

Earthquake jolts Harnai F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An earthquake of magnitude 3.6 on Richter scale jolted Harnai and surrounding areas of Quetta city on Friday afternoon, reported Pakistan's National Seismic Monitoring Center (PNSMC). According to PNSMC, tremours measuring 3.6 on Richter scale were felt in Harnai and surrounding areas of the provincial capital Quetta.



@thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX

No. 363

Regd. No. 241

RAJAB 08 1445 -- SATURDAY, JANUARY 20 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

RICE. 30

NSC reviews security situation

— Pakistan, Iran should address each other's security concerns

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Security Committee (NSC) Friday observed that Iran was a neighbourly and brotherly Muslim country and existing multiple communication channels between the two countries should be mutually utilised to address each other's security concerns in the larger interest of regional peace and stability.

The committee, which met with Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in the chair to deliberate upon matters of national security, hoped that in line with the universal principles governing the conduct of good neighbourly relations, the two countries would mutually be able to overcome minor irritants through dialogue and diplomacy and pave the way to further deepen their historic relations.

The forum reviewed the overall security in view of the situation between Pakistan and Iran. It undertook a wholesome review of the situation and lauded the professional, calibrated and proportionate response by the Armed Forces of Pakistan against unprovoked and unlawful violation of Pakistan's sovereignty.

During the meeting, participants were briefed about political and diplomatic developments bearing upon the prevailing situation between Pakistan and Iran, and its impact on the overall security milieu in the region. The forum also took stock of the 'Operation Marg Bar Sarmachar', which was successfully executed against Pakistani origin Baloch terrorists residing on the ungoverned spaces inside Iran.

An update on the situation along the borders and necessary full preparations done to comprehensively respond to any further violation of national sovereignty was also deliberated about. The forum reiterated the unflinching resolve that sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan were

Jilani speaks with Iran's FM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on Friday spoke with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. Underscoring the close brotherly relations between Pakistan and Iran, the foreign minister expressed Pakistan's desire to work with Iran based on spirit of mutual trust and cooperation. He stressed that respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty must underpin the cooperation.

The two foreign ministers agreed that working level cooperation and close coordination on counter-terrorism and other aspects of mutual concern should be strengthened. They also agreed to de-escalate the situation. The return of ambassadors of the two countries to their respective capitals was also discussed. This is the second telephonic interaction between the two foreign ministers this week, as earlier Jilani had received a call from his Iranian counterpart on Wednesday after Iran had violated Pakistan's airspace. FM Jilani also underscored the need for closer cooperation on security issues.

Cabinet discusses situation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Friday briefed the Caretaker Federal Cabinet about the situation arising from the Iranian attack on Pakistan on January 16. The details of the attack, as well as Pakistan's response, were shared in the meeting of the Federal Cabinet held under the chairmanship of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. The cabinet lauded the high professionalism with which the Pakistan Armed Forces responded to the breach of Pakistan's sovereignty and how the entire government machinery worked in unison in that regard.

Addressing the cabinet, the prime minister affirmed that Pakistan was a law abiding and peace loving country, and it sought friendly and cooperative relations with all countries, particularly its neighbours. PM Kakar said that Pakistan and Iran were two brotherly countries that had historically enjoyed fraternal and cooperative relations marked by respect and affection. It was in the interest of both countries to take steps to restore the relationship to what it was prior to 16th January, 2024, he added. The prime minister said that, in that regard, Pakistan would welcome and reciprocate all positive measures from the Iranian side.

absolutely inviolable and sacrosanct, and any attempt by anyone to breach it on any pretext would be responded with full might of the state.

The meeting reaffirmed that the security and safety of the people of Pakistan were of paramount importance and no stone would be left unturned to ensure it. The forum impressed upon Pakistan's commitment to sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international norms. The committee also

reiterated the resolve to deal with the menace of terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, with an iron hand. The forum also highlighted that Pakistan had suffered far more than any other country due to the scourge of terrorism. The meeting was attended by the caretaker ministers for Defence, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Information, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Chief of the Army Staff, Chief of Naval Staff and Chief of Air Staff as well as heads of intelligence agencies.

Lion may hide again to see public passion: Bilawal

F.P. Report

LIAQATPUR: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a mammoth public gathering of the Party in Liaquatpur said that it is possible that the 'lion', which came out yesterday cowers in its den again after witnessing such a massive crowd. Chairman Bilawal said that he is highly pleased to be among the people of Liaquatpur, and address the people of Waseb and Punjab. He said that he wishes to send a message to the politicians of Lahore, that PPP is not one to cower away, and will contest them with determination. The 'arrow' will be victorious, and resultantly the PPP and the people.

Chairman Bilawal said that the PPP is the only party that is contesting this election on its manifesto. The rest of the political parties lack a manifesto, narrative and are unable to feel for the people and the harm meted out to the country. The only wish to sit on the seat of the PM for the fourth time, that is their only concern. The PPP is concerned for the people who are pained by the poverty, inflation and unemployment. Hence, the PPP has brought forward a 10-point economic charter for the people of the country. The Party has decided that it will devolve 17 ministries in the federal government that cost 300 billion rupees to function annually. This will be done according to the 18th Amendment of the Constitution. Moreover,

government of Pakistan gives a subsidy of 1500 billion rupees to the elite class of the country. A PPP government will end this practice, and spend the money on the downtrodden masses of the country instead.

If the people elect the PPP, then it will implement the 10-point agenda. The onus is on the Jiyalas of the Party to go from door to door to convey this 10-point agenda. They should apprise the people of the Party's aim to achieve all its objectives in the manifesto, as it did during the eras of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and President Zardari. Chairman Bilawal said that he wishes to uphold the legacy of the Party in a similar manner. The PPP wishes to double the wages within five years. It also aims to provide 300 units of electricity free-of-cost to the deserving citizens of the country through solar power. People should be apprised of the Party's aim to build three million houses in the country and give ownership to the women of the households.

This promise is not one that is empty, unlike those made in the past of five million houses. The PPP has already done this in Sindh and now wishes to extend the project to all the other provinces. The women of South Punjab should be made aware of the PPP's aim to not only expand the internationally-acclaimed Benazir Income Support Programme, but also provide interest-free loans to the underprivileged

women of the country so that they can be financially independent and contribute to the economy. It needs to be conveyed to the farmers and labourers of the country that the PPP wishes to introduce the 'Benazir Kissan Card' and 'Benazir Mazdoor Card' so that the hardworking brothers and sisters of the country can get their due share in the form of financial assistance by the country.

The youth of the country needs to be beckoned to trust the PPP and stamp the 'arrow', as it is Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's promise that he will introduce the 'Benazir Youth Card' and support youngsters financially for a year. It was the dream of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto to see that no child or adult sleeps on an empty stomach. To combat hunger, the PPP plans to initiate the 'Bhook Mitao Programme' on the level of union councils so that the dream is materialised.

Bilawal said that he is only looking towards the people and solely asking for their support. If the people support the Party as they have supported Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in the past, then there is no stopping it. The PPP is not competing with any political party or politician, but poverty, unemployment, hunger and price-hike. Two political parties are left to compete in the elections. While one party belongs to Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the other is General Zia's PML-N.

(Continued on Back Page)

Anti polio program coordinator killed

F.P. Report

KHAR: The anti polio program coordinator, Dr Abdul Rahman was killed by unknown gunmen at Bajaur tribal district on Friday.

According to Bajaur police, the car of Dr. Abdul Rehman was ambushed at Badsia village of Tehsil Mamond and expired in hospital. A police constable also sustained injuries.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor and caretaker Chief Minister have condemned the attack and expressed sympathies with the victim families. They directed the police high ups to arrest culprits and bring them to justice.

Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan on Friday strongly condemned the attack on polio officer Dr. Abdul Rehman in Bajaur. "I am deeply saddened by the martyrdom of Dr. Abdul Rahman on polio duty," Dr. Nadeem Jan said in a statement.

He said that he was in constant contact with the family of Dr. Abdul Rahman after receiving the news of the attack. "I instructed to transfer Dr. Abdul Rehman to Islamabad for the best medical treatment but before transferring to Islamabad, he expired." He said that Dr. Abdul Rahman's killers will be arrested and set a lesson. He said that such cowardly acts cannot shake our resolve.

Agencies issue security alert for Baloch protesters

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The intelligence agencies have issued a security alert for the participants of a protest being held these days in the Red Zone area of Islamabad, reported on Friday.

The Baloch Yakjehti Council (BYC) and Balochistan Shuhda Forum (BSF) have been staging a protest camp outside the Islamabad National Club for the last several days. According to the letter by the agencies, due to tension on the Iran-Pakistan border, there is a security threat as anti-national elements and terrorists can target these protest camps to sabotage peace and order in the country.

The letter further says that it should be clear that Balochistan National Party (Mengal) leader Jamal Raisani is already facing a security threat.

PML-N, PPP deceiving people: Siraj

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq has said that the PML-N and PPP were once again deceiving the people by engaging in friendly wrestling.

Addressing party workers at Mansoorah on Friday, he said that the two former ruling parties have same political agenda and they were two sides of the same coin. Sirajul Haq said that the upcoming elections will determine the future of 250 million Pakistanis. He urged voters not to choose the tested parties but rather to vote for the JI on February 8. He advised party workers to intensify their efforts and spread the message of the JI across the country.

Highlighting the artificial rift between the PPP and the PML-N, he argued that the masses are well-informed in the age of social media. He claimed that both former ruling parties have nothing substantial to present in terms of past performance, relying on false promises to capture public attention. However, he expressed confidence that this time, the people will not accept them, as Pakistanis have grown weary of dynastic rule.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairing a meeting of National Security Committee.

Deployment for election duty

ECP issues code of conduct for security personnel

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday directed the security officials to facilitate voters, follow election laws, prioritize safety, cooperate with officials, observers, and media, respect voter rights and to avoid unnecessary interference.

The ECP has issued a code of conduct for security personnel affiliated with Law Enforcement Agencies, excluding the Armed Forces and Civil Armed Forces (who have a separate code of conduct). This code applies to those deployed for election duty during the General Elections 2024.

As per the code, security personnel should execute their responsibilities within the legal framework and within the prescribed mandate of law enforcement agencies. Their role is to support the Election Commission of Pakistan in ensuring free, fair, transparent, and peaceful General Elections-2024.

This involves deploying security personnel at all polling stations, maintaining a secure environment for law and order, safeguarding printing presses during ballot paper production, and ensuring security during the transportation of ballot papers from printing presses to the offices of Returning Officers.

Provide security for the transportation of polling bags from Returning Officers' offices to polling stations and for election material from polling stations to RO offices after polling

and counting. This includes ensuring security during tabulation, provisional result announcements, and result consolidation by Returning Officers.

Security officials should adhere to Article 220 of the Constitution of Pakistan and Section 5, along with Section 193 of the Election Act, 2017. Gazetted officers must exercise powers delegated through an Election Commission notification under Section 193. Cooperate with District Returning Officers, Returning Officers, and Presiding Officers as mandated by Section 83(4) of the Elections Act, 2017.

Support the Presiding Officer in carrying out lawful duties, ensuring order at the polling station. Remain impartial and neutral during the entire election process, refraining from favoring any political party or candidate. Provide full cooperation to the Presiding Officer to maintain order and ensure uninterrupted voting at the polling station.

Maintain politeness and impeccable behavior with voters and polling staff, adhering firmly and justly to the law. Assist in guiding individuals outside the polling station during confusion or untoward situations. Ensure a peaceful and safe environment, preventing intimidation or hindrance to voters.

