by more than 100,000 fishermen in their local industry. These fishing boats include fish and shrimp trawlers (both wooden and steel-hulled), large wooden boats (dhows) with both inboard and outboard engines, and fiberglass boats. Fishing gear consists of trawls, bottom-set gill nets, traps made of wire mesh and plastic, barrier traps, hand lines and knives. It should be noted that many of the plastics come from petroleum products and pollute the mariners' work environment.

Anthropologists refer to fishing communities as "assemblages." According to their belief system, mariners feel the rhythm of ships coming in and out of port, as well as the fate of their contents, as determined by the demands of the city. The schools of fish they catch are determined by biology, the ocean's tides and the Earth's seasons. Fish coming from mariners' efforts are only meant to feed nearby communities. They do not include the larger mechanical trawling fleets that also roam the high seas. Overfishing is disturbing the life cycle of several fish populations and risks creating an imbalance in local marine ecosystems. The biggest fish are the most desirable in markets, but they are also the most capable of reproducing and bolstering species populations. These old communities have a way of life where seafarers stay within their own requirements. This avoids upsetting the balance of fish stocks in and around the Arabian Peninsula. In

Dr. Theodore Karasik

this region, fishermen cooperatives are found, allowing mariners to belong as part of their community. These differ across the region.

The current environment - with drones and missiles being fired at ships and others taken over by pirates - is raising the stakes regarding the safety of mariners and their trade. Drone strikes on shipping vessels kill and injure sailors who have nothing to do with regional politics or conflicts. On legitimate fishing vessels, they provide an important service. When they are injured or maimed by explosive ordnance or taken against their will, the entire community suffers. Mariners' welfare as a policy issue comes under the purview of the UN-supported International Maritime Organization. This is the governing body that makes most of the regulations for the maritime industry. It has been able to develop many regulations, resolutions and guidelines. The organization helps to set the pace of the policy discussion over mariners' safety and livelihood at the supranational level.

In conjunction with the International Maritime Organization, international shipping industry organizations are dedicated to providing comprehensive maritime security guidance to companies and mariners within small communities. There are a number of international guidance documents that are useful for understanding mariners' dilemmas and the safety and protection procedures that are in place for them. "Global Counter Piracy Guidance for Companies, Masters and Seafarers" and "BMP5: Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Safety in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea" both contain guidance on piracy and armed robbery that can be used by mariners around the world.

Significantly, shipping industry guidance is not specifically written for the dangerous new environment. Here, local governments may be asked to boost their overall management and safety, such as by reviewing procedures. Jurisdiction in the maritime environment can become an issue and there is a sharp disconnect between the requirements of the shipping industry and local fishermen when it comes to safety and security. This issue becomes more important as shipping companies put armed guards on their own vessels.

Overall, the lifestyle of mariners has greatly improved over the past decade. The changing amenities, standards of living and technology have made going to sea a much more comfortable way to make a living for some. Unfortunately, these changes have not been uniform, resulting in many merchant mariners experiencing poor treatment, unclean drinking water, little sanitation, very low wages and lengthy periods of work without adequate rest. These working conditions can lead to extreme stress, fatigue and depression.

Add in the threat of missiles, drones, piracy and other crime and it becomes clear that great attention must be paid to seafarers' perceptions and activity, as safety comes first. They are preyed upon by smugglers, who take contraband for delivery around the Arabian Peninsula's waterways. This is now an acute threat. Overall, a mariner's life is often difficult and dangerous. It is not always an easy life, as it requires a lot of time away from home, family and friends, as well as hardships such as bad weather, dangerous work, poor living conditions and seclusion. Their responsibility is to feed large urban areas with the "wealth from the sea." The people who do this job and get that hamour on to your dining plate are truly brave.

2024 will be a year of reckoning - the weak West must adapt, or perish

Nick Timothy

FROM India to Iceland, the UK to Uruguay, more than two billion people in 50 countries will decide who governs them. And yet democracy has rarely felt more precarious. Elections in countries like Belarus and Russia are, of course, a sham. Democracy as we understand it is diluting in India, where Narendra Modi leads what some call an "ethnic democracy"; in South Africa, where the corruption of the ANC is killing good government; and in Pakistan, where it is difficult to determine who among politicians, the military and intelligence agencies holds power. So much for all that aid spending.

Around the world, the forces of democracy face challenges greater than at any time since the end of the Cold War. The fighting in Ukraine goes on, and if Donald Trump wins the US presidential election this November, he will likely threaten to end American support for Kyiv unless President Zelensky negotiates - and cedes territory - to Vladimir Putin. Relative Western decline and the rise of Chinese power means the are dominated by the threat posed by Beijing, is in grave danger. But Chinese aggression has other consequences, such as India's growing relationship with Russia, which thwarts Western attempts to isolate Putin, and the need for the US and its allies to focus diplomatic and military resources in the Pacific.

The effects are clear around the world. If Western strategic attention had not been on China and the Pacific, Putin might not have been confident enough to invade Ukraine. Neither might he have

done so without the backing of Xi Jinping, who has provided Russia with arms and economic support, nor without the knowledge that countries like India and Pakistan would continue to import Russian oil and gas. This also helps to explain the alarming pattern of events in the Middle East, which threaten a new oil crisis and another global economic shock. Iran, determined to acquire its own nuclear weapons and eager to undermine the regional alliance of forces against it, has decided now is time to act.

The Iran-backed Hamas attacks on Israel, which formed an arc of powers against Tehran along with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, were almost certainly motivated in part to destroy the co-operation made possible by the Abraham Accords. The Houthi rebels, who, backed by Iran, have been fighting a bloody war against Yemeni and Saudi forces, have started to attack international shipping in the Red Sea. In the last year Tehran has increased its production of enriched uranium at its plants in Natanz and Fordow, prompting a joint statement last week by the US, Britain, France and Germany. None of these events - nor others, such as Chinese exploitation of African minerals and Venezuela's military threat to Guyana - is happening in isolation or by accident. They are all symptoms of the world in which we live today: one in which American leadership is more contested, and Western interests more openly challenged. This trend will only deepen, and there will be consequences for all our lives, and for our domestic politics. It is

already one reason why this is such a difficult time for incumbent governments across the West. In 2023, ruling parties lost elections in the Netherlands, Finland, Poland and Slovakia. In Spain, Pedro Sánchez held on only by cutting an amnesty deal with Catalan nationalists that undermined the constitution and rule of law. In Poland, the Law and Justice Party won most seats but lost its majority. In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders topped the ballot from the Right.

In 2024, we will see more of the same. In America, it is entirely plausible that Donald Trump will win the Republican nomination and then the presidency. Elections in Austria, Belgium and Portugal might see those countries turn Right, and it is probable that elections to the European Parliament will see populists elected from across the continent. In Germany, the AfD is ahead of all the governing parties, and in France Marine Le Pen and the Rassemblement National still looms large. There are many local and specific reasons for this tumult, but some clear trends apply across the board. Voters are struggling with the consequences of global instability and, to varying degrees, their exposure to related risks caused by the policies of their national - and supranational - governments.

Some countries have better insulated themselves against the forces of globalisation than others. But even those with a better-balanced economy, with more industrial capacity, stronger exports and good blue-collar work, are starting to struggle. Rising industrial energy costs are crippling the manufac-

turers at the heart of the German economy. In Britain, dependent on imports for energy and much else, inflation has been harder to shake off than elsewhere. Economic insecurity is matched by cultural insecurity. From Black Lives Matter to the anti-Israel marches, mass protests relating to ethnic and religious identity have highlighted how divided many Western countries have become. Voting blocs based on these identities are increasingly the norm. Stories of communal violence and attempts to impose de facto Islamic blasphemy laws by force are becoming more frequent, in Britain and elsewhere.

Immigration is a big part of the story. Annual net migration in Britain has reached a previously unthinkable 745,000, but we are far from the only country facing a crisis. Germany has three million refugees, including more than a million Syrians and half a million Afghans. In America, officials at the Mexican border encountered 225,000 illegal immigrants in December alone. Some politicians and thinkers throw up their hands and dismiss these changes as inevitable. But in doing so, they only demonstrate the poverty of thought and timidity of action that is fuelling frustration with democratic politics and government. The usual way of doing business is delivering little but insecurity, and insecurity breeds instability. The challenges we face may derive from global problems as well as our own failures but that only makes the mission more important. We must sweep away the old, and build anew - better, stronger, and secure.

The Telegraph



PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 2,210 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 2,210.74 points, a positive change of 3.54 percent, closing at 64,661.78 points against 62,451.04 points the previous trading day.

A total of 625,147,050 shares valuing Rs.18.525 billion were traded during the day as compared to 590,592,624 shares valuing Rs.16.844 billion the last day.

Some 380 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 328 of

them recorded gains and 37 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 15 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 76,430,706 shares at Rs.5.44 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 61,550,634 shares at Rs.1.57 per share and Cnergyico Pk with 54,945,823 shares at Rs.5.29 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.300.00 per share price, closing at Rs.22,200.00, whereas the runner-up was Hoechst

Pakistan with a Rs.88.47 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,288.47.

Blessed Textiles witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.19.99 per share closing at Rs.320.01, followed by Bata Pakistan with Rs.10.08 decline to close at Rs.1,722.15.

Gold rates decline by Rs.300 to Rs.219,700 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.300 and was sold at Rs.219,700 on Monday compared to its sale at Rs.220,000 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.258 to Rs.188,357 from Rs.188,615 whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went down to Rs.172,661 from Rs.172,897, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained unchanged at Rs.2,680 and Rs.2,297.66 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market remained stagnant at \$2,082, the Association reported.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Privatisation Fawad Hasan Fawad in a meeting with Chinese Business Delegation on at Privatisation Division.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at the Port where seven ships namely, MSC Diego, MSC United-VIII, Ocean Gracioso, Leila Confidence, Sunary, Al-Bidda and Ullswater scheduled to load/offload Container, Rice, Palm oil, Gas oil, LNG and LPG, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Oil Terminal, Elengy Terminal and Sui Southern Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Turan-C and Luna Rossa also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours to load/unload Rice and Wheat respectively.

A total of thirteen ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a container ship 'MSC United-VIII' left the port on today morning and four more ships, MSC Diego, African Hornbill, Velos Libra and Sunary are expected to sail on same day.