Conduct thorough frisking/checks to prevent the entry of any weapons, explosives, or undesirable items, including mobile phones that could disrupt the polling process.

Security personnel are required to facilitate proper queuing for all vot-

ers, with prioritized assistance for the elderly, transgender individuals, pregnant women, women with infants, and voters with disabilities. Concentrate exclusively on ensuring a peaceful and transparent polling process outside the polling station, following the Presiding Officer's directions. Note that each contesting candidate is allowed one polling agent at each booth, with only one agent per candidate permitted to observe the counting and tabulation process.

Polling agents observing the counting process can legally obtain copies of Form-45 and Form-46 from the Presiding Officer. Additionally, observers present during counting may also receive these copies. Provide security to the Returning Officer's office until result consolidation is complete, ensuring the safe storage of polling bags and materials in the Commission's strong room.

Adhere to election laws, fostering public trust through a safe environment and law enforcement. Be aware that District Returning Officers/Returning Officers can visit polling stations anytime. Allow accredited observers and media, permitting cameras for footage except in screened-off compartments to maintain ballot secrecy. Security personnel must refrain from requesting voters to produce identification ("Perchees"). They should not prevent any eligible voter from entering the polling station, recognizing the inviolable right to cast their vote at the assigned polling station.

Govt challenges IHC cypher trial verdict in SC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has challenged the Islamabad High Court's (IHC) 21 November, 2023 decision to annul the jail trial of PTI founder Imran Khan in cypher case.

On 21 November last year, the IHC had declared the proceedings of Imran Khan's trial conducted in jail in the cypher case as null and void. However, the appointment of the judge to the special court formed under the Official Secrets Act was held to be valid.

An IHC division bench, comprising Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Saman Rafat Intiaz, had pronounced the verdict on Imran's intra-court appeal against a single-member bench's decision to approve his jail trial in the cypher case and the

appointment of the judge to the special court formed under the Official Secrets Act, 1923.

Approving the maintainability of the appeal, the court declared that the notification issued by the law ministry on August 29 -- which read that the Law and Justice Division had "no objection" to PTI chairman's trial in the cypher case being held at Attock jail -- was without lawful authority and no legal effect "for want of an order by the appropriate government and fulfilment of requirements provided in Section 352 of the CrPC [Code of Criminal Procedure] as well as Rule 3 in Part-A of Chapter-I in Volume-III of the Rules and Orders of the Lahore High Court".

In its short order, the

court also declared the law ministry's notifications about Imran's jail trial issued on September 12, September 25, October 3, and October 13 to be "without lawful authority and no legal effect". On Friday, the federal government challenged the IHC order in the Supreme Court through Raja Rizwan Abbasi advocate, praying the apex court to annul the IHC verdict, arguing the high court did not analyse the facts correctly.

The federal government further said that the IHC has no authority to abolish the status of the special court. It is challenge, the federal government made PTI founder and judge Abul Hasnat as respondents along with FIA director general, Islamabad IG chief and deputy commissioners.

Faizabad commission: SC to hear extension plea next week

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) will take up the federal government's plea seeking an extension in the committee's tenure probing the Faizabad sit-in, next week. The committee was scheduled to submit its report in the third week of January.

On January 8, the commission investigating the Faizabad Interchange sit-in in Islamabad, sought a month extension from the Supreme Court (SC) to complete the probe. According to details, the

federal government submitted a formal request to Supreme Court (SC), seeking extension to complete the probe and identify those who planned, financed, and supported the 2017 Faizabad sit-in.

A three-member bench of the Supreme Court will take up the plea next week. The committee has so far summoned former ISI director-general Lt.General (retired) Faiz Hameed, former prime ministers Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Shehbaz Sharif and others. Earlier on Jan 5, former director general ISI retired Lt-Gen

Faiz Hameed submitted a written response to the inquiry commission.

The federal government had established this Faizabad commission, headed by retired Inspector General Akhtar Ali Shah, in response to the Supreme Court's rejection of the Fact-Finding Committee report. Constituted under Section 3 of the Pakistan Commission of Inquiry Act, 2017, the commission is led by Syed Akhtar Ali Shah, a former civil servant, who also served as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's police chief.

Repatriation of Afghans continue

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A notable number of Afghan nationals, currently residing unlawfully in Pakistan, are willingly participating in the repatriation process.

As of January 18, 2024, the total count of these individuals has reached 470,999, indicating a consistent flow of returns. On this particular date, 603 Afghan citizens bid farewell to Pakistan, comprising 176 men, 135 women, and 292 children.

The repatriation initiative involved 58 vehicles, facilitating the return of 76 families to Afghanistan. This ongoing trend underscores a significant movement of Afghan nationals choosing to return to their homeland voluntarily. While the reasons for leaving Pakistan may vary, their active involvement in the repatriation process signals a substantial shift in their residency status.

SC fixes for hearing Suri's case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Friday fixed for hearing National Assembly's former deputy speaker Qasim Khan Suri over his alleged rigging.

In 2018, Suri was declared ineligible for alleged rigging. However, former chief justice of Pakistan Omer Ata Bandial had issued a stay order against his disqualification.

Mother, two children hurt F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Three people including mother and her two children were injured after a reported gas leak in an LPG cylinder triggered a blast in a house near Faisal Colony, Dalazak Road on Friday. The house was partially damaged due to the impact of the blast, said an official of Rescue, adding that the injured have been identified as a 40-year mother (M) seven-year Wasif and five-year Abdullah.



Female minority candidate fully hopeful of winning polls

PESHAWAR (APP): The first female candidate from minority community for general elections seat in Buner district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is fully hopeful of getting support from her electorates, mostly Muslims.

Dr. Saveera Parkash has been fielded by Pakistan People's Party (PPP) into the electoral arena for contest from general seat of PK-25 Buner. "I have received very positive response from voters of my constituency almost one thousands time more than what I was expecting," remarked Saveera while talking with media during election campaign in her constituency here Friday.

I appreciate the dwellers of Buner who did not let down a daughter of their area entered into the electoral politics with the sole objective of serving the people of the area and betterment of our district, she commented. In the elections, Dr. Saveera is facing some political heavyweights including some former members of

provincial assembly, but she is confident that people will break the stereo type and provide educated youth to work for development and prosperity of the area.

Graduate from Ayub Medical College Abbotabad, Dr. Saveera opted for taking part in politics in her hometown Buner soon after completing MBBS. She said that she never faced discrimination from people on basis of religion and even in elections has not heard any comment expressing disguise on faith basis.

Saveera said her decision of serving people is because of inspiration she got from her father who was also a doctor and did a lot of activities for the welfare of people of the area. In response to a question about giving preference to politics over medical service, Saveera said as a doctor she can benefit only her patients, but as a policy maker or member of legislative assembly, she can expand her focus and ambit of developmental

effort.

She was very thankful to the people of her constituency who termed her as 'Daughter of Buner' and said she cannot find words to express thanks over this title reflecting pure love of people. Dr. Saveera was also very much thankful to the leadership of PPP for reposing confidence in her abilities and giving her a chance to contest elections from a general seat.

She said that she was receiving appreciating comments from across of the country and from the countries of the region including India and Nepal. "The support I am receiving from the people of my hometown, country and abroad is reflection of unity of the people and peace in Pakistan," she remarked. Her electioneering will sent a very positive image to the world about strong sentiments of interfaith harmony and respect for women in Pakistan, especially in a Pakhtun belt, she expressed.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah giving a cheque of special grant to President of Press Club Arshad Aziz Malik.

Abdul Rehman defends M. Phil thesis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A Master in Philosophy (M. Phil) scholar of Journalism and Mass Communication and working journalist Abdul Rehman defended his thesis at University of Peshawar, on Friday.

Chairman Department of Journalism and Mass Communication Dr. Faizullah Jan supervised the scholar while Dr. Jamal-u-Din of University of Swat was external examiner.

During the defense of M. Phil thesis faculty members along with students and researchers were present while congratulated the scholar for successful viva-voice.

Very cold and dry weather likely

F.P. Report

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

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

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

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar 21/03, Chitral 17/-02, Timergara 19/00, Dir 18/-03, Mirkhani 18/00, Kalam 14/-06, Drosh 15/02, Saidu Sharif 18/-01, Pattan 22/04, Malam Jabba 08/-01, Takht Bhai 19/01, Kakul 16/01, Balakot 18/01, Parachinar 12/-02, Bannu 22/04, Cherat 14/06, DI Khan City 22/03. The lowest temperatures recorded in the province was -06 in Kalam and -03°C in Dir.

Training of police officers starts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As part of security arrangements for upcoming general elections, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has started two-day training of police officers from Friday.

The training session of police officers would continue till January 27, said the spokesman of the provincial election commission adding that the officers of the Election Commission would impart training to 265 police master trainers.

The master trainer officers would later train more police personnel. The training has been started in Peshawar and Bannu simultaneously.

Judicial commission must to probe PTI's graft: QWP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Quami Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Friday demanded the establishment of a judicial commission to look into the corrupt practices during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Addressing a gathering at Hajizai area in Charsadda's Shabqadar tehsil, he said the PTI ruled KP for straight nine years but left the province in dire financial straits. He said now the province lacked funds to pay salaries to government employees.

Aftab Sherpao said KP's debt had soared to over Rs900 billion so the commission should be set up to find out as to where the money had gone. "The one, who used to call his political rivals as thieves, pushed the country and KP to the brink of bankruptcy due to his follies and incompetence. The QWP leader said that KP had lagged far

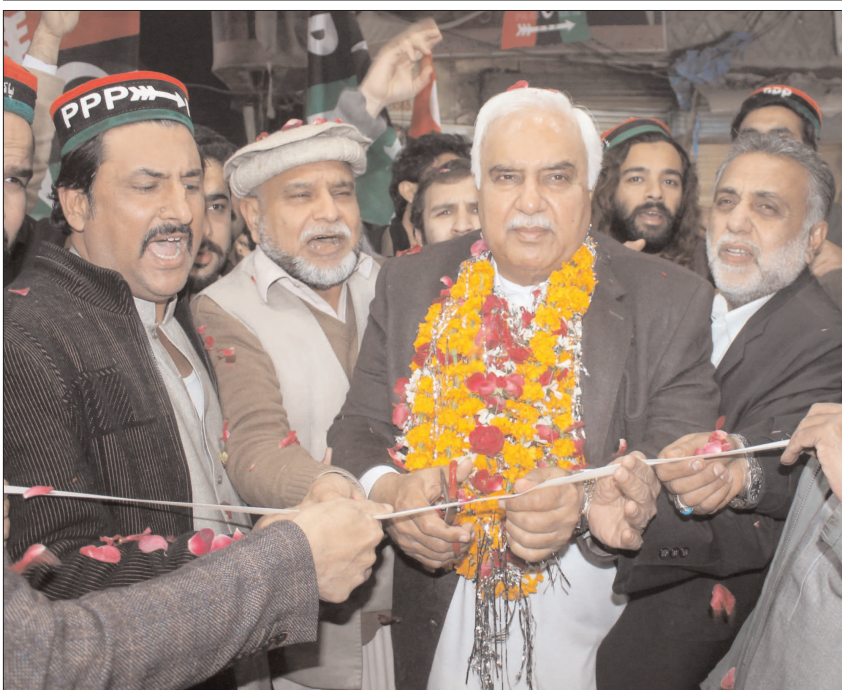


behind and its residents were facing abject poverty. He said the PTI's so-called crusade against corruption was a ploy to hoodwink the people. Aftab Sherpao said Imran Khan was projected as a third option, but his rule had been a disaster.