Cargo volume of 203,776 tonnes, comprising 150,991 tonnes imports cargo and 52,785 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,589 Containers (1,969 TEUs Imports and 2,620 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours There are 5 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, MSC Jemma, Luna Rossa and IVS Crimson Creek carrying Container, Wheat and Coal are expected to take berths at QICT, FAP and PIBT respectively on today.

While two more Container ships, Maersk Kensington and MSC Archimidis are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Tuesday.

Post-election situation: 'Int'l institutions double minded'

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has said that international financial institutions were double minded what may happen after the election as the newly-elected administration might undo the reforms.

Talking to businessmen community on Monday, he said that the new government will be under pressure to reverse reforms and make popular decisions,

which will push away multinational financial organizations.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that international organizations also want timely elections in Pakistan and are also afraid of the post-election situation as the government formed as a result of the election can stop the process of reforms to increase its popularity.

Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the concerns and reservations of the international organizations that are playing a major role in saving the country from bankruptcy must be addressed.

He said that there was no option other than accepting the dictates of international organizations to save the country from default. Problems will increase for the country's economy if the reforms are reversed, and foreign investors will also stop planning to invest in Pakistan.

The business leader noted that some international organizations believe that the benefit-seeking elements have become active even before the elections, and they are making efforts for subsidies, tax exemptions, various types of packages, etc.

Machinery import goes up by 6.36% in 5 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The imports of the overall machinery group witnessed an increase of 6.36 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the machinery group during July-November (2023-24) stood at \$ 2,935.576 million against the imports of \$2,760.055 million during the same period of the last year.

The import of agriculture sector machinery and equipment surged by 60.76 per cent from \$19,784 million to \$31,804 million; office machinery including data

processing equipment 57.11 per cent from \$129,909 to \$204,095 million; construction and mining machinery by 3.87 per cent from \$33.260 million to \$34.546 million; electricity machinery and apparatus 17.10 per cent from \$778.902 million to \$912.073 million; telecom related equipment 74.36 per cent from \$455.625 to \$794.445 million; mobile phone 112.20 per cent from \$290.550 to \$616.541 million and other apparatus 7.77 per cent from \$165.075 million to \$177.904 million.

However, during the period under review, the import of power-generating machinery declined by 26.24 per cent from \$ 243.135 million

to \$ 179.337 million; textile machinery by 73 per cent from \$212.786 to \$56.803 million; and other equipment by 18 per cent from \$886.654 million to \$722.473 million.

Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the machinery group imports increased 9.17 per cent during November 2023 compared to the same month of last year, from \$ 534.863 million to \$583.926 million.

On a month-on-month basis, the machinery imports into the country came down by 15.95 per cent during November 2023, compared to the imports of \$694,762 million in October 2023, according to the PBS data.

Super Asia sign MOU with UET



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Super Asia, a renowned Home Appliances brand and exporter, takes a great initiative towards fostering collaboration between industry and academia by signing an MOU with the University of Engineering & Technology (UET).

It is an excellent step that opens the door for

many opportunities and growth for Engineering & Technology (UET) students by participating in joint R&D in Products and Processes developments supporting indigenous technology development and developing customize products for Exports: A way forward for enhancing the exports.

Appreciated and honored by all the stakehold-

ers, where the Vice Chancellor of UET, Prof. Dr. Habib-ur-Rehman and CEO Super Asia Muhammad Faisal Afzal, signed the MOU. The initiative was taken by Hammad Khalid, an Industry specialist and Prof. Dr. Muhammad Shahbaz, Coordinator, Narowal Campus.

LCCI starts membership renewal

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has started renewal of memberships for the year 2024-25 and bills have been issued to more than 37,000 members. For the renewal of membership, proof of income tax return filing for the financial year 2022-23 will be mandatory.

Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Kashif Anwar here Monday appealed to the LCCI members to get their memberships renewed for the year 2024-25 as soon as possible to avoid rush and other problems.

He said that it is very important for the members to get their renewals done as the LCCI certificate is a very important document along with other commercial documents to carry on business activities.

The LCCI President emphasized that the members should get their memberships renewed well before the last date which is March 31, 2024, to save their precious time and efforts.

Pakistan earns \$372.930m by exporting transport services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned US \$372.930 million by providing different transport services in various countries during the first four months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

This shows an increase of 26.01 percent as compared to \$295.959 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the fiscal year (2022-23), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the months under review, the exports

of sea transport services witnessed an increase of 120.49 percent, going up from \$65.700 million last year to \$144.860 million during the months under review.

Among the sea transport services, the exports of freight services dipped by 62.56 percent from \$53.370 million last year to \$19.980 million whereas the exports of other sea transport services however increased by 912.81 percent from \$12.330 million to \$124.880 million current year, the PBS data revealed.

The exports of air trans-

port witnessed a nominal decline of 1.95 percent going down from \$222.779 million last year to \$218.440 million during July-October 2023.

Among the air transport services, the exports of passenger services increased by 3.57 percent, from \$144.650 million to \$149.810 million, whereas the exports of freight services dipped by 32.51 percent, from \$11.350 million to \$7.660 million, in addition, the export of other air transport services also dipped by 8.70 percent from \$66.779 million to

\$60.790 million.

Meanwhile, the exports of road transport services during the months under review witnessed a growth of 70.15 percent going up from \$4.590 million to \$7.810 million during this year, it added.

Among the road transport services, the exports of freight services witnessed a decrease of 17.61 percent from \$1.590 million to \$1.310 million, while the export of postal and courier services decreased by 37.02 percent, from \$2.890 million to \$1.820 million, the data revealed.

FCCI must present viable suggestions for new industrial policy, says NPO Chief

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) must present viable suggestions for new industrial policy in addition to submitting proper applications to get the facility of APO / NPO experts or conducting study missions to follow best practices in their relevant sectors, said Mr. Muhammad Alamgir Chaudhry, Chief Executive Officer, National Productivity Organization (NPO).

In a meeting with Dr Sajjad Arshad, Acting President FCCI, he said that the NPO would provide printed material in soft form regarding facilities offered by the organization for dissemination among the industrial community. He stressed the need for

value addition in agriculture products and quoted his recent visit to Thailand which had excelled in dehydration of fruits and vegetables.

He said that Thailand was importing frozen strawberries to prepare its chips along with potato chips for export purposes. He said that NPO was organizing workshops regarding this facility at the provincial level for the information and awareness of local farmers. In this connection, a workshop could also be arranged at Faisalabad, he added.

He said that post-harvest losses had been estimated around 35-40% which could be controlled through value addition and developing the processing industry.

He said that the value of Rs.10 per kg of tomatoes could be enhanced to Rs.250 through value addition. He also quoted the example of apricot of Hunza which was sold at Rs.200/- per kg. "Agha Khan Foundation provided them skills to dehydrate it", he said and added that now they are exporting the dehydrated apricot at Rs.2,000/kg.

He also mentioned the exotic taste of "Chunsa" mango and said that a pilot project for mango pulp was established in Multan while now 7-8 such units were successfully working in this field. He said that the world demand of mango pulp is 200,000 tons per annum and out of it 80% was being provided by India alone.

Our mango is far better than Indian quality and it could be used for the manufacturing of many derivatives including jam and squash etc, he added.

He further said that production of electricity and controlling wastage of electricity were two separate issues and industrialists must avail the facility of NPO to check the wastage of electricity in their units.

Acting President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad underlined the need for value addition in agri products and said that increase in production without value addition may be detrimental to growers.

He said that we had a bumper maize crop but its price has come down to the lowest inflicting losses on

the farming community. He said that through value addition we could save farmers from such losses.

He further said that Pakistan was exporting rice worth \$ 2.5 bn which could be increased to \$ 5 bn in 2025 and \$ 10 bn in 2030.

He said that our textile exports had been trimmed from \$ 14 bn to \$ 11 bn while foreign remittances were also in declining mode. We failed to adopt new technologies only due to the inconsistency and uncertainty in government policies, he added.

About poultry, he said that the quality of our products was equal to the US only due to the non-interference of the government in this sector. He said that we should also work on the

promotion of the dairy sector which offers multiple avenues of value addition and progress.

Dr Sajjad Arshad said we should focus on practical steps to enhance productivity instead of indulging ourselves in blame games by only identifying the problems.

Engineer Ahmad Hassan, Convener FCCI Standing Committee on R&D, said that FCCI has been making serious efforts to increase productivity but there was a dire need to declare wastage of energy as a criminal offense instead of leaving it on the choice of entrepreneurs.

Later, Dr. Sajjad Arshad presented an FCCI shield to Mr. Muhammad Alamgir Chaudhary, CEO NPO.

Public Notice

It is published through this notice that I Mr. Khaista Jan S/o Habib Shah Resident of Mohallah Pir Khel Jungle Khel Distt. Kohat is the owner of plot No. 13. Size. 5. Marla Sector. B-5. Phase.2. K.D.A Kohat. He has requested that the original paper of the said plot has been lost somewhere and now Issuance of Duplicate Paper is Desired the plot is not mortgaged. There has been appointed no attorney and not sold to anybody. If any Bank / Institution / Firm or Person has any objections, He / She Should Contact The Housing Officer UADA Kohat within 15 days of publication of this notice. In writing with proof otherwise duplicate paper will be Issued and no objection will be accepted. (Project Director Urban Area KDA Kohat)

Court Notice

In the Court of Jauhar Ali Safi Civil Judge I/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No. 374/1, Institution 19/4/2023. Date of hearing 30/1/2024. Noor Sharif etc VS Mst Bibi Halema etc. Notice to 3.Matiullah s/o Mst Bibi Halema. 8. Rahim Zada s/o Peer Khan. 9. Anwar Said s/o Sharif Khan in Saudi Arab. 10. Abdul Said s/o of Sharif Khan in Malaysia. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot 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 a.m dated 30/1/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



In brief

Zimbabwe call-up Tapiwa

HARARE (Agencies): Zimbabwe included uncapped Tapiwa Mufudza in the ODI squad for the three-match series against Sri Lanka, scheduled in January. The 33-year-old was called up by caretaker coach Walter Chawaguta after Dave Houghton quit last month, saying he had "lost the changing-room" following a series of disappointing results. Off-spinner Mufudza got the nod after consistently impressive performances at the domestic level in the southern African nation. Pace bowler Faraz Akram, who has only played international cricket in the Twenty20 side, is also in line to make his ODI debut. Zimbabwe will also play three T20I matches in Colombo with Mufudza, Akram and T a k u d z w a n a s h e Kaitano dropping out and Brian Bennett, Carl Mumba and Ainsley Ndlovu taking their places. The ODI matches are scheduled for January 6, 8 and 11 and the T20I matches for January 14, 16 and 18. Zimbabwe ODI squad Craig Ervine (c), Faraz Akram, Ryan Burl, Joylord Gumbie, Luke Jongwe, T a k u d z w a n a s h e Kaitano, Tinashe K a m u n h u k a m w e, Clive Madande, W e l l i n g t o n Masakadza, Tapiwa Mufudza, Tony Munyonga, Blessing Muzarabani, Richard Ngarava, Sikandar Raza, Milton Shumba Zimbabwe T20I squad Sikandar Raza (c), Brian Bennett, Ryan Burl, Craig Ervine, Joylord Gumbie, Luke Jongwe, Tinashe K a m u n h u k a m w e, Clive Madande, W e l l i n g t o n Masakadza, Carl Mumba, Tony Munyonga, Blessing Muzarabani, Ainsley Ndlovu, Richard Ngarava, Milton Shumba.

Mbappe's future to dominate transfer

PARIS (AFP): The future of Kylian Mbappe and his protracted courtship by Real Madrid is expected to be the key theme of the transfer window that opens in Europe on Monday. Arsenal's search for a proven goalscorer to spearhead their challenge for a first Premier League title since 2004 could also loom large. Manchester City meanwhile are widely expected to let Calvin Phillips leave the club, ending a disappointing stay for the former Leeds midfielder who has failed to make his mark at the world champions. Much attention though will again focus on Mbappe, Paris Saint-Germain's lethal finisher and the man who a year ago scored a hat-trick for France in the World Cup final only to finish on the losing side. Real Madrid are again the main suitor for the 25-year-old whose contract at PSG expires in June -- will the 14-time European champions finally get a commitment from the player they have been pursuing for years? It is far from certain though as Mbappe triggers an extraordinary reaction in France, illustrated when President Emmanuel Macron intervened to persuade him to stay at PSG in June 2022 when a move to Real seemed almost cut and dried. Real are not sitting on their hands though. Endrick, the latest Brazilian starlet, will join the club from Palmeiras when he turns 18 in July 2024 for a fee reported to be 72 million euros. Toney to the Gunners? Arsenal's lack of a goalscoring edge could lead them to plunge into the market. For weeks, their rumoured target has been Ivan Toney, the Brentford forward whose ban for over 200 breaches of the Football Association's gambling rules ends in mid-January.

David Warner retires from one-day cricket ahead of Test farewell



Sydney (AFP): Dynamic Australian opener David Warner called time Monday on one-day international cricket ahead of his farewell Test against Pakistan this week, but kept the door open to play the 2025 Champions Trophy if needed.

The 37-year-old will pad up in his 112th and final Test in his home city Sydney on Wednesday, having plundered 8,695 runs at an average of 44.58, with 26 centuries and 36 half-centuries.

At a press conference at the Sydney Cricket Ground, he also announced his retirement from ODIs, where he has been a fixture since his debut in 2009, helping the team win the World Cup in 2015 and 2023.

"I've got to give back to the family and also on the back of that I'm definitely retiring from one-day cricket as well," he said.

"That was something that I had said through the (2023) World Cup, get through that, and winning it in India, I think that's a massive achievement.

"So I'll make that deci-

sion today, to retire from those forms, which does allow me to go and play some other (Twenty20) leagues around the world and sort of get the one-day team moving forward a little bit.

"I know there's a Champions Trophy coming up," he added. "If I'm playing decent cricket in two years' time and I'm around and they need someone, I'm going to be available."

The Champions Trophy has not been played since 2017, but is set to be resurrected in 2025 in Pakistan. Traditionally 50-over cricket, reports have said there is a push underway to make it T20.

Warner leaves ODIs after 161 matches, smashing 6,932 runs at an average of 45.30, with 22 centuries. Among Australians, only Ricky Ponting with 30 has scored more one-day tons.

He will continue to be available in the T20 format, with the 2024 World Cup in the Caribbean and United States a target.

Warner's decision to depart one-dayers means

Australia will need a new opener for their three-match series against the West Indies in February, which follows a two-Test series in Adelaide and Brisbane.

Vital role

Ahead of his ODI announcement, Cricket Australia chief Nick Hockley paid tribute to Warner's "amazing Test career". "We are all extremely grateful for his immense contribution to this form of the game," he said in a statement.

"David's wonderful attacking style not only played a vital role in many Australian victories, it also enthralled and entertained fans across the world and drew many to Test cricket."

A larger-than-life character, Warner was described by Australia coach Andrew McDonald over the weekend as "probably our greatest ever three-format player".

But he will forever be remembered for the role he played in the notorious ball-tampering scandal of 2018 in South Africa.

Along with skipper Steve Smith, he was banned for a year for his part in the third Test debacle in Cape Town that saw Cameron Bancroft use sandpaper to scuff the ball before a crude attempt to conceal the evidence down his trousers.

Reflecting on his Test career, Warner said it was a "fairytale ending" to hang up his gloves in Sydney.

"I would have never imagined opening the batting for New South Wales or anyone to be honest when I first started but to be here, 112 Tests I think, I still pinch myself," he said.

He added that he would like to be remembered as someone "authentic and honest" who has "gone out there and given it his all".

Brisbane Int'l: Murray loses to Dimitrov in first round

BRISBANE (Agencies): Andy Murray made a first-round exit from the Brisbane International as Grigor Dimitrov came from behind to win in three sets.

Bulgarian second seed Dimitrov triumphed 4-6 7-5 6-2 to progress at the season-opening tournament.

The defeat is a setback for Murray's preparations for the Australian Open, which starts on 14 January.

It comes after the Briton said the 2024 season could be his last on tour if he is "not enjoying it".

The 36-year-old struggled with a shoulder injury in the latter months of 2023, while illness and a bruised knee made for what he described as a "tricky" pre-season in an interview with BBC Sport before the Brisbane event.

Playing in his first competitive singles match

since October, Murray came out on top of a tight first set that went with the serve, sealing the opener on its only break point after an error-strewn Dimitrov service game.

More comfortable holds for both players followed, with Dimitrov eventually edging ahead in the ninth game - the first of the set to feature break-point opportunities.

Although Murray - a two-time champion in Brisbane - cancelled it out immediately, Dimitrov broke again before saving two break points, including one with a broken string, on his way to sealing the second set.

In the third, the world number 14 raced to a 4-0 lead, and while Scot Murray slowed Dimitrov's pace despite issues with his racquet, he could not

convert a break point at 5-2 from which his opponent held.

"I've really missed this tournament," said 2017 champion Dimitrov, who will face German Daniel Altmaier or Australian qualifier Li Tu in the second round. "Here we go, kicking off the new year in style."

"I just wanted to carry [last season] on. Of course it's never easy, especially when you're playing so well at the end of the year, you put pressure on yourself to start well.

"As soon as I came out here today, I felt a little rusty to be honest. I have to keep on fighting. I have to keep on believing in the work that I've put in."

Before the Australian Open, Murray will play the Kooyong Classic exhibition in Melbourne next week.

PM of Australia hosts reception for Pakistan team in Sydney

SYDNEY (Monitoring Desk): Prime Minister of Australia Anthony Albanese hosted a reception at Kirribilli House, Sydney on Monday in honour of the Pakistan and Australia teams and their respective management.

Chairman PCB Management Committee, Mr Zaka Ashraf also attended the event. High Commissioner of Pakistan in Australia, Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, and officials from Cricket Australia were also present.

Prime Minister Australia warmly welcomed both the teams and went on to praise the performance of the Pakistan team, especially in the Melbourne Test. He commended the visiting team's exemplary conduct during this tour and looked forward to witnessing good



cricket in Sydney.

Pakistan captain Shan Masood expressed his gratitude to the Australian Prime Minister for hosting the team. Shan highlighted how both teams are play-

ing positive cricket in this series and mentioned that this serves as an opportunity to be an ambassador for your country through your conduct. He also hoped that the team would do

well in Sydney to end the series on a high note. The third Test match between Pakistan and Australia will be played at Sydney Cricket Ground starting Wednesday, 3 January.

Dominant Swiatek sends Poland into United Cup quarter-finals



PERTH (AFP): An irrepressible Iga Swiatek unleashed on Spain Monday as Poland booked a 2-1 win to move into the quarter-finals of the United Cup.

The world number one showed no mercy to Sara Sorribes Tormo in a 6-2, 6-1 singles victory before teaming with Hubert Hurkacz to clinch the tie with a 6-0, 6-0 mixed doubles thrashing in just 53 minutes.

Hurkacz was ambushed in the day's opening singles, losing 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 to Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

The top-seeded Poles finished Group A play with a perfect 2-0 record and await a last-eight oppo-

nent.

Swiatek, who has lost only seven games in two singles matches to start her countdown to the Australian Open, said playing mixed doubles was good experience.

"It's lessons for the future and great practice," the 22-year-old said. "I hardly ever play mixed. You use different skills, it's about feeling the geometry of the court."

Hurkacz credited his teammate with doing most of the hard yards.

"She carried me throughout the whole match, in every game she was making amazing shots," the world number nine said.

In Sydney, a sharp Casper Ruud won his second straight singles match before backing up in the mixed doubles to steer Norway past Croatia.

World number 24 Donna Vekic ground past unheralded Malene Helgo 7-5, 3-6, 6-3 to give the Croats a winning start to the Group F tie.

But three-time Grand Slam finalist Ruud swept past Borna Coric 6-4, 6-1 in just 89 minutes to level proceedings, then partnered with Ulrikke Eikeri to beat Vekic and Ivan Dodig 6-2, 3-6, 10-7.

It was a much-needed win for Norway, who lost to the Netherlands

at the weekend.

"I'm motivated for the new year, I'm fresh and I'm ready," said world number 11 Ruud. "Another great singles match. I'm very happy to start the new year that way."

The win followed a similarly dominant 6-3, 6-4 victory over Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor on Saturday.

Ruud has dropped serve just once through the two matches, and was not broken on Monday.

He also won 12 of 13 net approaches and said he had been working hard to improve his volleys.

"I'll never be the guy who is all over the net, but I'm trying to come into the court a little more," he said.

Vekic needed two hours and 49 minutes to battle past Helgo, who played far better than her ranking of 539 suggested.

"She's a really good player and her ranking doesn't do her justice," said Vekic, a quarter-finalist at the Australian Open last year. "Finally my serve showed up in the third set, which made it easier."