QWP Chairman said the PTI leader ruined the economy during his rule and caused political instability in the country. "He failed to eliminate terrorism," he said. "Imran Khan misguided the youth and based his politics on hollow slogans, which were meant to deceive the young minds in the name of the so-called change," he remarked. "He

acted like a dictator when he was the prime minister and incited violence against state institutions when his government was dislodged," he added.

The nation, he maintained, would never forget the May 9 mayhem as the country's enemies could not dare stage such brazen attacks on the military installations. "Imran Khan stabbed his benefactors in the back and caused colossal loss to the country and its economy," he further said, adding that it would take considerable time and effort to undo the damage and put the country on the path to progress.



PESHAWAR: PPP senior leader Syed Zahir Ali Shah inaugurating polling office at Karimpura.

PESCO notifies power suspension

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Friday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Jamrud grid station on 21st and 28th January from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Consequently, it said consumers of PIC, Hayatabad 1,2, 3, 4, 5, Health Care Hospital, Health Excellence, Northwest Hospital, Kidney Center, RMI, Kacha Garhi, Karkhano, Gul Abad, P.I.C, Hayatabad Surgical, Peshawar General, Foundation Hospital, Wood, Northern Bottling, Industrial Estate, Express 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, PHA, Omrah, Olympia, Industrial Estate, Mohmand Steel, Al Hafiz, Frontier Tech Wood, PPI 1,2,Mica Steel, Alhaj, BSF, Olympia 2 and Gulabad feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar University Grid Station on 23rd, 25th and 30th January from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of University Campus, Canal Town, Malakandher, Engineering, Regi, Taj Abad, Taj Abad 2, Agriculture, Mera Achini,

HMC, Ring Road, Danish Abad, Ghrib Abad, Rahatabad 1, CMB and Abdara feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will also remain suspended from Rehman Baba Grid Station on 22nd, 24th, 29th and 31st January from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Kachori, Shalozai, Safdar Abad, Khanmust, New Hazar Khwani, Surizai, Phandu Baba, Urmur 2, Hazar Khwani, Yakatoot, New Chairman Dafta, Jameel Colony, Ring Road, Beri Bagh, Rashid Ghari, Surizai, Akhon Abad, Ring Road 2, SIDB feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from Kohat Road Grid Station on 22nd, 24th, 29th and 31st January from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of PAF Express, Kohat Road, Wazir Bagh, Sonehri Masjid, Bana Mari, Civil Quarter, Nothia, Murshad Abad, Abasin, Old Deh Bahadar, Deh Bhadar, Wazir Abad, Ameen Colony, J Bara, Nodhya Payan, Murshid Ababad, Dora Road, Nodiya Bahadar, Lundi Arbab 1, 2, 3, Sheikh Muhamadi, Pishstakhara, Swati Gate, Gulbag,

Scheme Chowk, Chairman Dafta feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar City Grid Station on 20th, 22nd, 24th 27th, 29th and 30th January from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Sikandar Abad, Zaryab Colony, Phandu Road, City Home, Bana Mari, Urmur, Islamabad, Faqir Abad, Sheikh Abad, Molvi G, Nishtarabad, NHA feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will also remain suspended from Mardan Grid Station on 23rd, 24th and 30th January from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Shah Dandh, Rural, Zandai, Ghari Daudzai, Col Jawad Khan, Laksin Tobacco Factory, Tawas, Babinai, Ahmad Abad, Rural 1 feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from Chakdara Grid Station on 22nd and 23rd January from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of 132 KV Chakdara, Swat, Khwaza Khela, Madyan, Shangla, Timergara, Wari and Matta grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

Public servants seek extension in receiving of postal ballot

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Office bearers of Tanzeem-e-Asateza, Pakistan, Khyber chapter asked the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to extend date of receiving of ballot for the government employees who will perform their duties in the general election because they have not got their duties letters from ECP.

In a press statement issue here Tanzeem-e-Asateza, Khyber chief Sharifullah Afridi said that so far the government officials especially the teachers who would execute their duties in the upcoming election had not obtained their duty letters but the ECP gave a due date for returning of the ballots.

The illogical act of ECP meant to deprive the huge number of government employees (election crew) of casting their votes, he maintained. He demanded of the Election Commission, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa high-up to extend the due date for receiving of government employees' ballots so that they could utilize their right of vote, ensured by the law.

It is to be stated here that ECP through press release has fixed 22 January 2024, as last date for receipt of postal ballot for National and Provincial Assembly and the regulator has urged individuals appointed by the returning officers, such as police personnel and polling staff assigned to various polling stations, to submit their postal ballot applications within three days of their appointment.

3 brothers shot killed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A land dispute claimed lives of three brothers and critical bullet injuries to a passer-by here on Friday in Spainky Jabagi area of tehsil Rustam.

The officials of Chora Police station told that the victims were identified as Rozi Khan,36, Shah Zameen,34, and Muhammad Shafiq,25 while the injured passers-by as Fazal Hadi, Rescue-1122 soon after getting information about the ill-fated incident and took the dead and injured persons to district headquarter hospital Mardan for medico-legal procedure.

The officials of Chora police station registered FIR on the complaint of Suleman son of deceased Shah Zameen against the accused Akbar Zeb and his relatives. The alleged killers had fled the scene. The FIR stated that a land dispute was going on between both the rival groups which led to killing of three brothers.

Thall scouts organizes free medical camp

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a remote and underserved region of Torawarai, the Thall Scouts organized a Free Medical Camp under the supervision of Commandant Thall Scouts Col Khubaib Rasool. The camp witnessed the provision of free check-ups and distribution of medicines to over three thousand individuals.

Specialists and paramedics conducted thorough examinations for each ailment, utilizing laboratory facilities and dispensing complimentary medications. The camp catered to a diverse demographic, benefiting children, women, and the elderly.

The initiative garnered



praise from the local community, expressing gratitude towards Tall Scouts for organizing a successful Free Medical Camp. Residents emphasized the importance of extending medical facilities to impoverished and underserved individuals, considering it a commendable step towards healthcare accessibility.

Commandant Thall

Scouts affirmed their commitment to replicating such Free Medical Camps in other regions, echoing the sentiments of providing healthcare facilities to those in need. The event highlighted the dedication of Scouts in contributing to the well-being of the community and addressing the healthcare needs of the less privileged.

Reforms in tax sector discussed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq and Chief Commissioner, Regional Tax Office Peshawar Zafar Iqbal have agreed to hold an open forum at chamber level that would aimed at resolving the problems of the business community at their doorstep.

According to the details, an important meeting between SCCI president Fuad Ishaq and Chief Commissioner RTO Peshawar Zafar Iqbal held at the regional tax office, said a press release here on Friday.

The meeting was attended by SCCI senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ijaz Khan Afridi, Commissioner Inland Revenue RTO Peshawar Dr Syed Farooq

Jamil, and Additional Commissioner Audit RTO Peshawar Fazli Malik.

During the meeting, the participants thoroughly discussed reforms in the tax system, reduction in tax rates and holding of an open forum at the chamber level for immediate resolution of taxpayers' problems. On this occasion, the SCCI chief expressed his satisfaction with the tax officers for facilitating the business community.

Fuad Ishaq made several suggestions regarding reforms in the tax system, simplifying the tax system and solving the problems faced by the taxpayers, on which the Chief Commissioner Regional Tax Office Peshawar Zafar Iqbal and other senior officers fully agreed.

The chamber president emphasized that the gov-

ernment and the FBR should take effective measures to widen the existing tax base and simplify the tax system. He demanded for provision of facilities and relief to the business community and implementation of business-friendly policies.

Fuad Ishaq said that the business community is facing difficulties in the present situation and stressed that serious measures should be taken to solve their problems. Later, Chief Commissioner RTO Peshawar Zafar Iqbal while talking about the recommendations presented by the SCCI chief Fuad Ishaq and other members of the delegation, assured that the RTO Peshawar will take all possible steps to solve the problems of the business community.

Iran's unprovoked airspace violation of Pak airspace flayed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party strongly condemned Iran's unprovoked violation of Pakistan's airspace, terming it an irresponsible and reprehensible act which would sabotage the possibilities of much-needed unity among the Muslim Ummah at this hour of need.

In a statement issued here on Friday, Shah said there will be no compromise on Pakistan's national security and territorial integrity and vowed to stand by the government of Pakistan, state and its nation against Iran's aggressive act. He added the attack on Pakistan's integrity and aggression 'intolerable'.

The Islamic Republic of Iran should act responsibly and avoid treating cruelty with people from pushing the region into a new war, Shah asserted.

He was of the view that wars bring extreme negative impacts on human lives. Poverty, unrest and deprivations would further increase, he added. Shah asked Iran shouldn't put pressure on other Islamic states globally. The ATP leader said Pakistan has always adopted a restraint policy, and demonstrated patience and endurance and talked about peace and stability, and it should never be meant to attack its integrity.

He went on to say that national security policy is equal for all and ATP will give due respect and consider it "Primogenial". "We support all acts of Pakistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, and state" that had been taken after

the unprovoked airspace violence by Iran in which martyred two children". The party leader expressed heartfelt sympathy and condolences with martyred children and their bereaved families.

He said people have been enraged by the irresponsible act of Iran so it should tender an apology at international level and compensate for this major mistake. Shah called upon Turkey, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other countries to come forward and to jointly remove the growing apprehensions of unrest and tension and prevent this region from new war. He made it clear that we are fond of peace and struggling for improvement in the political system and bringing economic stability and will never support any policy against the state.



PESHAWAR: Senior ANP leader Ghulam Ahmad Bilour and others addressing during public gathering.



In brief

3 shot dead over children conflict

PISHIN (INP): An accused gunned down three including father and two sons over children conflict and attempted suicide with same weapon here on Friday. According to details, the incident took place in Lamaran area of Pishin where an accused shot death three including father and two sons over dispute among the children. The culprit attempted to suicide with same weapon after committing triple murder and hospitalized in serious condition. The bodies were shifted to hospital and later handed over to heirs after legal formalities. The police registered a case into the incident and started an investigation.

Two killed, cop martyred

GUJRANWALA (INP): Two people were killed and a cop martyred in armed clash between two rival groups in Gondalanwala area of Gujranwala on Friday. According to details, the incident took place in Aroop police station jurisdiction where two groups which were in old dispute were called for settlement of the issues. After exchange of hot words, members of Awan Group started firing killing two members of the rival group including Naeem and Azeem. The fleeing culprits crushed to death Constable Akram under their vehicle when he attempted to catch them. The martyred cop was serving with SP Soddar. The bodies were shifted to hospital and police after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest the culprits.

Action against profiteers

SUKKUR (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Sukkur, Fayyaz Hussain Mahehar on Friday directed to intensify the crackdown against profit-teers and hoarders across the district. Chairing a meeting at his office, he said that profiteers and hoarders should be dealt with iron hand under the law. The DC also reviewed the prices and availability of food items in the district and directed for mobilizing Price Control Magistrates in the field to ensure the availability of essential items at fixed rates. He said that price lists should be prominently displayed on all shops in markets and bazaars. The DC said that in order to stabilize the prices of vegetables and fruits, the Assistant Commissioners should visit vegetable markets regularly.

Man killed in road mishap

SARGODHA (INP): A man was killed in road accident near Chak 132-NB under the jurisdiction of Silanwali police station here on Friday. Police spokesperson said that Qadir Iqbal (44) r/o Chak 132-NB was travelling to Silanwali on his motorcycle when all of a sudden his bike hit with a speeding truck near 29 Phatak which resulted into his on the spot death. Police concerned and Rescue 1122 teams reached the spot, shifted the body to hospital for necessary legal formalities. Further investigation was under way.

Passengers hurt

PATTOKI (INP): At least 12 passengers were injured when a speeding passenger bus overturned after hitting a green belt on a road near Multan Road Pattoki on Friday. According to Rescue 1122, the accident occurred near Pattoki where a passenger bus overturned, injuring twelve passengers. The ill-fated bus was heading to Khanewal from Lahore, a private news channel reported.

PTI face internal rifts in Lower Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Pakistan Tahreek Insaf nominated candidates in the Lower Dir district are facing difficulty in almost all constituencies as some of the party's genuine activists are also in the field.

The PK 15 workers in the Asbanr area have announced that they would never vote for the party nominated candidate, former MPA Humayun Khan. They made the announcement during a function held at Asbanr here the other day with the independent candidate for PK 15 Rashid Khan in the chair. Dozens of the PTI workers from the area attended the function. Speaking on the occasion the PTI senior activists Hawa Khan, Pervez Khan, Sardar Khan, Zahid Khan and others said that Rashid Khan was their genuine candidate and all the PTI workers would fully support him.

They said the PTI former MPA Humayun Khan had ignored the party workers during the last five years and he had no right to be awarded a party ticket again. The speakers alleged that Humayun Khan had also included his son Khuram Shahzad in the list of candidates for PK 15 and he would seek votes for his son as he [Humayun Khan] had reportedly withdrawn from the run. Three activists of the PTI including former MPA Humayun Khan, Rashid Khan and Farooq ur Rehman are in the run in PK 15 Adenzai.

They demanded the party chairman barister Gauhar Khan to clarify the situation or they would be free to vote for Rashid Khan. Three workers including former MPA Muhammad Azam Khan, PTI former district president Ghulam Hussain and Azhar Taqveem are in the run for PK 14. The party has awarded a ticket to former MPA Azam Khan in this constituency.

In PK 16, the party has awarded a ticket to its former MPA Shafiullah Khan but two other strong party workers including Muhammad Inam Khan and Syed Alam Shah have also announced to contest the Feb 8 polls at any cost. In PK 17, four PTI activists including Ubaid ur Rehman, Muhammad Din Jan, Mahboob Yar Khan and Jawad Khan, are in the run. Local party workers are of the view that two of the four candidates including Ubaid ur Rehman and Muhammad Din Jan would contest the polls. The party has awarded a ticket to Ubaid ur Rehman for PK 17.

Similarly in PK 18 the PTI has awarded a ticket to its former MPA Liaqat Ali Khan but he has to face another party activist Malak Abdullah Shah. The party dissident Malak Abdullah Shah has been running his

election campaign in the area and has announced that he would not withdraw from the run.

In NA 6 Lower Dir, there are two strong candidates of the PTI including former MNA Muhammad Bashir Khan and Ali Shah Mishwani in the run. The party has awarded its ticket to Muhammad Bashir Khan but Ali Shah Mishwani is also in the field. The PTI has awarded its ticket to Mehboob Shah for NA 7 but another party activist Muhammad Inam Khan is also running his election campaign in the constituency. The internal differences in the PTI over the award of tickets in Lower Dir will badly affect the party that had won two national assembly seats and four of the five provincial assembly seats in the 2018 general elections.

Independent withdraws nominations in favour of PTI candidate: The Pakistan Tahreek Insaf activist and independent candidate for PK 14 Arshad Mayar on Friday announced to withdraw his papers in favour of the party nominee former MPA Muhammad Azam Khan. Speaking at a news conference at the Timergara press club, Arshad Mayar said that he decided to withdraw from the contest after a jirga of party elders convinced him to do so.

The PTI nominee and former MPA Muhammad Azam Khan, former MNA and nominated candidate for NA 7 Syed Mahboob Shah, PTI tehsil president Hujaj Khan, general secretary Jamshid Khan and other party workers were also present on the occasion.

Meanwhile the PTI activist Ali Shah Mishwani, who is contesting elections on NA 6 and PK 18, on Friday, asked party activists to vote for him as he was a genuine soldier of Imran Khan. The PTI has awarded its ticket for NA 7 to its former MNA Muhammad Bashir Khan and for PK 18 to former MPA Malik Liaqat Ali.

Mishwani while addressing a workers' convention at Samarbagh said that the PTI leadership had awarded a ticket to him but the decision was changed at the eleventh hour. Hundreds of party workers attended the convention. He said that he had served the party for about 20 years and party workers in the area supported him. He said that he was deprived of the party ticket in 2008, 2013 and 2018 but this time he would not remain silent. The party workers present on the occasion promised him that they would fully support him. Later the workers held a march on the road and chanted slogans in favour of Ali Shah Mishwani and party founder Imran Khan.

Constitutional supremacy key for democracy

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SING: Retired Air Marshal and an independent candidate for National Assembly NA-107 Kamalia Syed Azhar Hussain Shah said that he will continue to serve both the public and state at every cost through constitutional means, on Friday.

This he said while talking to daily The Frontier Post and add that he will continue to serve the people after being elected MNA. I thank the people of the constituency who gave me the opportunity to serve and because of the love people of the constituency participated in the election. He said that the people of the constituency have many problems which are increasing day by day.

The present representatives have not made any

serious efforts to solve the public problems. I will try, solve the public problems immediately. Highlighting the problems of constituency, there are many problems of health and education in remote villages. Inshallah, I will solve all these problems soon after being elected MNA.

Complaint cell to address bad governance: On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sindhu, a meeting was held in the committee room of DC Office under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner General Zeeshan Labha Masih regarding the complaint portal of CM Punjab. In the meeting, all the officers of the administrative and line departments Attended. SNA Mahmood

Ahmed gave a briefing in the meeting with reference to complaints on CM Punjab portal. Additional Deputy Commissioner General Zeeshan Labha Masih said that the performance of all departments and administrative officers was reviewed in the meeting.

Serving the public through CM Portal Complaint Cell is the top priority of Punjab Government. The Additional Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned departments to implement 100% redressal of complaints on the portal account and said that all officers should perform their duties without any delay in redressal of complaints. Actions will be taken against the departments which will not show responsibility.

Six-member bike lifter gang busted in Mansehra

F.P. Report

MANSEHRA: The police busted six-member bike lifter gang and recover over a dozen motorcycles during separate actions in jurisdiction of City Police station Mansehra.

During a media briefing on Friday, SP City Bilal Ahmed said that DPO Mansehra Zahoor Babar Afridi taking notice of surge in motorcycle lifting incident issues special directives in line with which a special team comprising DSP Circle City Javed Khan and SHO City police station Anas Khan

was constituted.

The special team traced and investigated various persons and managed to arrest six-member also including Afghan nationals besides recovering 13 stolen motorcycles worth hundreds of thousands rupees from their possession.

The detainees included Sadher s/o Muhammad Ayub hailing from Hangu currently residing in Pano Dheri, Abdullah s/o Behram resident of Pakhwal Chowk, Wali Muhammad and Ali Muhammad s/o Allah

Dad belonging to Pakhwal Chowk area, Shehzad s/o Muhammad Aslam hailing from Batta Kundi and Sumeer Saeed belonging to Oghi area.

The nabbed bike lifters in the preliminary investigations have admitted of selling the stolen motorcycles in other provinces. The SP City said that police was in contact with police of other provinces and bikes stolen in other provinces will also be recovered soon. He said that the recovered bikes would be handed over to their owners after legal formalities.



PABBI: ANP leader Mian Iftikhar inaugurating elections office at Tarkha area. — F.P. photo

PPP activists to welcome Bilawal

F.P. Report

PABBI: Hundreds of activists from Pabbi tehsil will welcome Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on his visit to Peshawar while a contingent of 100 vehicles were participate in the gathering.

This was claimed by PPP provincial vice president Engineer Muhammad Tariq, Pabbi president Muhammad Ilyas, NA34 candidate Muhammad Idress, PK89 Munawar Kamal and PK87 candidate Abdullah Ishaq while briefing media personnel.

In this regard a meeting was held at the residence of PPP Pabbi general secretary Rizwan Ullah at Akbarpura and argued party's activists for propagation of narrative among public to ensure maximum participation in the Peshawar gathering.

Barikot Press Club elects new cabinet

F.P. Report

BARIKOT: Barikot Press Club (BPC) elected new cabinet including Khalil-ur-Rehman as president and Muzaffar Shah as general secretary for 2024, on Friday. According to details, Assistant Commissioner Barikot Munawar Shah served as Presiding Officer, Sub-divisional Police Officer Ihsanullah as Assistant Presiding Officer and Tehsil Municipal Officer Anwar Sadat Khan as took responsibility as Assistant during BPC elections.

BPC cabinet comprising of vice president Zahir Shah Kamal, senior vice president Asadullah Khan, deputy general secretary Wajid Khan, finance secretary Bakht Ravan, press secretary Riaz Ahmad and Dr. Zakir Muhammad elected as Chairman Executive Committee.

During the polling civil society member Engineer Sharafat Ali, Shah Hussain Bacha, Noor Salam Bacha advocate, Traffic In-charge Ismail Khan, Noor Zaman Khan and Umar Zeb Sultankhel along with others were present.

Motorcyclist killed

FAISALABAD (INP): A motorcyclist was killed in a road accident in the area of Chak Jhumra police station.

Rescue 1122 spokesman said that motorcyclist Nadir Ali (35), resident of Chak No.202-RB Bhaiwala, was on his way when a speeding van hit him severely near Chak No. 188-RB. Consequently, the two-wheeler received serious injuries and died on the spot. The police took the body into custody and started investigation, he added.

Ex-minister allegedly 'picked up' outside court

FAISALABAD (INP): Former provincial minister Khyal Ahmed Castro was picked up by unknown persons outside the cassation court on Friday.

A video of Khyal Castro being taken outside the court has surfaced. Khyal Castro is a former provincial minister and PTI-backed candidate from PP-118. An elder brother of the Khyal Kastro published a video claiming his younger brother was picked up outside the court.

Balanced system imperative: Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Acting President Dr Sajjad Arshad has stressed a comprehensive and balanced system covering all segments of agriculture and protecting financial interest of all concerned to enhance agricultural productivity and value addition.

He was addressing the concluding session of a seminar, organised by the National Productivity Organisation (NPO) on the topic of "Innovative business opportunities through business ties with Thailand" here on Friday. He said that being an agrarian economy, country's progress and prosperity was directly linked with the sector. He mentioned his visit to Hunza and said that there was excellent quality of apricot. They said they had been given proper training to plant apricot trees, har-

vesting and their dehydration. They said they were earlier selling apricot for Rs. 200 per kg, but after its dehydration, they were exporting it for Rs. 2,000 per kg.

Dr Sajjad said proper awareness and training should be provided about the entire chain of fruits and vegetables from their production, harvesting, dehydration and export with potential markets, etc. "They should also know that from where they could fetch maximum profit of their product," he said and stressed the need for close liaison between all segments of the production chain.