The Alexander Zverev-led Germany meet France in Group D later Monday in Sydney, while the defending champions United States face Australia in Perth.

Mustafa Jamal beats Azhar Katchi 8-0



KARACHI (APP): Mustafa Jamal beat Azhar Katchi 8-0 in Men's Single second round during the ongoing 1st Ocean - Siddiqsons Tennis Championship being played at DA Creek Club Karachi.

According to results of third day:

Men's Singles 2nd Round

Mustafa Jamal beat Azhar Katchi 8-0

Men's Singles Quarter

Farhan Altaf beat Asaad Sheikh 8-0

Ibrahim Ilfat beat Vinod Das 8-4

Ladies Singles Quarters

Versha Das beat Aiman Harris 8-4

Hibab Rizwan beat Aysha Yousuf 8-0

Eschelle Asif beat Tahreem Yousuf 8-0

Juniors Under 17

Singles Quarters

Aisam Malik beat Azan K 7-6, 6-3

Under 15 Singles 1st Round

Ahsan ali beat Abbas Bhagat 4-0, 4-1

Ruhab Faisal beat Eschelle Asif 4-1, 4-0

Arham Shehzad beat Zain Nomi 4-1, 4-2

Under 13 Singles 2nd Round

Arman Ali beat Nibras Malik 4-2, 4-1

M. Yahya Haleem beat Abbas Habib 4-0, 4-1

Under 11 Singles 2nd Round

Syed Abdullah beat M. Shaheer 4-1, 4-0

Raahim Faisal beat M. Ayaan

Rohan Das beat Aidh Imran 4-2, 3-5, 10-3

Ashar Bhaila beat Tariq Rafi 4-2, 5-4

Meer Bhagat beat Syed Sufyan 5-3, 4-0.



SYDNEY: The Pakistan players pose with Glenn McGrath as they gear up for the Pink day.

Pakistan cautious over Abrar's participation in Sydney Test

SYDNEY (Agencies): There is cautious hope in the Pakistan camp that legspinner Abrar Ahmed may be fit in time for the third Test in Sydney.

Abrar, who was ruled out of the first two Test matches with a right leg injury, bowled for a significant period in the nets during Pakistan's training session on Monday without obvious discomfort.

While that represents reason for optimism, the nature of Abrar's injury means it does not guarantee his participation in the third Test. While he was initially ruled out after complaining of "discomfort in his right leg" during Pakistan's tour game against Prime Minister's XI in Canberra, Abrar's history of injury issues makes any degree of certainty elusive.

ESPNcricinfo understands part of the issue afflicting Abrar involves a pinched nerve in his right leg and a weakness in his muscles, and he was given injections as part of his treatment. But Pakistan will wait to see how he pulls up overnight after today's training session, and if signifi-

cant pain or discomfort arises over the next 12 hours or so, it will determine his ability to start in the final Test.

Since he was initially ruled out of the first Test, the PCB only issued a vague update about his fitness status when ruling him out of the second. They declared that his "symptoms have significantly improved" but that he was not "100% asymptomatic". There are also understood to be concerns about his ability to manage the workload required of a leading spinner in a Test match, and Pakistan understand the risk of selecting him, given the potential any injury flareup effectively reduces them down to ten players.

Pakistan are also aware of the risk of any injury to Abrar in a T20 World Cup year. He is part of Pakistan's squad for the upcoming five-match T20I series against New Zealand, and the PCB views him as a valuable white-ball asset in addition to a key Test spinner.

Abrar, 25, has played only six Tests since making his debut against England

last December. But 11 wickets in his first Test, and 38 so far, clubbed with the paucity of Pakistan's spin-bowling stocks have made him an important player. While much of his early cricketing days were blighted by lengthy, persistent injuries, there were signs he was putting that behind him, though his current injury scare could set back some of the gains he has made.

Pakistan have also called up Sajid Khan and Mohammad Nawaz as cover, though neither have played a Test match this series so far. Both also bowled during Pakistan's training session on Monday.

Pakistan are understood to be keen to play a specialist spinner in the third Test, having gone with an all-seam attack in each of the previous two. Agha Salman was used as the spinner in those games, and while his discipline and economy rate have impressed Pakistan, the absence of a wicket-taking spinner has been felt. Nathan Lyon has nine wickets in the first two Tests, while Salman has managed one.

PM Youth Talent Hunt Program as handball trials at Bannu concluded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister's Talent Hunt in connection with the Youth Sports League has concluded at Bannu Sports Complex, in which 14 players have been selected for the forthcoming Provincial Handball League to be played under the aegis of Directorate of Sports University of Peshawar.

International handball player Naveedur Rehman

and Director of Distance Education System Dr. Noorzada were there and monitored the performance of the players before selecting them for the team to represent Bannu Region in the Provincial Handball League to be played in Peshawar.

District Sports Officer Banu Adil Shah was the chief guest on the occasion of the closing ceremony. In the Provincial Handball League teams from Hazara, Swat, Bannu, Peshawar and

Mardan would take part and out of that two teams would be short-listed for the National Handball League, also to be played in Peshawar.

Trials were held under the auspices of Directorate of Sports Peshawar University, Director of Sports and Organizer and Coordinator of Peshawar University Bahr Karam, President of Provincial Handball Association, is supervising the trials.





In brief

ICT seals eight petrol pump nozzles

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Labour Department of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration has continued regular inspections of petrol pumps across the Federal Capital. According to an ICT Administration spokesperson, the teams of Labour Department sealed eight nozzles of different petrol pumps on account of short measure during last week. "The violations will be dealt with in accordance with the Weights & Measures Act 1976 and Rules," he added. Meanwhile, a Food Department team under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Pothwar visited the area of Shams Colony and sealed four illegal factories.

RDA issues 548 notices

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) in its ongoing operation against illegal housing societies has issued 548 legal notices said RDA spokesman here on Monday. He informed that the authorities concerned on the orders of the Director General (DG), RDA Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa were taking strict action against the illegal operation against illegal housing societies, launched on the special instructions of the Commissioner Rawalpindi division Liaquat Ali Chatta. The operation was underway against illegal housing societies without any discrimination, he added. The citizens were advised not to invest in illegal housing schemes and to check their status on RDA's website www.rda.gop.pk before any investment, he added. The offices of several illegal housing schemes had also been demolished and FIRs were also lodged against illegal and unapproved housing societies.

AC crackdown on price gouging

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a swift response to Deputy Commissioner Islamabad's directives, the Assistant Commissioner of Pothohar Nabel Hafiz took decisive action against overcharging culprits in the local vegetable market. The crackdown resulted in the arrest of six individuals found guilty of manipulating prices beyond the allowed limits, ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabasum said on Monday. As part of the ongoing daily operations targeting issues like price hikes and encroachments, the Assistant Commissioner meticulously displayed a rate list and closely monitored the prevailing prices in various areas of the Pothohar subdivision. This proactive measure aims to curb unfair practices and ensure affordability for the local community. The stern approach led to the immediate arrest of six people caught red-handed engaging in overcharging practices. Swiftly transferred to the police station, these individuals now face legal consequences for their actions. The crackdown serves as a clear message that authorities are actively monitoring and enforcing regulations to protect consumers from exploitation. While these arrests sent a strong message, warnings were also issued to other potential violators, signalling the continued vigilance against practices detrimental to the community. The Assistant Commissioner's efforts align with the broader mission to maintain order, fairness, and affordability in daily transactions, contributing to the overall well-being of the residents in the Pothohar subdivision.



ISLAMABAD: A view of first sunrise of year 2024 through KhanaPul.

Minister lays foundation stone of Shah Alla Ditta Caves preservation & development project

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Syed Jamal Shah on Monday laid the foundation stone of Shah Alla Ditta Caves development, conservation, preservation and restoration.

Federal Secretary of National Heritage and Culture Division Humaira Ahmed, Director General Department of Archaeology & Museums (DOAM) Dr Abdul Azeem and other senior officials were also present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that the Department of Archaeology & Museums (DOAM) Islamabad has declared the site a "Protected Antiquity" under the Antiquities Act

1975 on 13-08-2016.

He said that DOAM, National Heritage & Culture Division, has started conservation, preservation, restoration & development of the caves during the current financial year.

He said that the work includes Archaeological excavation, complete documentation of the site, geo-technical study of binding materials, construction of drainage works as well as Soft and hard landscaping.

Shah Allah Ditta caves are situated on the southern side of the Margalla hills in a small picturesque valley, 14 kilometers northwest of the capital city of Islamabad. Caves consist of two natural rock shelters of Kanjur stone situated on either side of a

natural spring of hot water. The front side of the eastern cave is covered with a wall of undressed kanjur stone laid in mud mortar. The facade of the cave is covered with mud plaster having many coatings of red color.

On the smooth surface of the wall, some paintings are executed in black color but in the later period, the paintings are covered with a layer of whitewash. The paintings are of Hindu origin, probably of god Vishnu (the savior). Interior of the cave is divided into upper and lower halves. Walls are treated with mud plaster having many coatings of white wash but now the color of the walls become blackish due to the smoke of the fire used by the dwellers.

CDA introduces state-of-the-art fast-track services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Building Control Directorate of Capital Development Authority (CDA) has introduced state-of-the-art fast-track service by modernizing the system of providing amenities to the citizens.

In this context, CDA started to ensure the approval of the building plan in the facilitation centre on the fast track.

Under this modern and fastest system, residential buildings of 356 yards will now be approved with an additional fee of Rs 20,000 thousand with required documents with-

in two days, while residential buildings larger than 356 yards will be approved with a fee of Rs 30,000 thousand.

Additionally, commercial buildings up to 10000 square yards will also be approved within three days. A separate desk has also been established for all these matters. It should be noted that the citizens coming to this place will not have to wait in the line of one window separately.

Similarly, arrangements have been made to set a good environment for the citizens who will visit here. After receiving

the token, the citizens who come to the fast track service will be able to go to the relevant desk on their number and will get their case processed by the relevant desk. It should be noted that with the establishment of fast-track service, the citizens coming to the CDA Facilitation Center will neither have to wait for a long time nor they will have to stand in lines. Similarly, after the paper documents are completed, the citizens will not have to wait unnecessarily and their case will be approved immediately.