He said that generally isolated decisions were made which benefit one segment at the cost of another. He further said that bumper maize crop was harvested this year and Pakistan exported maize of \$265 million against \$85 million exports last year.

About soybean, the FCCI official said the local researchers had developed two varieties of soybean, while 50 per cent of the poultry industry was closed due to a ban on import of the commodity.

He said people also suffered a lot as the prices of chicken and eggs almost doubled due to the mismanagement at the highest level. He said that being patriotic Pakistanis, people should discourage imports

as new jobs were not created through the arrangement. He said special measures should be taken to inform growers when and which crop was needed with its well-defined quantity and the job should be entrusted to the agriculture officers of the extension department. He said the government incentivised the growers by enhancing minimum support price of wheat at Rs. 4,000 per maund and as a result we are expecting maximum yield. He said dehydration of fruits and crops would certainly increase profitability of farmers, but they must be given accurate and authentic information by publishing relevant material in easy urdu.

Earlier, NPO Deputy Manager Fahad Imtiaz stressed the need to enhance production and quality of the products to market it at the global level after its dehydration. He said growers could benefit from successful experiment of Thailand in the specific field.

Later, Dr Sajjad Arshad presented the FCCI shield to Wajah A Abbasi, General Manager NPO, who also reciprocated and gave away the NPO insignia to Haji Muhammad Aslam Bhalli, Vice President FCCI. Qayyum, Muhammad Asif and other speakers also addressed the different sessions of the seminar.

Balochistan CM reviews polls 2024 arrangements

F.P. Report

QUETTA: A high-level meeting was held here under the chairmanship of Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki at the CM Secretariat for conducting free, fair and peaceful general elections 2024 in Balochistan.

Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs Zahid Saleem, secretaries of different aligned departments and divisional Commissioners were present in the meeting. The meeting was briefed that eight thousand CCTV cam-

eras would be installed at sensitive and highly sensitive polling stations. Arrangements are being made for the deployment of police and levies personnel as required.

The meeting was further informed that delivery of election material to remote and inaccessible areas will be done by helicopter, while heavy machinery will be available in the respective hilly districts in case of possible snowfall in Ziarat and other winter areas. "The steps taken so far regarding the election are satisfactory, caretaker Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki said

while expressing his satisfaction over the polls arrangements.

He however directed the authorities concerned to take more concrete steps for the conduct of fair, free and peaceful elections. The genuine concerns of the candidates and the people related to the election should be resolved immediately, the Caretaker Chief Minister said adding that a favourable atmosphere should be established for the people to exercise their right to vote. Complaints of people should be resolved immediately so that problems do not hamper the peaceful conduct of polls, he maintained.

Departments to actively check bonded labour, child trafficking

DERA GHAZI KHAN (APP): Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue (ADCR) Mian Rizwan Nazir ordered labour and other relevant departments to perform duty actively to check child trafficking and labour, bonded labour, and ensure payment of minimum wages as per law to labourers and workers.

Presiding over a meeting of the district vigilance committee on labour here Friday, the official said that the provincial government has introduced revolutionary laws to check bonded

labour and payment of wages to workers and it was their duty to ensure the law is enforced in support of the poor working-class people. "Every individual is free in this modern era and no one can force anyone to do labour against his/her will," the ADCR said.

He said that the minimum wages announced by the government for workers of brick kilns, factories and mega industrial units was Rs 32000 per month and labour and other relevant departments must ensure its

flawless enforcement besides checking child smuggling and bonded labour effectively. Violators would be made to face the law of the land, he warned.

Assistant Director Labour Muhammad Sadiq informed that cases have been got registered against sixteen shopkeepers, 11 of them on a charge of paying low wages and the remaining five on charge of child labour law violation. He said the process of inspections of factories and industrial units was in progress across the district.

Police seizes NCP items

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The district police have foiled a smuggling attempt and seized non-custom paid (NCP) items during the checking of several vehicles here in the limits of Dera Town Police station on Friday.

According to the police

spokesman, Following the directions of District Police Officer Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, a police team of Dera Town Police Station led by SDPO Saddar Circle Saleem Baloch along with SHO Attaulah Khan inspected several vehicles.

During checking, police

recovered NCP items from truck number 8660-DIK including 93 sacks of parachute cloth, 13 sacks of China salt and 04 tyres. The estimated worth of the recovered goods was around Rs 6.5 million which was later handed over to the customs authorities for further legal action.



MINGORA: PML-N leader Amir Muqam addressing public gathering at Charbagh, Swat.



10 civilians dead in suspected Jordanian air raids in Syria

DAMASCUS: An estimated 10 civilians have been killed in air strikes targeting the neighbouring towns of Arman and Malh in the southeast Syrian province of Sweida, according to local media. Jordanian forces are believed to be behind attacks, though its government has yet to confirm any involvement.

Sweida 24, a news platform based in its namesake city, said warplanes carried out simultaneous strikes on residential neighbourhoods after midnight local time (21:00 GMT). The attack in Malh caused material damage to some houses. The second strike in Arman, however, collapsed two houses and killed at least 10 civilians, including four women and two girls, both under the age of five.

Jordan is thought to have carried out previous raids in Syria, mostly near the countries' shared border, in an effort to disrupt weapons smuggling and drug-trafficking operations. But inhabitants of the towns struck questioned the choice of targets. "What happened was a massacre against children and women," Murad Al-Abdullah, a resident of Arman, told Al Jazeera. "The air strikes that targeted the villages are far from being identified as fighting drug traffickers." Al-Abdullah said the bombing was not limited to houses of people suspected to be involved in drug trafficking. He noted other homes were damaged as well, terrorising villagers while they were asleep and causing needless civilian deaths. "It is unreasonable for two girls who are no more than five years old to be involved in drug trafficking," al-Abdullah said. Tribes and residents of the villages near the Jordanian border issued separate statements this week disavowing any involvement in drug smuggling.

ttack is believed to be the third time this year that Jordanian planes have carried out air raids on Syrian territory. A previous attack occurred on January 9, resulting in the deaths of three people in the countryside of Sweida, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a London-based rights monitor. The Observatory said that five smugglers were also killed in a border attack on January 7. Fighting that day took place sporadically over 10 hours. By the end of the raid, Jordanian forces had arrested 15 suspects. They also claimed to have recovered 627,000 pills of Captagon, an illicitly manufactured amphetamine, and 3.4kg of cannabis. "What Jordan is doing can certainly delay drug-smuggling operations but unfortunately, cannot stop them completely. The border with Syria is 375km (233 miles) long, and smuggling operations are carried out by professional groups, not some random individuals carrying out bags of drugs to cross the border," said Essam al-Zoubi, a lawyer and human rights activist. Drug enforcement officials in the United States and other Western countries have said that war-torn Syria has become a major hub in the Middle East for the drug trade.

The country, for instance, has become

the primary manufacturer for Captagon, a multibillion-dollar business. Experts have said smugglers are using Jordan as a route through which Syrian drugs can reach the oil-rich Gulf states. Al-Zoubi and other human rights advocates have warned the Syrian government itself is involved in the drug trade, in an effort to shore up its war-drained finances. Reports indicated that the Fourth Armoured Division of the Syrian Army has played a role in overseeing the country's drug operations, alongside the Iran-backed armed group Hezbollah, an ally of the Syrian government. "The officials responsible for drug smuggling in Syria are Hezbollah of Lebanon, the Fourth Division, and the security apparatuses of the Syrian regime that control southern Syria," al-Zoubi said. Jordan and its allies have also taken other approaches to stopping the drug trade. In March last year, for instance, the US Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on six people, including two relatives of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, for their role in producing and trafficking Captagon. Some of those sanctioned had ties to Hezbollah as well. But al-Zoubi warns that even targeted attacks on Syrian drug dealers will not be enough to stop the trade. "It does not matter to the drug officials from Hezbollah or the Fourth Division if traders are killed, as the trades themselves will continue regardless of the people," al-Zoubi said, pointing to an example in May 2023. Jordanian planes, at the time, had carried out air raids in the Sweida countryside, targeting the house of one of the most famous drug traffickers in Syria, Marai al-Ramthan. He was ultimately killed in the attack. But, al-Zoubi said, his death "did not limit drug trafficking but, in fact, increased it". Other smugglers used his demise as an opportunity to expand their trade in his absence.

Omar Idlibi, director of the Doha office at the Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies, said that geopolitical turmoil in the region has also allowed trafficking to flourish. "Drug-smuggling operations to Jordan did not exist before 2018, that is, before the Syrian regime and its Iranian allies regained control of southern Syria from the opposition factions," he told Al Jazeera. Idlibi explained that the launch of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has had a direct effect on the expanding drug operations. As it focused on Ukraine, Russia withdrew some of its troops in Syria, allowing Iranian militias and Hezbollah forces to spread. Those groups then turned some of the Syrian army's headquarters into logistical centres for the manufacture, transport and smuggling of drugs to Jordan. Russia's need for military equipment from Iran also prompted it to turn a blind eye to the drug-smuggling activity in Syria, Idlibi explained. "Everyone knows that the Syrian regime and Iran are behind the terrorist activity on the Syrian-Jordanian border, and unless it is terminated from the source, it will continue at different rates," Idlibi said. — Aljazeera

Head of Russian region denounces ‘traitors’

MOSCOW (Reuters): The head of one of Russia's biggest ethnically mixed republics accused what he called extremists and traitors of trying to bring about its secession, a day after police used tear gas and batons to break up a rare demonstration. The clashes took place in a small town in Bashkortostan, a republic of 4.1 million people in the Urals Mountains, where a leading rights activist was sentenced to four years in a penal colony.

The activist, Fail Alsynov, had led successful protests in 2020 against plans to mine for soda on a hill that local people consider sacred, and was head of a banned nationalist movement. He denied the charge against him of inciting ethnic hatred. Bashkortostan's leader, Radiy Khabirov, said that he himself may have been at fault in the past for failing to explain to people that what he described as extremists in the region were masquerading as activists. "You can put on

the mask of a good environmental activist, a patriot, but in reality the situation is completely different," he said in a statement on Telegram.

"A group of people, some of whom are abroad and who are essentially traitors, are calling for the separation of Bashkortostan from Russia. They are calling for guerrilla warfare here." Among the alleged traitors he named Ruslan Gabbasov, a co-founder with Alsynov of the banned Bashkort movement. Gabbasov has been labelled a "foreign agent" by Russia and now lives in Lithuania. Gabbasov told Reuters in a telephone interview that the grievances of ethnic Bashkir people, who make up just over 30% of the republic's population, were driven by the policies of Russian President Vladimir Putin that had eroded the status of their own language and culture. He said they were also angry over the environmental impact of mining operations and the disproportion-

NK threat could change ‘drastically’ given Russia cooperation

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The nature of the security threat posed by North Korea could change "drastically" in the coming decade as a result of its unprecedented cooperation with Russia, the White House's senior director for arms control Pranay Vaddi said. "What we're seeing between Russia and North Korea is an unprecedented level of cooperation in the military sphere," Vaddi told Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank.

"And I say unprecedented very deliberately - We have never seen this before," Vaddi said it was necessary to pay close attention not just to nuclear-armed North Korea's help for Russia war in Ukraine, primarily in the form of missile systems, but "what could be going in the other direction as well." "How could that improve North Korea's capabilities? And what does that mean for our own extended deterrence posture in the region with both Korea and Japan?" "I think the nature of North Korea as a threat in the region could drastically change over the coming decade as a result of this cooperation," Vaddi said. Vaddi said the United States would continue to work with South Korea to make sure their combined "extended deterrence" was as credible as possible in the face of the evolving North Korea threat - a reference to the US "nuclear umbrella" protecting allies.

Asked how much of a worry it was that such allies would pursue their own nuclear defense capabilities in the face of the growing North Korean threat, Vaddi said: "We want to make sure that the US nuclear umbrella system as it has existed remains sufficient for deterring threats, including emerging threats that are emanating in Europe and Asia." Russia said it was developing its relations with North Korea in all areas, including "sensitive" ones after the North Korean foreign minister held rare talks in the Kremlin with President Vladimir Putin, who has been invited to visit the reclusive nuclear-armed country. Putin has deepened ties with North Korea since sending troops into Ukraine in 2022, and Washington has condemned what it says have been significant North Korean missile deliveries to Russia, amid concerns that Russia could be sharing weapons technology with Pyongyang in return.

NATO drills to start next week

BRUSSELS: NATO will launch its largest exercise since the Cold War next week with about 90,000 personnel set to take part in the months-long wargames, the alliance's top commander General Chris Cavoli has said. Cavoli said that the drills would rehearse NATO's execution of its regional plans, the first defence plans the alliance has drawn up in decades, detailing how it would respond to a Russian attack.

NATO did not mention Russia by name in its announcement. But its top strategic document identifies Moscow as the most significant and direct threat to member states. The alliance also said that taking part will be more than 50 ships, from aircraft carriers to destroyers; more than 80 fighter jets, helicopters and drones; and at least 1,100 combat vehicles, including 133 tanks and 533 infantry fighting vehicles.

"Steadfast Defender 2024 will demonstrate NATO's ability to rapidly deploy forces from North America and other parts of the alliance to reinforce the defence of Europe," NATO said. The wargames will contain a "simulated emerging conflict scenario with a near-peer adversary", Cavoli told reporters in Brussels after a two-day meeting of national chiefs of defence. During the second part of the Steadfast Defender exercise, the focus will be on deploying NATO's quick reaction force to Poland. — Aljazeera

Blackouts in Gaza must not be used as ‘weapons of war’

GAZA: A weeklong telecommunications blackout in the Gaza Strip has become a "matter of life and death" and should end immediately, digital civil rights group Access Now says during the longest continuous outage since Israel's war began. "It is unconscionable to toy with connectivity amidst unprecedented violence and unfathomable human suffering," Marwa Fatafta, the group's policy and advocacy director for the Middle East and North Africa, said in a statement.

"Internet shutdowns must not be used as weapons of war. Access Now continues to call for an immediate physical and digital ceasefire and for the full restoration of telecommunications services in the Gaza Strip." Palestinian internet service provider Paltel announced the complete loss of all telecommunications services in Gaza "due to the ongoing aggression" on January 12. Cloudflare Radar's data confirmed a drastic drop in traffic. The watchdog NetBlocks, which monitors cybersecurity and the governance of the internet, said the incident had passed the 144-hour mark. "The disruption is the ninth and longest sustained telecoms outage since the onset of the present conflict with Israel," it said on the social media platform X.

Internet shutdowns have hampered the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza's 2.3 million people, 85 percent of whom are internally displaced. The outages also have made it extremely challenging to document and share information about what is happening on the ground. Since the beginning of the war on October 7, internet traffic in the Gaza Strip has undergone multiple blackouts and shutdowns. Repair crews have had trouble reaching damaged sites during heavy Israeli bombardments and have at times taken significant personal risks to restore connections. Access Now said it found the outages across Gaza resulted from a combination of direct attacks on civilian telecommunications infrastructure, restrictions on access to electricity and technical disruptions to telecommunications services.

The blackouts have occurred as Israel has carried out a devastating bombardment of Gaza, killing at least 24,620 people and wounding 61,830, according to Palestinian authorities. Access Now found air strikes by Israeli forces on October 9 destroyed a building containing both offices and infrastructure for Paltel and Jawwal, two of the main telecommunications providers in the Gaza Strip.

Al-Watan Tower, another building that houses media offices and serves as a hub for internet service providers, has also been the target of Israeli air strikes. Israel emerged as one of the world's leading jailers of journalists in 2023, according to a report by a press



freedom watchdog, with the number of reporters behind bars soaring after the start of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

In its annual snapshot of jailed journalists published, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) found that Israel was the joint sixth biggest jailer of journalists in 2023, alongside Iran. There were 17 Palestinian reporters held in Israeli jails as of December 1, the CPJ said. By comparison, the previous year one Palestinian reporter was held in an Israeli prison, according to the New York-based non-profit group. "Israel has appeared several times on CPJ's annual census, but this is the highest number of arrests of Palestinian journalists since CPJ began documenting arrests in 1992 and the first time Israel has ranked among the top six offenders," read the report. All those held in Israeli prisons were detained in the occupied West Bank after the Israel-Hamas war began on October 7, when Hamas fighters launched a surprise assault into southern Israel, killing at least 1,139 people, mostly civilians, according to an Al Jazeera tally based on official statistics. Around 240 others were taken captive, according to Israeli authorities. Israel responded with a devastating bombardment and ground offensive on Gaza. More than 24,600 people have been killed in the Israeli assault, according to Palestinian officials.

In the more than three months since the Gaza war started, violence has soared in towns and cities across the West Bank, with Israeli forces conducting near-daily raids and mass arrests. According to the new report, most of the journalists arrested were held under administrative detention - a practice where Israeli authorities hold detainees without charge or trial for up to six months. The detention can be extended based on "secret evidence" that neither the detainees nor their lawyers are allowed to see. Due to the lack of information on the reason behind the jailing, the CPJ said it

has been difficult to establish why the 17 journalists had been arrested. Several of the reporters' families said they believe they were jailed for messages posted on social media, the report said. The CPJ's list is a snapshot of people incarcerated on December 1, and it does not include those imprisoned or released throughout the year. As of January 17, at least 19 reporters were still in jail, the CPJ said.

The Gaza war has also seen a spike in the number of journalists killed in the region. As of mid-January, 83 reporters have been killed since the start of the conflict. At least 67 were Palestinians, four were Israeli and three were Lebanese, according to the CPJ. Since the start of 2024, the committee recorded that at least six journalists were killed, including Hamza Dahdouh, the eldest son of Al Jazeera's Gaza bureau chief Wael Dahdouh. He was the fourth member of Dahdouh's close family to have been killed in the war. The report found that 320 journalists were in prison worldwide on December 1 of last year, the second-highest number recorded since the committee began documenting arrests in 1992. The total marks a fall from a record global high in 2022 when more than 360 reporters were behind bars. This represents "a disturbing barometer of entrenched authoritarianism and the vitriol of governments determined to smother independent voices", read the report.

"Some governments go a step further, using transnational repression to threaten and harass reporters beyond their own borders," it added. China is the worst offender, with 44 journalists in jail, followed by Myanmar (43) and Belarus (28). More than 65 percent of those listed in the census are accused of spreading false information and of "terrorism in retaliation for their critical coverage". In 66 cases, those held have not yet been told of the charges they are facing, read the report. — Aljazeera

‘Critical failures’ in Uvalde school shooting response: US Justice Dept

WASHINGTON: Police failed in their response to the 2022 elementary school shooting in Uvalde, Texas that killed 19 children and two teachers, according to a US Department of Justice report. The report cited "critical failures" and faulted law enforcement officers for waiting more than an hour to breach the classroom where the 18-year-old gunman was holed up with students and staff, leaving the children inside to make panicked 911 calls.

"The victims and survivors of the mass shooting at Robb Elementary School deserved better," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement. "The law enforcement response at Robb Elementary on May 24, 2022 - and the response by officials in the hours and days after - was a failure." The report released, the most comprehensive federal accounting of the police response to the shooting, identifies a vast array of problems from failed communication and leadership to inadequate technology and training that federal officials say contributed to the crisis lasting far longer than it should have. The report concluded officers should have immediately breached a classroom to stop the shooting, but instead treated the gunman like a barricaded subject and allowed him to remain in a classroom with victims for more than an hour. The report details the results of the department's "Critical Incident Review," of the law enforcement response, a review which began days after the shooting at the request of Uvalde's mayor. The police response to the massacre came under intense criticism following reports that law enforcement waited in a hallway for more than an hour while the gunman remained holed up in a classroom and students made panicked 911 calls.

A US Border Patrol-led tactical team ultimately burst into the classroom and killed the gunman. A July 2022 report from Texas lawmakers described an "atmosphere of chaos" at the scene and concluded that law enforcement "failed to prioritize saving the lives of innocent victims over their own safety". The Justice Department review is aimed at providing an independent analysis and identifying lessons for authorities responding to other mass shootings. The department's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services led the assessment with the help of outside experts in emergency management, active shooter response and school safety. Uvalde, a community of more than 15,000, has continued to struggle with the trauma left by the killing of 21 people - mostly elementary school students, and has remained divided about questions of accountability for officers' actions and inaction.

Uvalde school district officers arrived within three minutes of the gunman's arrival at the school and ran towards the classroom, but as they approached, the gunman fired from inside the classroom. Two officers were hit by shrapnel and police retreated to take cover. "An active shooter with access to victims should never be considered and treated as a barricaded subject," the report says, with the word "never" emphasized in italics. In the 20 months since the Justice Department announced its review, footage showing police waiting in a hallway outside the fourth-grade classrooms where the gunman opened fire has become the target of national criticism. — Aljazeera

France denies Russian claim of mercenaries in Ukraine

PARIS: France has denied Russia's claim that there were French mercenaries in Ukraine after Russia's Ministry of Defence said its troops had killed "foreign fighters" earlier this week. "France helps Ukraine with supplies of military material and military training, in full compliance with international law, in order to help Ukraine in its fight to defend its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity," France's Ministry for Foreign Affairs said.

"France has no mercenaries, neither in Ukraine nor elsewhere, unlike certain others," it added. Russia also summoned French ambassador to Moscow, Pierre Levy, to its foreign ministry regarding the alleged French mercenaries, Russian state news agency TASS reported. "In connection with the destruction by the Russian armed forces of a temporary deployment point of foreign fighters in Kharkiv, among whom were several dozen Frenchmen, the French ambassador has been summoned to the Foreign Ministry," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova was cited as saying.

Moscow said that its forces had carried out a strike a day earlier on a building in Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv. "On the evening of 16 January, the armed forces of the Russian Federation carried out a precision strike on a temporary deployment point of foreign militants in the city of Kharkiv, the core of which were French mercenaries," Russia's Ministry of Defence said in a state-

ment. It said the building was destroyed and more than 60 people were killed, though it did not provide evidence for the claim. After strike on the Ukrainian city, Kharkiv region governor Oleh Syniehubov said there were no military targets in the area that Russia hit. Local authorities said that 17 civilians were wounded in the attack. The chief of NATO's military committee, Dutch Admiral Rob Bauer, criticised Russia's recent attacks in Ukraine. "While Russia's most recent attacks are devastating, they are not militarily effective," he said.