ANF recovers over 2 tons drugs in 10 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), while conducting 10 operations across the country, managed to recover over 2 tons of drugs and arrest three accused, including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He said that 1.5 kg of ice was recovered from a Bahrain-bound passenger on Flight No. GF-0791 at Faisalabad Airport. 100 grams of hashish were recovered from a parcel booked for Dubai at a

courier office near Jinnah Airport. 1460 kg of hashish and 215 kg of heroin were recovered from the Mazai Adda area of Qila Abdullah. 510 kg of hashish was recovered from Pishin, while 335.6 kg of hashish was recovered from the Toba Achakzai area of Chaman. The spokesman informed us that 68.4 kg of hashish was recovered from the Morgah Border, Khyber area, in four separate operations.

180 kg of hashish was recovered from the Gali Alam Khan area of Pishin,

and 17 kg of crystal heroin was recovered from a hilly area of Chagai.

In an operation, 6 kg of heroin was recovered from a drug manufacturing factory in the 'Kabari' market of Khyber. 4.8 kg of hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Tamol Pathak Islamabad, while the husband and wife were arrested along with four children. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused, and further investigations were under way.

‘We aim to make education accessible and affordable’ says VC AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, congratulated the students on the beginning of the new year and said that our 2024 resolution is to make education accessible and affordable for everyone.

He emphasized the importance of hard work and education as the key to success.

Dr. Nasir highlighted education as the ladder of development and urged the younger generation to prioritize education and play an active role in the progress of the country and the nation. Our New Year resolution is to make education accessible and affordable for

everyone. Dr. Nasir Mahmood stated that Allama Iqbal Open University is committed to keeping its doors open for those who seek education and is ready to provide them with all possible support to include them in the educational network.

Admissions for the spring semester of 2024 will commence on January 15. The university will be awarding scholarships to talented and deserving children nationwide, who cannot afford the fees. In his message, the Vice Chancellor has directed the regional heads of the university to take special care of the students' facilities and provide them with full support.

Rangeela remembered on his 86th birth anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Late actor Rangeela, the real name Muhammad Saeed Khan was remembered on his 86th birth anniversary where fans from all walks of life through media platforms paid him tributes to his services in the field of comedy.

The iconic actor not only showcased his comedic prowess but also left an unforgettable mark with his serious acting skills and enchanting voice.

Rangeela, known for his bold phrases and unique acting style, was born as Muhammad Saeed Khan in Parachinar, Kurram Agency. Initially, he began his career as a bodybuilder and earned a livelihood by painting boards for films. However, his passion for acting led him to the stage, where he eventually made his mark, electronic channels reported. In 1958, Rangeela embarked on his cinematic journey with the film "Jati," marking the start of a remarkable career that soared to great heights.

Mushaal concerned over deteriorating political, HR situation in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Human Rights & Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick Monday has expressed serious concern over the deteriorating political and human rights situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). While talking to Pakistan Television, Mushaal Hussein Mullick warned that brazen demographic change by India in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir is creating tensions that could push the region to a disastrous war, adding, "India is expected to register up to 2.5 million new voters from Indians in the contested Indian Illegally

Occupied Jammu Kashmir (IIOJK)".

In replying to a question, she regretted that the prisons inside the IIOJK jails were still waiting for basic facilities of medicines and lawyers, adding, that they were deprived of basic needs.

She also called upon International organizations and human rights platforms to speed up their efforts and raise voices for the rights of innocent Kashmiri people.

Additionally, she also shared her own experience of being targeted during a journey to Norway where she had faced significant harassment by an Indian national.

New Year discount frenzy attract women buyers

ISLAMABAD (APP): New Year sales being offered by different brands in federal capital, like in other parts of the country, are attracting a large number of women customers who are buying dresses and other Winter accessories taking advantage of discount offers from 50-70 percent.

Following international trends, offering huge discounts on different important festivals and occasions has become a trend among famous brands and online retailers to catch more customers and get maximum profits. The month of December witnessed continuous sales due to the Christmas, Quaid-i-Azam Day and New Year celebrations and kept most of the women busy in buying Winter stuff for this season as well as keeping good stock for next year.

Following past trends, all the famous brands announce sales on every important occasion to attract the women customers who eagerly wait for sales to buy winter stock at affordable prices.

"Buying branded clothes after a reduction in its prices has become a trend for most women especially working ones. Wearing branded dresses, even if these were not of good fabric or colour, has become a status symbol for many despite inflation", Irum Naz, a working woman said. Talking to APP, she said, "I only purchase branded clothes during sales on important occasions as it is difficult to shop when rates are higher. Some brands offered good sales on the occasion of Christmas, Quaid-i-Azam Day, and New Year celebrations so December is the best month for shopping".

Another working woman, Leena Ameen said, "There was a time when these

branded dresses were out of reach of the average customers like me. Thanks to inventors of replicas, the brand owners decreased the prices significantly and now everyone can afford to buy these".

"Wearing nice dresses is the weakness of women and this New Year, like previous ones, is giving an opportunity to the customers to have stock of good dresses for the next Winter season", she added. Bushra Rehman, a housewife who has four kids, said, "Sale offers on different important occasions have made it easier for women like us to do shopping for daily life essential commodities besides dresses and shoes". For me, shopping without sale is insane keeping in view the prevailing price hike situation and the limited purchasing capacity, she observed.

Discount offers on special occasions have not only facilitated the buyers but on the other hand given an opportunity to the brand's owners to earn good business through selling more items.

Umer Khan, a salesman at a famous brand shop said, "December is the month when the majority of the customers visit our shop and buy maximum dresses due to consistent sale on three celebrations".

"It is a perfect time to get maximum profit by selling a large number of dresses with offering even minimum discount", he observed. The sales on important occasions are not just limited to the dresses and shoes brands but famous eateries, cab hailing services, furniture shops and other daily household items retailers in capital have also started offering discounted deals for the food lovers.

Int'l Workshop on 'Ethical Research in Clinical Trials' to be held next month

ISLAMABAD (APP): Two-day International workshop on 'Ethical Research in Clinical Trials' will be held under the auspices of COM-STECH and UEARS in February to address the challenges of research integrity in clinical trials in low-middle-income countries and propose the best suitable guidelines to improve the quality of research in this domain.

The workshop, scheduled to be held from February 07-09 in Cairo, Egypt, is aimed at imparting knowledge and training about research integrity and creating a network of professionals working in the field for continuous learning and exchanges.

According to an official of COM-STECH, the meeting and its workshop will help devise solutions for the challenges faced in clinical trials by low-middle income country.

Students, scientists, researchers, experts, healthcare managers, government officials, think tanks, health NGO's, policy makers from the domain of multicenter clinical trials research from across the world and global south countries can register for the workshop for physical or virtual participation.

Globally the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge enjoys a place of distinction, and the public expects to reap considerable benefit from the creative and innovative contributions of scientists. As science becomes increasingly tangled with major social, philosophical, economic, and political issues, scientists become

more accountable to the larger society of which they are a part.

Therefore, it is more important than ever that those individual scientists and their institutions periodically reassess the values, and professional practices that guide their research as well as their efforts to perform their research work with integrity.

Behind every medicine and intervention that people have ever taken, are thousands of patients who have volunteered to participate in clinical trials, which have led to many breakthroughs in disease prevention and treatment in the last few decades. Without the willingness of these individuals, many would have suffered.

The value of clinical trials depends on the quality of information produced and the relevance of the data to address public health needs. Nevertheless, there are many less-developed countries that do not have well-prepared medical infrastructure and little or no experience in conducting trials. Moreover, there is considerable heterogeneity across countries and even within each country, when it comes to health care systems. This may result in some differences in many aspects starting from the review process itself to all the other steps of conducting trials such as data monitoring and patient safety.

To overcome these challenges, UEARS invited COMSTECH to engage the OIC researchers (as part of the audience) in training and development in the area of research

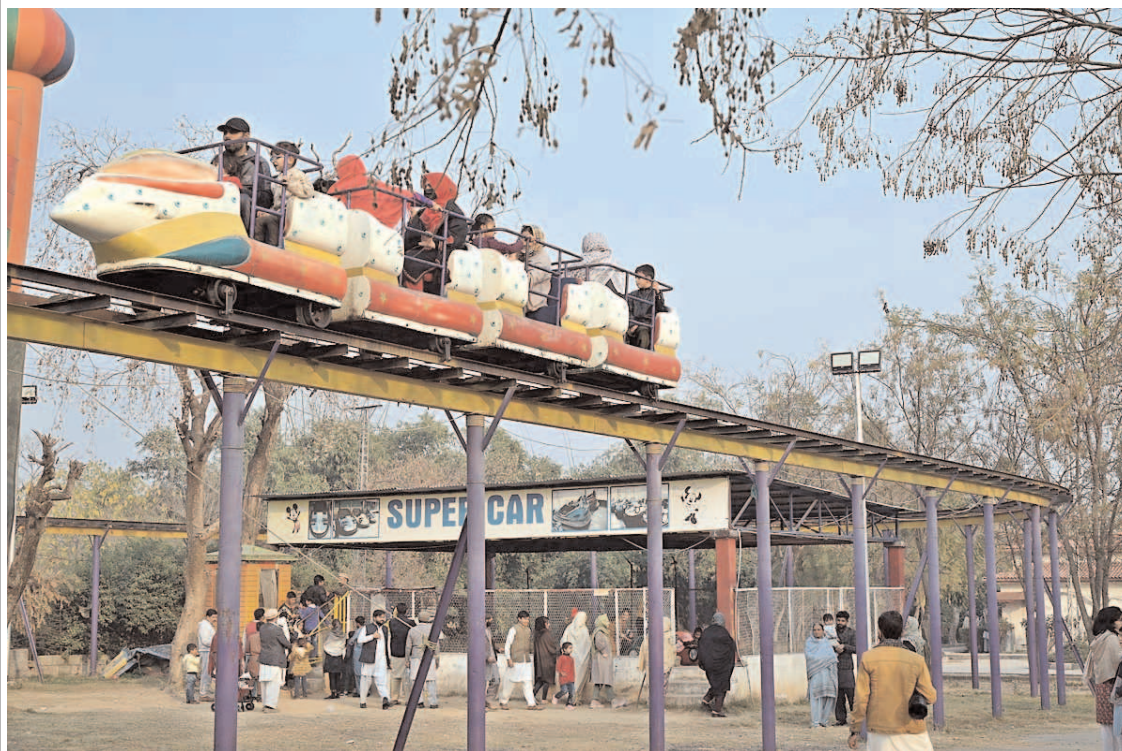
integrity in clinical trials.