Bauer added that the war had reached a relative stalemate, and the conflict was in a phase where it was "not moving a lot". "We should not expect a miracle happening on either side," he added. Ukraine also

warned that the country was facing an ammunition shortage as its war with Russia nears the two-year mark. "A shortage of ammunition is a very real and pressing problem that our armed forces are facing," Ukrainian Defence Minister Rustem Umerov said on the social media platform X. "The artillery coalition is aimed at solving this issue," he said after speaking by video link to the Ramstein contact group, which gathers more than 50 countries supporting Ukraine. "We need to strengthen Ukrainian defence capabilities to protect the free world against Russian evil," he added. The meeting came as Russia claimed its forces had pushed Ukrainian troops out of Vesele, a village near the city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine. — Aljazeera

Australia rejects China comments on sonar incident

SYDNEY (Reuters): Australia rejected comments by China's ambassador seeking to deflect blame from China's navy for the injury of Australian military divers in an incident near Japan in November. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he was "not swayed" by Chinese ambassador Xiao Qian's comment a day earlier that a Chinese navy ship didn't use its sonar while Australian divers were in the water, and a Japanese boat could have been the source.

Albanese said in November a Chinese warship acted in a dangerous manner by using its sonar

during an incident with an Australian navy vessel in Japan's waters that injured military divers who were clearing fishing nets from its propellers, and the incident had damaged ties. China has previously rejected Australia's description of the incident, and at an annual press briefing, Xiao said China "didn't initiate sonar", adding there was a Japanese navy boat nearby. "Whether there was sonar from the other party, we don't know," he told reporters. Albanese said, "I think it is very clear what occurred." "I stand by the comments I made at the time, that it was wrong, that

it shouldn't have occurred," he said in a media briefing. Australia has said medical assessments found minor injuries to the divers involved were likely caused by the Chinese destroyer's sonar. Japan's embassy in Australia said it didn't know what Xiao said.

"Generally speaking, however, Japan and Australia as the core of a partnership of like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific region, unambiguously abide by the rule of law and have been promoting security cooperation across a wide range of areas," an embassy spokesman said in a statement.

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Pakistan's unceasing economic ailment

PAKISTAN has recently received a \$700 million loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The second tranche of the loan was approved by the IMF Executive Board after a successful review of the first installment, bringing the total disbursements under the \$3 billion Standby Arrangement (SBA) to about \$1.9 billion. The debt-ridden South Asian economy is currently running on an ad-hoc basis by the caretaker setup until the transition of power to the publicly elected leadership by the end of the next month. Due to the unique political situation, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) faces tough choices on how to assess Pakistan's debt situation and how to deal with the country in the aftermath of the February 8 elections. At the moment, Pakistan's economy needs periodic injections of bulk finances to address its acute fiscal volatility and tackle long-standing economic issues on a sustainable basis. To secure the bailout, Pakistan had implemented tough IMF-proposed measures including a sharp revamped budget, a record hike in interest rates, and painful increases in electricity and gas prices. In addition, the IMF asked Pakistan to raise \$1.34 billion in new taxation to meet monetary adjustments, the measures that sparked headline inflation to 38 percent, which still hovers at 30 percent or above.

Historically, Pakistan faces a shortage of funds dearly needed to pay its import bill, repay its foreign debts, and maintain a minimum threshold of foreign reserves at the national level. Previously, the country fulfilled its urgent fiscal needs through the IMF's \$3 billion Standby Arrangement and crucial assistance from friendly nations including Saudi Arabia, China, the UAE, and Qatar to bridge the financial gap. However, the newly elected government would face similar challenges after assuming office, while no leader has the plan to get rid of the loan trap and steer the country out of persistent economic ailment through alternative arrangements by using national resources, exploration of minerals, oil deposit and investment in human capitals, etc.

Since liberating from British colonial rule in August 1927, Pakistan has sought IMF bailouts 23 times in the past 75 years, reflecting the high unpredictability and continuous unsustainability of its economy. The cyclical nature of seeking IMF assistance highlights the intricacies of managing Pakistan's economic affairs, a lack of fiscal discipline, and the imbalance in government revenue and public spending. The delicate balance between external assistance and long-term economic independence remains a major challenge for Pakistani economists to chart a sustainable path forward and adhere to it strictly.

In fact, the IMF's programs have serious repercussions for the South Asian economy, specifically, concerning rising inflation, poverty, unemployment, low growth, and balance of payment problems. The IMF loans often lead to foreign dictation, cause a policy conflict, and impact domestic growth creating long-term dependency on global lenders. Unfortunately, Pakistani economists failed to address structural and management problems that led to unceasing unsustainability and periodic collapse of the national economy over the past decades.

There is a dire need for a national debate of the political leadership, economists, and civil society to deliberate on the real circumstances that caught the country into a cyclical paranormal comprising temporary economic gains, bulk circular debt, gradual collapse, and initiation of a begging campaign by the governments at frequent intervals throughout the past. There must be political consensus on the national economy and red lines must be drawn for future political leaders not to detract the national economy through politically motivated economic policies, poisonous subsidies, and use of nepotism in governmental affairs so this nation comes out of persistent economic degradation and moves toward affluence and prosperity.

HEC and conundrum of attestation

THE sub-committee of the Senate Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development held a long session with several state institutions to discuss serious issues faced by overseas Pakistani workers concerning training, certifications and verification of degrees from concerned departments including the Higher Education Commission (HEC), the Foreign Office (FO), the Ministry of Industries and Production (MOIP), Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MOFEPT), National University of Technology (NUTECH), National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), Pakistan Industrial Technical Assistance Center (PITAC), Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MOITT), and Pakistan Institute of Management (PIM).

Degrees, certificates and professional licenses' attestation and verification are very important processes that ensure the authenticity and correctness of academic credentials. The process of degree attestation and verification play an important role in job search and getting employment in the country and abroad because the recruitment agencies and Employer firms wholly rely on degree attestation and verification to confirm the qualifications of potential hires, avoid fraud, and ensure a rightful prospect join their team and contribute to the development and growth of their company.

Historically, Pakistani students and professionals in the country as well as Pakistani overseas workers abroad in the Middle East and Europe face utmost hurdles and suffer long wait for degrees issuance, attestation and verification of their documents at the Higher Education Commission and other departments due to discourteous behavior, bureaucratic attitude and corruption of the low tier officials of those departments. Although, the HEC has made appreciable efforts by launching an online portal for all applicants for permanent data storage, record keeping and the facilitation of the applicants but that same endeavor has become a hindrance due to the non professionalism of HEC officials and no supervision by the senior executives. There is no time frame for HEC response for review of online application, scan of resubmitted application and redressal of queries. The urgent cases take months and no time limit has been set for routine applications and resolution of issues adding to anxiety and problems of the public. Similarly, Universities, colleges and other technical institutions have laid down a policy for degree/ certificate/ license issuance, verification and attestation but the major hurdle has been the fee submission, an early processing of application and dealing with the people sitting abroad or at distant locations within the country. The public institutions must make better use of modern technologies, online resources and telecommunication mediums to the optimum level to provide speedy service delivery and resolution of the public issues. So our fellow citizens and overseas workers do not face any difficulty in getting admission in foreign universities, and employment abroad anywhere in this Universe.

Important Notice

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



The dangers of great power competition for resources

Khaled Abou Zahr

SEMICONDUCTOR metals, almost like nothing else on the planet, act as mirrors to the global geopolitical situation. The decisions made by sovereign states in regard to protecting and maintaining the resilience of their supply chains of these vital raw materials give a clear indication of what to expect in terms of political tensions. They are at the forefront of the soft and bizarre confrontation we are witnessing between China and the US - and consequently the divide between a Western-led world and its challenge by a rising East.

Semiconductors are a necessary component for devices used in communications, computing, healthcare, military systems, transportation, clean energy and countless other applications. Rare earth metals, meanwhile, play a vital role in the fabrication of various systems and devices, especially within the renewable energy sector and green economy, such as solar photovoltaic plants, wind farms, electric vehicles and battery storage.

Consequently, to quote famed investor Warren Buffett: "It's only when the tide goes out that you learn who has been swimming naked." Any shortage or disruption in the supply of either semiconductors or rare earth metals could leave any great power naked. One of the main factors is that semiconductors are not only essential to the development of the new digital economy, but also for defense and security purposes. And to a certain extent, the same applies to rare earth metals.

Taiwan is the dominant semiconductor-producing nation today. And a total of more than 80 percent is produced in Asia. And so, as tensions between the West and China rise, the prospect of a disruption in Taiwanese chip production or a supply chain disruption like we witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic poses significant economic and military risks. Any disturbance in Taiwan's chip production could reverberate across various industries, affecting not only the technology sector but also global manufacturing.

Moreover, a shift in demand for semiconductors

has moved toward what are called graphics processing units, known as GPUs. In short, these units have the necessary specifications for the training of artificial intelligence systems, which are a strategic technology whose use can give superiority on both the military and economic levels. One company has asserted its dominance in the GPU market. This again underscores a concentration, both commercially and geo-

duction, as evidenced by initiatives like the US Chips and Science Act. This 2022 law includes \$39 billion in subsidies for chip manufacturing on US soil, along with 25 percent investment tax credits for the costs of manufacturing equipment and \$13 billion for semiconductor research and workforce training, with the dual aim of strengthening America's supply chain resilience and countering China.

Western governments are attempting to boost domestic chip production, as evidenced by initiatives like the US Chips and Science Act. This 2022 law includes \$39 billion in subsidies for chip manufacturing on US soil, along with 25 percent investment tax credits for the costs of manufacturing equipment and \$13 billion for semiconductor research and workforce training, with the dual aim of strengthening America's supply chain resilience and countering China. As the Biden administration was gearing up for this legislation, it took other measures to block China's access to microchips. Beijing answered by last year increasing its oversight on the export of two crucial rare earth materials that are essential for the production of computer chips necessary for - among other things - quantum computing.

graphically, which adds to the disruption risks.

As for rare earth metals, concentration is also the rule, with China being the dominant force. It is the primary supplier to the global market, consistently representing 85 percent to 95 percent of the total supply over recent decades. This supremacy has raised apprehensions in the US and Europe regarding the possibility of Beijing withholding access to these crucial materials as a geopolitical tool should political tensions increase.

Hence, governments - recognizing the strategic importance of semiconductors and rare earth metals - are proactively looking for substitutes, or at least a way to diversify and mitigate their risks. Western governments are attempting to boost domestic chip pro-

duction, as evidenced by initiatives like the US Chips and Science Act. This 2022 law includes \$39 billion in subsidies for chip manufacturing on US soil, along with 25 percent investment tax credits for the costs of manufacturing equipment and \$13 billion for semiconductor research and workforce training, with the dual aim of strengthening America's supply chain resilience and countering China. As the Biden administration was gearing up for this legislation, it took other measures to block China's access to microchips. Beijing answered by last year increasing its oversight on the export of two crucial rare earth materials that are essential for the production of computer chips necessary for - among other things - quantum computing. It instituted mandatory special licenses for the export of gallium and germanium. This blocking of rare earth metals had not been seen since 2010, when China and Japan were involved in a heated territorial dispute. For Japan, diversification of its supply with the help of Australia was the answer.

This reflects a new broader and dynamic situation in which nations vie

for semiconductor dominance, acknowledging these technologies as crucial to economic strength and national security. This is especially true and clear within the competition in AI systems. In essence, semiconductors and rare earth metals have transcended their technological role, becoming pivotal instruments in shaping the world's geopolitical landscape and great power competition. This means that, whether on semiconductors or rare earth metals, governments cannot depend on anyone - not even their friends.