About the expected outcomes of the workshop, the official informed that a draft of recommendations concerning research integrity in clinical trials will be documented through this event. The other goals include giving certification to participants concerning research integrity training in clinical trials and distribution of statement to relevant institutions.

On the first day of the workshop, COMSTECH distinguished scholar, Prof. Dr. Khalid Khan will present introduction to the workshop while there will be three sessions on the topics including Critical appraisal of clinical trials, Ethical issues in multicenter clinical trials and Design and statistical analysis of clinical trials.

On the second day of the workshop, three sessions will be held on the topics including Regulation and oversight of clinical trials, Publication of clinical trials and Presentation of recommendations for feedback and finalization.

COMSTECH Distinguished Scholar, University of Granada, Professor Dr. Khalid Saeed Khan; London College, UK and UEARS Distinguished Scholar, Professor Dr. Yacoub Khalaf and UEARS Cofounder, Dr. Mohamed Fawzy are likely to be the speakers of the workshop. The intended participants can get details of the workshop through the web link: <https://comstech.org/workshop-on-ethical-research/>.



ISLAMABAD: People enjoying mini train ride at Lake View Park.

Needy families receive aid
KUNAR (Ariana News): Bayat Foundation distributed consignment of winter aid to dozens of needy families in Kunar. Aid packages included food items and winter clothes, which were distributed to needy families following a survey. In continuation of Bayat Foundation's winter aid which distributed in different provinces, on Monday, fortunately, the foundation distribute food and non-food items such as flour, oil, rice, blankets, jackets and socks to the deserving families.

Afghanistan demands respect
KABUL (BNA) Afghanistan respects the rights and interests of other countries, near and far, and expects the same from them. However, some countries have shown hostility and aggression towards Afghanistan, accusing it of harboring terrorists and posing a threat to regional security. Afghanistan rejects these accusations and says that it is the victim of terrorism, with evidence of foreign citizens, especially from Tajikistan, being involved in attacks in Afghanistan.

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

Afghan security situation in 2023 reviewed

KABUL (TOLONews): In 2023, as a result of anti-security events, nearly 200 people were killed and wounded across the country. According to reports, the number of casualties was less than the casualties of the first three months of 2022. Security in the year 2023 was one of the key issues that the caretaker government has spoken of as an important achievement after its coming into power in Afghanistan. In this regard, MoI spokesman Abdul Matin Qani, said: "In 2022, full security was provided, and in 2023, it had a 40% reduction, but still, unfortunately, we witnessed some security incidents in Badakhshan, Baghlan and

Herat provinces and even in the capital." TOLONews findings show that since the beginning of this year, more than ten suicide attacks and explosions occurred in Baghlan, Badakhshan, Balkh and Kabul provinces, in which fifty-six people were killed and 140 others were injured. One of these incidents happened on the first day of the year 2023 near the gate of the military airport in Kabul, in which at least ten people died and eight others were injured. On January 11th and March 27th, 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate was attacked twice. In these incidents, several employees of the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, including diplomats, were killed, and these attacks were accompanied by strong international and domestic reactions. In 2023, several officials of the Islamic Emirate were also targeted in some anti-security incidents. Among them, we can mention the 9th of March, when a suicide bomber exploded himself near the office of the governor of Balkh, as a result of which three people were killed, including Mohammad Dawood Muzamil, the governor of Balkh, with four others being injured. On June 6, 2023, the acting governor of Badakhshan province was also attacked, resulting in his death and his driver's,

and injuries to six others. Two days after this incident, at the funeral of Mawlawi Nisar Ahmad Ahmadi, there was another attack with fatalities, including Safiullah Samim, the former commander of Baghlan police, and 14 others, and more than 50 others were injured. On October 13, a suicide bomber reached the Takiakhana Imam Zaman (place of worship) in Pol-e-Khomri and blew himself up among the worshippers, killing seven people and injuring seventeen others. Two days after this incident, another blast also in Tabyan cultural center in Mazar-e-Sharif happened in which one person was killed and eight others were injured.

In this year Dasht-e-Barchi area of Kabul witnessed explosions on October 27th and November 8th, in which more than 10 people were killed and nearly 30 others were injured. ISIS has taken responsibility for most of the incidents. The spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, Zabihullah Mujahid, said: "ISIS is a bad phenomenon that used to operate and hide in cities, especially big cities. A special operation was carried out against them, and immediately they fled to remote provinces and places." In 2023 rather than other years, Afghanistan had two conflicts with Pakistan and one border conflict with Iran, with the Pakistan skir-

mishes lasting for several days. The spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior said that most of the conflicts that took place on the borders of the country were first started by the opposite side. While the Islamic Emirate has always denied a ISIS presence in Afghanistan, Colonel General Anatoly Sidorov, Chief of the Joint Staff of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), claimed that the number of ISIS fighters in Afghanistan has increased to 6,500. "The number of members of the Islamic State's Afghan branch, Wilayat Khorasan (outlawed in Russia), has significantly

increased to about 6,500, with up to 4,000 militants concentrated along Tajikistan's southern border in the provinces of Badakhshan, Kunduz and Takhar," TASS said, quoting Sidorov. The head of US Central Command, Michael Kurilla, said that ISIS in Afghanistan will be able to attack American or Western interests outside the country in less than six months "with little to no warning," as reported by Star and Stripes. But, the Ministry of Defense said that a serious fight against terrorist groups has been carried out in Afghanistan, and currently the ISIS group has been defeated in Afghanistan.

On the last day of 2023, Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, the Acting Minister of MoD, at the news conference of the Security and Clearing Affairs Commission, in the government media center, dismissed the claims and concerns of countries about the existence of terrorist groups as baseless and said that Afghanistan is in a safe state, and will not allow anyone to disrupt the security and use of Afghanistan's soil. The acting Defense minister said: "Those who make such claims against us should be asked why they make such claims, and they do something that does not benefit any country."

Restrictions on entry of Iranian trucks into Afghanistan lifted



KABUL (Ariana News): Afghan and Iranian authorities have agreed to immediately remove the 20-day restriction on the entry of Iranian trucks to Herat. According to IRNA news agency, the agreement came on Sunday at the joint meeting of the representatives of Iran and Afghanistan at Dogharun customs. In addition, the working hours of Dogharun customs office increased by one

hour to 16 hours. Earlier, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi said that Iran can increase trade relations with Afghanistan and its investors can invest in the country. "Afghanistan offers many opportunities. For instance, it has fertile soil and fresh water. A lot can be done in agriculture. Its land is full of minerals. There could investment in minerals that could benefit

both you and us. When businessmen come from far away and invest in Afghanistan, why not come from nearby? Why not come from Iran to invest there," Muttaqi said during his recent visit to Iran. Experts say that lifting trade and transit restrictions between Afghanistan and Iran can lead to the expansion of trade and provide more employment opportunities.

"I think that as much as the restrictions on trade and transit are lifted from both sides, it can benefit the private sector. As much as we can provide facilities for our trade, business will boom and there will be economic growth," said Abdul Nasir Reshtiya, an expert on economic affairs. This comes as efforts to expand political and trade relations between Kabul and Tehran have increased recently.

WB likely to start work of incomplete projects

KABUL (Ariana News): Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) says the World Bank will likely resume the work of its incomplete projects in Afghanistan. DAB officials said talks are underway with the World Bank so that the work of these projects may kick off as soon as possible. "In this regard as it seems, work of part of the World Bank's incomplete projects is going on now," said Ahmad Jawad Sadad, DAB's DG Monetary Policy Department. Sadad stated it is hoped that the World Bank and other financial institutions that were involved in the Afghan economy will resume their unfinished projects. Economic experts meanwhile have said when the World Bank projects start, it will have a direct impact on the country's economic growth. "The World Bank projects were usually semi-infrastructure projects in Afghanistan and they were being implemented to provide service, welfare and social infrastructure, and these projects still managed to create good jobs for people in the villages of the country," said an economic analyst.

‘Media have freedom if they respect national and Islamic interests values’

KABUL (BNA): In response to a recent report by Reporters Without Borders, Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, stated that the media in Afghanistan have unrestricted freedom and support from the government. Mujahid revealed these views during a discussion with Afghanistan's National Radio and Television, adding that media outlets would have no obstacles if they followed the country's laws and Islamic values. This comes as Reporters Without Borders classified Afghanistan as one of the most dangerous nations for journalists and media people in their most recent report.



According to Mujahid, authorities have detained members of the media on occasion for their engagement in specific issues or as a kind of punishment, but this is not a systematic incarceration. Mujahid added that certain detentions that led to

trials had legal and criminal ramifications unrelated to media work. The Islamic Emirate's spokesperson underlined that the media in Afghanistan operates freely, in accordance with Afghan laws and Islamic norms and principles.

Afghanistan among world’s most dangerous countries for journalists

KABUL (TOLONews): Reporters Without Borders said in a report that independent journalism was crushed in Vietnam, Russia and Afghanistan. According to the RSF, Vietnam, Russia and Afghanistan are also among the world's most dangerous countries for journalists. "Spying charges are also used against journalists in Afghanistan, where Mortaza Behboudi's long-awaited release on 18 October 2023 underscored the dangers of journalism under the Taliban, who have been persecuting independent media ever since retaking power in August

2021," the RSF said. Meanwhile, journalists called on the interim government to provide them with access to information and stand beside the media. "I hope the Islamic Emirate approves the law for access to information for the journalists, so we can have better access to the information," said Ahmad Tanha, a journalist. "You cannot find a journalist who will not be struggling with the economic problems," a journalist said. The Afghanistan Independent Union Journalists voiced concerns over the situation of the media in

Afghanistan and urged the interim government to pay attention to it. "Any action we take should be through legal paths and we have the commission of media violation and complaints. If this happens, I believe that there will be no organization to criticize it [Islamic Emirate]," said Hojjatullah Mujadidi, head of the AIUJ. Meanwhile, the Islamic Emirate denied the reports of the media watchdogs, saying that all media organizations are freely active within an Islamic structure. "The media are active and free in Afghanistan.

There have been some problems created by Daesh but in general, Afghanistan is the safest place for the journalists," said Zabiullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Islamic Emirate. The International Federation of Journalists said in a report that 120 journalists and media workers, including 11 women, have been killed in 2023. This year, 68% of journalists and media workers of the media worldwide have been killed in the Gaza conflict, the IFJ said in a report. According to the report, two journalists were killed in Afghanistan in 2023.

Smuggling of historical artifacts

FAIZABAD (BNA): Acting Information and Culture Minister Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwah considered the smuggling of historical artifacts as a form of plundering the identity of the country, emphasizing the preservation of historical monuments and structures during a meeting with the director of information and culture in Badakhshan province. During the meeting, Maazuddin Ahmadi, the director of information and culture in Badakhshan, stated that they are actively working to protect historical buildings and prevent the smuggling of artifacts.



KABUL (BNA): The Afghanistan International Islamic University's Faculty of Sharia Studies and Bank-e-Milli Afghan (BMA) or Afghan National Bank have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under which students in the Department of Islamic

Economics and Banking will receive practical training in Islamic banking. During the signing ceremony, Dr. Rafiullah Manib, Deputy Chancellor of Afghanistan International Islamic University, emphasized the collaboration with BMA for training of students and problem-solving

in conjunction with BMA. During the signing of this memo, bank officials underlined their commitment to continuing collaboration with Afghanistan International Islamic University, citing practical measures as critical for developing the students' capacities.

2023 chaotic year for Afghan refugees

KABUL (TOLONews): The past year was tumultuous for the Afghan refugees living in the neighboring countries with hundreds of thousands of them forced to leave their host countries. The Afghan refugees also faced harassment and mistreatment in countries like Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. In early October, Pakistan announced a one-month deadline for 1.73 million undocumented Afghan refugees to leave. Following the deadline, Pakistan's caretaker government escalated deportation of tens of thousands of Afghans. The Pakistani Interior Minister, Sarfraz Bugti, said in early October: "There are no two opinions that we are attacked from within Afghanistan and Afghan nationals are involved in attacks on us. We have evidence."

Pakistan's decision however faced international reactions and many human rights watchdogs including the UN called on Islamabad to reconsider its decision. "The Pakistani police have mistreated Afghan refugees, and the government has ordered shops to be evacuated and even ordered that homes should not be provided to Afghan migrants," Hadisa, an Afghan migrant in Pakistan told TOLONews on October 26. "Everyone is at home. Even the [refugees] cannot go out to purchase their basic needs including food because if they are detained and deported, it will cause them problems," Sial Mohammad Wisal, a member of the Afghan refugee's council, said at the time. On November 1, 2023, the Islamic Emirate emphasized that the decision of the interim government of Pakistan will damage relations between the two countries.

"The issue of refugees is the issue with which Afghanistan suffers and the people of Afghanistan are suffering, and it also damages the relations between the two countries. We have asked the government authorities in Pakistan to take the issue seriously and understand the consequences," Mujahid said. Despite consecutive calls on Pakistan to stop deporting Afghan refugees, Islamabad escalated its efforts to force undocumented Afghans off of its soil. Over 100,000 Afghan refugees were deported to Afghanistan on November 1, when the deadline expired. "Around 50 people were going in this truck. It has been hired by 6 families for Rs. 2, 20, 000. We had no time to bargain because the CDA was pushing us," said Khial Gul, an Afghan refugee, who was quoted

by Reuters. The Islamic Emirate's Prime Minister, Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, reacted then to the expulsion of Afghan refugees by Pakistan, saying that the action is against international laws. In a video message, PM Akhund called on Pakistan to not "expel Afghans in an undignified manner, to not harass Afghans and to give them sufficient time so that they can return in a dignified manner." In November, the US Department of State's spokesman, Matthew Miller, in reaction to the forced deportation of Afghans, asked Pakistan to uphold its obligations in the treatment of refugees and respect the principle of non-refoulement. "So we join all of our partners in urging every state, including Pakistan, to uphold their respective obligations in their treat-

ment of refugees and asylum [seekers], and to respect the principle of non-refoulement. We strongly encourage Afghanistan's neighbors, including Pakistan, to allow entry for Afghans seeking international protection and to coordinate with international humanitarian organizations to provide humanitarian assistance," Miller said. The United Nations said that the organization is concerned about this forced deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. Stéphane Dujarric, spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, in a press conference said: "we're very concerned about this forced movement of people, many of whom are very likely refugees to a country that by most accounts isn't ready to welcome them back, in a sense; and given the state of not only the humanitarian situ-

ation, but of course, first and foremost, the human rights situation. But, I know this is an issue that our colleagues in UNHCR [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] and other humanitarian organizations are engaging with the Pakistani authorities." However, Pakistan was not the only country which forcefully deported many Afghans, Iran and Turkey also caused severe challenges for the Afghan refugees based on their territory. In November TOLONews interviewed Nazia, a mother of three children, who said then that she has recently been deported from Iran. Nazia said that her husband also was arrested by Iranian police. "They took six million [Iranian currency] from us in Iran. They brought us near the Balochistan province, and we came so

far through private transportation," she said. According to the data of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, approximately 7 million Afghans are living in the neighboring countries and around 1 million in Europe. In 2023, the data shows that around 1.5 million Afghan refugees have returned to the country, most of them deported. In mid-December, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Iran's foreign minister, asked the United Nations to facilitate the return of Afghan refugees to their country. Abdollahian in this forum added that Iran has been hosting Afghan refugees for more than 45 years and asked the United Nations to cooperate with Iran in the return of these migrants to their country. Abdollahian said: "As you know, it has been more than 45 years that the

Islamic Republic of Iran has hosted the longest refugee situation, and now, after the political changes in Afghanistan in 2021, my country hosts the largest displaced population in the world." The acting Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, who visited Iran last week to participate at the consultative and political meeting held on the situation of Palestinian, met with Iranian Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, to discuss the diplomatic ties between the two countries, the situation and problems of Afghan prisoners and refugees. Meanwhile, the International Organization of Migration and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have published a joint report saying more than 30,000 undocumented refugees have been detained in Pakistan in 2023.

Magnitude 7.6 earthquake strikes Japan

— residents flee some coastal areas

TOKYO: A powerful earthquake has struck central Japan, destroying buildings, knocking out power to tens of thousands of homes and prompting residents in some coastal areas to flee to higher ground. The quake with a preliminary magnitude of 7.6 triggered waves of about 1m (3 feet) along Japan's west coast and neighbouring South Korea on Monday, with authorities saying larger waves could follow.

The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) issued tsunami warnings for the prefectures of Ishikawa, Niigata and Toyama. A major tsunami warning — the first since the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami that struck northeastern Japan — was initially issued for Ishikawa but later downgraded. Russia and North Korea also issued tsunami warnings for some areas.

Japanese government spokesperson Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters that the earthquake had caused several destroyed houses, and led to fires, and army personnel have been dis-

patched to help with rescue operations while authorities continue to assess the damage. More strong quakes in the area, where seismic activity has been simmering for more than three years, could occur over coming days, JMA official Toshihiro Shimoyama said.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters he had instructed search-and-rescue teams to do everything possible to save lives, even though access to quake-hit areas is difficult due to blocked roads. Chris Gilbert, reporting from Tokyo, said authorities had located several people trapped.

"The government has identified at least six to 10 people trapped inside buildings and [the total] may be much higher than that, considering the government is usually quite conservative about these numbers until their official [final tally]," Gilbert said. Footage aired by NHK appeared to show buildings collapsing in Ishikawa, and tremors shook buildings in the capital Tokyo on the oppo-

site coast. More than 36,000 households lost power in Ishikawa and Toyama prefectures, utilities provider Hokuriku Electric Power said. Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority said no irregularities have been confirmed at nuclear power plants along the Sea of Japan, including five active reactors at Kansai Electric Power's Ohi and Takahama plants in Fukui prefecture.

Hokuriku's Shika plant in Ishikawa, located the closest to the quake's epicentre, had already halted its two reactors before the quake for regular inspection and saw no impact from the quake, the agency said. South Korea's meteorological agency said the sea level in some parts of the Gangwon province on the east coast may rise. Japan is one of the countries in the world most at risk from earthquakes. A huge earthquake and tsunami struck northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011, killing nearly 20,000 people, devastating towns and triggering nuclear meltdowns in Fukushima. — Aljazeera



TOKYO: A view shows badly damaged buildings along a street in the city of Wajima in Ishikawa prefecture after a major 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck the Noto region.

Seats in nursing colleges to be increased, says KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An important meeting to review progress, on the Provincial Government's initiative of Human Resource Export, was held here on Monday with the Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah in the chair.

Besides Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information Technology Dr. Najeeb Ullah, Managing Director Overseas Employment Corporation Naseer Khan Kashani, Managing Director K.P Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority Aamir Afaq, Director IM Sciences Dr. Usman Ghani and others attended the meeting.

The meeting was given a detailed briefing on training programs in different sectors including information technology, nursing and paramedics etc. Human resource required to foreign countries, and strategy of the provincial government to export human resources to foreign countries.

Addressing the participants, the chief minister said that the caretaker government was not only committed to train and employ the youth but also taking steps on war footings to this end adding that the number of seats in nursing colleges was also being increased multifold so as to send maximum nursing graduates abroad for employment. He further said that, this country belongs to all of us and we need to play our due role for its sustainable development and prosperity. He stated that the only way to put the country on the track of development was to make maximum investment on youth and make them an asset for the entire nation.

Filing of appeals begins

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Hearing of appeals against rejection of nomination papers for 2024 general elections began on Monday. Election tribunals comprising judges of high courts are hearing appeals.

According to the schedule issued by the Election Commission (ECP), appeals can be filed till January 3 as the process of scrutiny of nomination papers completed on Saturday (Dec 30). Appellate tribunals, headed by judges of high courts, will hear appeals and issue verdict by January 10. The revised list of candidates will be published on January 11 and candidature can be withdrawn by January 12, read the schedule. Election symbols will be allotted to political parties on Jan 13 and voting will be held throughout the country on February 8. The election schedule was announced by the ECP on Dec 15 detailing how the process would be completed.

It may be recalled that in Rawalpindi district, the returning officers rejected nomination papers of 66 candidates for seven National Assembly seats and 149 nominations papers for 14 Punjab Assembly seats. An Election Tribunal comprising Justice Mirza Waqas Rauf and Justice Chaudhry Abdul Aziz is hearing appeals.

The nomination papers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and vice chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi and several other party leaders have been rejected by the returning officers.

Fazl doesn't see election happening on Feb 8

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has said that he does not see the February 8 elections being staged as the country's security situation is not suitable for polls — almost 24 hours after vehicles, part of his convoy in Dera Ismail Khan, came under attack.

The veteran politician's convoy was fired upon from multiple sides at Yarik interchange, the party said, but also added that fortunately, the JUI-F emir was not present in the vehicles at the time. Fazl, during the press conference, said that his party's leadership had also come under attack in Waziristan and Tank,

adding that he has raised concerns about the security in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

Pakistan remained a theatre of terrorism and violence in the year 2023 amid internal political conflicts, socioeconomic disparities, regional instability and rising tensions with the militant groups operating in border areas adjacent to Afghanistan.

"How can we run our election campaign in such conditions? I've asked the election commissioner to consider my request [of delaying polls], but he says that he's praying," the JUI-F emir said. No major political party has been calling for the delay of elections, except for the JUI-F. The

PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) have been holding rallies and are set to announce their manifestos as well.

However, this time around, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is not in a good position as several of its top leaders — including founder Imran Khan and Vice-Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi — had their nomination papers rejected and they also remain jailed. The elections will take place on February 8, in which seats from the national and provincial assemblies will be up for grabs, and the ECP has said that it has fulfilled all prerequisites for staging the massive exercise.

Iran deploys warship to Red Sea amid soaring tensions

TEHRAN: Iran's Alborz warship has entered the Red Sea through the strategic Bab al-Mandeb Strait, Iran's Tasnim news agency has reported, at a time of heightened tensions over the globally important waterway. "The Alborz destroyer entered the Red Sea ... by passing through the Bab al-Mandeb" waterway at the southern tip of the Red Sea, connecting with the Gulf of Aden in Indian Ocean, the news agency said on Monday.

It added that Iran's naval fleet has been operating in the area "to secure shipping lanes, repel pirates, among other purposes since 2009". The United States in early December set up a multinational naval task force for the Red Sea following a flurry of missile and drone attacks by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi rebels on merchant vessels, which led shipping companies to suspend passages through the now highly militarised area.

The Houthis say the attacks were in solidarity with Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip, where Israel is continuing a months-long bombardment campaign. According to the International Chamber of Shipping, 12 percent of global trade passes through the Red Sea, which provides a shortcut past Africa via the Suez Canal. The Tasnim report comes a day after US Navy helicopters fired on Houthi rebels attempting to board a cargo ship off Yemen, with the rebels reporting 10 fighters dead. It also comes after Sayyed Razi Mousavi, one of the top commanders of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps in Syria, was killed in an Israeli air strike outside of Damascus last week.

Al Jazeera's Resul Serdar, reporting from Djibouti, said that Iran sending a warship to the region was not a "new" development. "From time to time", there have been Iranian warships operating in this area, he said. "These

waters are open to Iranian warships, as they're open to many countries."

Serdar said "more and more warships" are now amassing in the region, including those belonging to the US and Britain. Separately, Iran's security chief, Ali Akbar Ahmadian, held a meeting with top Houthi negotiator Mohammad Abdulsalam, according to the state-run news agency IRNA. It is unclear where or when the meeting took place, but Iranian media quoted Ahmadian as saying Tehran praised the Houthis for supporting Palestinians and standing up to Israel.

Regional tensions have spiked since the start of Israel's assault on Gaza following the October 7 Hamas attacks. On Monday, Britain's Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said Britain was "willing to take direct action" against the Houthis "to deter threats to freedom of navigation in the Red Sea". — Aljazeera

Baloch militants

(Continued from Page 1)

steps of the government, the smuggling of petroleum products from Iran had been reduced to a huge extent whereas cargo tracking system had started functioning from Taftan to Quetta.

PM for legal proceedings against hoarders of urea fertilizer: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that enough urea fertilizer was available in the country to meet requirements and directed for initiation of legal proceedings against those involved in its hoarding and illegal profiteering.

He said that those exploiting farmers by urea fertilizer hoarding would not be spared. The prime minister chaired a meeting over the availability of urea fertilizer in the country. The meeting was attended by Caretaker Finance Minister Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Caretaker Minister for Energy Muhammad Ali, Caretaker Minister for National Food Security Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik, Caretaker Minister for Trade Dr. Gohar Ejaz, caretaker chief ministers and relevant officials, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Addressing the participants, the caretaker prime minister directed for easier and trouble-free supply of fertilizer to farmers and asked for strict supervision over its demand and supply. He also directed the relevant federal ministries to ensure their assistance to the provincial governments in the action taken to control

the issue of hoarding by providing details about the demand and supply of fertilizer. The meeting was apprised that for the buffer stock, a total of 2 million metric tons of urea would be imported.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar expressed his government's resolve to make Pakistan a hub of development and prosperity in the new year. In a message to the nation, the prime minister said the year 2024 was significant for the country in its determination to achieve the goals of peace and a strong economy. PM Kakar urged the demonstration of unity among the ranks of the nation to attain success in every field of life. He paid tribute to the martyrs of the country who sacrificed their lives for the homeland. He felicitated the nation on the occasion, however mentioned that the government had banned the celebrations of the new year in solidarity with the people of Palestine.

He also pointed out that 2023 was a year marked by the violence and aggression of the Israeli authorities against the innocent people of Gaza. The prime minister hoped that the international community would play a role in ensuring peace in Palestine and ending the genocide committed by the Israeli authorities. He also expressed a desire for the people of Kashmir to attain their right to self-determination in the new year.

PHC to hear ECP plea today

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has fixed hearing on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) intra-party elections and restoration of 'Bat' as party's symbol for today (on Tuesday) on Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) supplementary pleas in this regard, on Monday.

Justice Ijaz Sabi will hear ECP plea challenging PHC's decision regarding restoration of 'Bat' as party's symbol as well as suspension of interim relief in intra-party elections petition. However, ECP had filed plea regarding restoration of 'Bat', intra-party elections and early hearing of revision pleas in this regard by PHC's divisional bench.

It is worthy to mention that PHC had suspended ECP decision as well as ordered restoration of 'Bat' as party symbol and uploading of intra-party election certification while argued for repelling the verdict. However, ECP had challenged both directives in the plea which is fixed for hearing today.

Meanwhile, the aspirant candidates for upcoming general elections scheduled on 8th February entered into third important steps of electoral process by filling appeal against accepting and rejection of nomination papers by Returning Officers (ROs) at Election Tribunal.

PTI regional president Atif Khan had filed appeals against rejection of his nomination papers from NA22 and PK59 Mardan. Former State's Minister Ali Muhammad Khan, former Member National Assembly Mujahid Khan, Zahir Shah Toru, Abdus Salam Afridi, Iftikhar Mashwani, Emir Farzand Khan from Mardan district challenged ROs decisions for rejecting their nominations at PHC Election Tribunal.

Moreover, former MNA Kohat Aftab Alam, NA- 31 Hangu candidate Yousaf Khan and Abu Turab candidate for provincial assembly also challenged their rejection by concerned ROs. Syed Sikandar Shah and Shah Faisal Ottomankhel advocate will represent PTI's candidate before PHC Election Tribunal.

PTI hopes of getting justice from election tribunals

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Barrister Gohar Ali Khan criticizing the rejection of nomination papers of party candidates has expressed hope of getting justice from election tribunals.

The PTI chairman in an informal conversation with media on Monday urged the Supreme Court (SC) to take immediate notice of the 'lack' of level-playing field being granted to his political party in the run-up to February 8 general election. Barrister Gohar Ali Khan termed the rejection of nomination papers of PTI candidates by returning officers (ROs) as unjustified and said Supreme Court should take notice of the issue.

PTI was constantly being targeted and the way

it was being "excluded" from the electoral process has "no place in the Constitution", he regretted. "PTI believes in democracy and favours equal level playing field for all political parties," Gohar Khan said, regretting that PTI workers and supporters were not safe from "fascism" despite the beginning of electoral process. He further stated that PTI believes in rule of law and wanted to see the nation strong.

Gohar Khan also took a jibe at the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), saying, "The electoral watchdog has failed to fulfil its primary responsibility — to hold transparent elections." He added that the only way out to current crisis is free, fair and transparent elections, noting that the election commission was losing its "purpose and effectiveness". "We will

fight for a free election," he declared, accusing the electoral watchdog of a pre-meditated conspiracy against PTI.

The PTI chairman alleged that the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) judges, who according to him delivered justice to the party, were threatened. He warned that the democracy will be "wiped out" from the country of the Supreme Court does not intervene. The comments come days after the PTI alleged that it was not being given a level playing field for the general election.

The party had alleged that its candidates were mishandled by authorities when they went to file their nomination papers. Further, the candidates successful in filing their nomination papers saw them being rejected during the scrutiny phase.

China's BRI project appreciated by world

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Monday that China's Belt and Road Initiative was appreciated by the world as progress was possible only by working together.

In an exclusive interview with China Radio International, the minister said that President Xi Jinping's vision of development was based on universal development. "The fruits and benefits of development come only when development is not limited. No country can progress in isolation", Murtaza Solangi maintained.

Welcoming the message of the President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping at the beginning of the new year, Murtaza Solangi said his vision of global development was also evident in his New Year message. President Xi has always promoted the timeless principles of humanity and his theory was a negation of the theo-

ry that a country can achieve development only by keeping other countries behind, the minister opined.

"In our region too, President Xi Jinping's globalist ideology is gaining ground," he said. Central Asian countries, Solangi added were already implementing Belt and Road Initiative projects. He said with the passage of time, President Xi's globalization-based ideology will gain momentum. He said that Pakistan's relations with China entered a new era after the start of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project. The minister said due to the cooperation of the People's Republic of China and China's leadership, Pakistan has made progress through CPEC.

When CPEC was launched, the focus was on energy and infrastructure projects, Murtaza Solangi said and added currently, work was being done in many new areas under CPEC. Wishing Happy New Year to the people of China he said relations

between Pakistan and China have always been exemplary. Solangi said cooperation in the fields of information technology, mining, special economic zones, agriculture, agro-based industry and tourism was developing as new avenues of cooperation between China and Pakistan were opening.

He remarked that Pakistan-China friendship was not limited to slogans and the future of the relations between the two countries was very bright. "Thousands of Pakistani students are studying in Chinese universities", Murtaza Solangi stated. As a result of the cooperation between Radio Pakistan and China Radio International, Pakistan's professionals went to China and brought back the pleasant experiences of working with their Chinese brothers, the minister said. Saying that CPEC projects have had a positive impact on the lives of local people, Murtaza Solangi urged the media to highlight the positive impact on people's lives.