Indeed, the European Commission in November officially inaugurated the Chips Joint Undertaking to bolster the European semiconductor ecosystem and enhance technological leadership. This initiative aims to bridge the gap between research, innovation and production, facilitating the commercialization of groundbreaking ideas. With an anticipated budget of nearly 11 billion (\$11.9 billion) by 2030 from the EU and participating states, the Chips Joint Undertaking will manage the Chips for Europe Initiative, supporting pre-commercial pilot lines, a cloud-based design platform, quantum chip technology development and competence center networks to promote skills development.

We live in a complex and quite bizarre situation of both ongoing collaboration and increased confrontational posturing. As a result, we may notice that, beyond a few exceptions, geopolitical incidents have not impacted decision-making within the scope of microchips and rare earth metals. Decisions made in Beijing, Washington or Brussels are mostly about asserting technological and economic dominance or might versus the competitor.

Thus, the key consideration is the pursuit of advanced technology to outpace the adversary, coupled with a strategic emphasis on diversifying the supply chain. This approach also clearly aims to avoid dependency in the event of a genuine confrontation. Yet, this also means that all powers are now putting the risk of such a confrontation at a much higher level.

Chinese economy still has much potential

Dan Steinbock

LAST year, international observers accused China of spreading global inflation and deflation, and causing economic collapse. In reality, the Chinese economy has achieved a soft rebound despite the dire global economic landscape.

As global business and political leaders swarmed to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Premier Li Qiang took the podium to tell the world that the Chinese economy rebounded and moved upward in 2023. The Chinese economy, in fact, grew by about 5.2 percent last year - at a slightly higher rate than the official target of "around 5 percent". And, as Li said, no matter how the global situation changes, China will adhere to its fundamental policy of opening-up, and keeping opening its door wider and wider. In the fourth quarter of 2023, China's GDP growth reached 5.2 percent. While retail sales in December grew by 7.4 percent year-on-year, consumers remained cost-conscious despite gradually returning to the marketplace.

However, the Spring Festival holiday is likely to generate "9 billion passenger trips", which will accelerate growth in the retail, tourism and transportation sectors. As a matter of fact, there is significant pent-up demand in China. The need is to unleash that consumption power, and the first condition is a promising job market outlook.

According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, the surveyed unemployment rate in cities in December was 5.1 percent. Also, industrial activities are picking up, with industrial production in December increasing by 6.8 percent year-on-year, thus beating forecasts. The same goes for fixed asset investment, which increased by 3 percent in 2023, slightly above the predicted increase.

Importantly, there is also broad expectation for targeted fiscal support. And in light of the raised real interest rates, there is still room for rate cuts. When will they come? The 10-year real yield of China is still higher than the US, where policy rates remain high due to perceived inflation concerns. As the US Federal Reserve is likely to enter the rate cut cycle later this year, China's cuts may ensue. That's why China's top leader put emphasis on making sustained efforts to develop the country's "financial power" so as to build a safe, efficient and internationally competitive financial system. As Premier Li noted at Davos, China has now some 400 million people in the middle-income group, and that number is expected to double to 800 million in the next decade. In contrast, in the past four decades, the real income of the middle-class in the US has largely stagnated, with the situation in the European Union not being dissimilar.

As Li said at Davos, in the next decade, urbanization in China will create huge demand in sectors such as housing, education, healthcare and elder-

care. And another 300 million people are expected to migrate from rural to urban areas in China and thus boost the secular potential for investments in upgrading the urban transport and telecom infrastructure, creating new opportunities for domestic and international financial institutions. After several years of deleveraging in the real estate sector, the Chinese economy seems to have made a soft landing which bodes well for a soft economic rebound in 2024. The full recovery of the property market will take time, though. The tier-one high-income mega-cities are usually able to borrow more to support local development, while relatively low-income cities are constrained by aggressive public finance. As Standard & Poor's Global Ratings report said, the Chinese property sector, though evolving, seems to have steadied and struck a balance. At the same time, China has shifted from exports- and investment-driven growth to high-quality development driven by consumption and innovation, a massive process that took a century or so for the West, but just few decades for China.

In the mid-2000s, steel production growth peaked at 30 percent; today, it is decelerating into negative territory. In two to three decades, China has moved from catching up with the West to becoming a leader in cutting-edge technologies and innovations. For instance, China is a leader in electric vehicles (EVs), both in terms of production and consumption. The county's already booming EV sales is much higher than that of the US and other adopters of EVs. Accordingly, economic reforms are likely to shift away from the supply side to the demand side. To expedite this transition, policymakers are likely to focus increasingly on the constraints of human capital rather than infrastructure, which worked in the past. These changes require parallel reforms and support, particularly in the property, education and healthcare sectors. However, unfinished housing units, local government debt and geopolitical challenges remain risks this year. The first two could now be regarded as soft risks; but the third is a black swan, highly consequential, yet unpredictable.

Perhaps that's why just a month ago, Gita Gopinath, deputy chief of the International Monetary Fund, asked whether the international community is on the brink of "Cold War II". The challenging external headwinds reflect some moderation as for now.

But as long as the West's geopolitical unilateralism and trade protectionism prevail, global recovery will remain constrained by downside risks and the potential for new and ever-more destructive, unwarranted wars. As China's massive transition and the West's secular stagnation suggest, what the world needs is peace and economic development, not economic unilateralism and geopolitical friction.

The China Daily

Europe must prepare for worst-case scenarios

Andrew Hammond

RECENT global shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Ukraine war, have impacted Europe perhaps more than any other continent. So much so that the period since 2020 is now sometimes seen as a new time of troubles.

However, even bigger political and economic shocks may be to come during the rest of the decade. This view was outlined on Tuesday by Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, whose country currently holds the EU's rotating presidency. Following Donald Trump's victory on Monday in the Iowa Republican caucus, De Croo warned that, "if 2024 brings us 'America First' again, it will be more than ever Europe on its own." However, he went on to say that Europeans "should not fear that prospect. We should embrace it by putting Europe on a more solid footing - stronger, more sovereign, more self-reliant."

What De Croo highlights here is the need for the EU specifically - and possibly Europe at large - to use 2024 to plan ahead for what could be another tumultuous period. With regard to Trump, there are concerns in Europe that, if he gets a second term as US president, he could try to withdraw the country from NATO, which underpins European security, and end its support for Ukraine in the war against Russia. However, the range of economic and political issues of concern goes well beyond Trump, meaning key European decision-makers are looking ahead to a more holistic range of issues in the period to 2030. This period covers not only the next term of the European Commission, but also the next UK parliament, the US presidency, a Russian presidential term and also the current term of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

In thinking through these 2030 scenarios, the core uncertainties likely to have

the most impact in shaping Europe's future at a genuinely historic time are at least twofold. A first key question is whether the geopolitical context will worsen or improve for Europe in the period to 2030. Following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, much depends on the future foreign policy not just of Moscow, but also other nations, including the US and China. A second question is whether the EU and Europe more broadly can boost their economic competitiveness and close the growth gap with the US. In 2008, the EU's economy was larger than that of the US: \$16.2 trillion versus \$14.7 trillion. By 2022, however, the US economy had grown to more than \$25 trillion, whereas the combined EU and post-Brexit UK economies had only reached \$19.8 trillion. As Christian Ulbrich, the CEO of global real estate services firm JLL,

has said: Europe's "wealth is melting away at rapid speed" and there is a pressing need for key reforms. Much uncertainty remains about the overall fortunes of the EU in the years ahead and it is particularly hard to ascertain the future economic trajectory of the bloc. What is for sure, however, is that the geopolitical context outside of Europe is unlikely to improve significantly from where it is today - and it may even grow significantly worse. This is probable, whether or not Trump wins the 2024 US presidential election.

In today's increasingly multipolar world order, the revisionist powers of Russia and China are flexing their muscles. This worries many politicians and, only last month, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius warned of the possibility of further Russian aggression in Europe by 2030.

International Monetary Fund Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath added that the world is heading toward "cold war two." Much more uncertain, however, is whether Europe will be able to recover its competitive economic advantage vis-a-vis the US economy and other world powers in the next five years. This may be possible if the shocks of recent years are not repeated, but there is a significant chance of further turbulence, especially in a more challenging geopolitical context. The problem, as Francois Geerolf of the French Observatory of Economic Conditions asserts, is that, "with each crisis, the eurozone permanently loses a few points of growth to the United States."

But it remains possible that the next few years could see a combination of faster European economic growth and a more challenging international context. This might give rise to a type of "Fortress

Europe" scenario, in which stronger economic growth provides significant new resources to pursue strategic autonomy, which would help enhance EU security. This could include an embryonic EU military - a key project championed by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen when she was German defense minister. However, it is also plausible that, by 2030, a more challenging international context is combined with stagnating European economic growth. This might see the EU lack the huge financial resources needed to pursue an expensive strategic autonomy pathway. Taken together, the period to 2030 will therefore be another highly uncertain one for Europe. While the continent can hope for the best, it urgently needs to build resilience to prepare for the worst so as not to get caught off guard by the economic and political perils that may lie ahead.

Iran seeking to expand its influence in the fog of Gaza war

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

MUCH of the fear expressed early on in Israel's war on Gaza that the conflict could spread has now been realized. Iran, in particular, has launched repeated attacks on its neighbors and beyond. A pattern is developing similar to what we witnessed during the days of the so-called Arab Spring, when Tehran exploited the peaceful protests in Arab countries, at times instigating them, to expand its influence, with considerable success. These actions belie Iran's recently stated commitment to diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of disputes with its neighbors.

Relying on proxies and affiliates, Iran is expanding its sphere of influence through repeated attacks and threats, including in Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Jordan and elsewhere. While some of these attacks could be seen as limited and direct responses to Israeli attacks, many of them are unrelated.

For example, on Monday, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said in a statement that it had launched a missile attack on a "headquarters of Mossad" in the Kurdish region of Iraq. However, the security council of the Kurdish Regional Government rejected that claim. It said that four civilians were killed and six injured after a house was hit in Irbil, the seat of Iraq's Kurdish regional authorities. Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein also rejected Iran's claim that the target attacked was Mossad-linked and said that Tehran was attacking Irbil because it could not confront Israel directly. Iran, he said, was present in Lebanon and Syria, right next to the border with Israel, and it could also attack Israel from Iranian territory with its long-range missiles, but it chose to attack Irbil instead.

The same day, Iran fired ballistic missiles into Aleppo, claiming to target a terrorist group, but without corroboration from independent sources regarding the nature of the target. In Jordan, what are believed to be Iran-supported militias and their affiliated drug traffickers have carried out brazen armed attacks during recent weeks, leading to retaliatory airstrikes by Jordan on their hideouts in Syria. On Tuesday, Iran announced that it had launched a missile and drone attack against suspected terrorist targets in Pakistan. However, Islamabad has rejected the claim, reporting that two children were killed and three more injured in a small village in Balochistan.

In retaliation, Pakistan recalled its ambassador to Iran and blocked Tehran's envoy from returning. On Thursday, it carried out retaliatory military strikes against what it described as "separatist militant hideouts" inside Iran. Iran shares a 900 km border and enjoys normal relations with Pakistan. It could have used diplomatic channels to raise its concerns instead of attacking Pakistani villagers in their homes. Iran's escalation has apparently raised serious concerns in Pakistan. In addition to the military and diplomatic actions taken by Islamabad, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, who is attending the World Economic Forum in Davos, and caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani, who is visiting Uganda, will cut their trips short and return home.

Meanwhile, the US has said that it believes Iran was "deeply involved" in planning the ongoing

operations against commercial vessels in the Red Sea. The US and other international forces operating in the area have repeatedly intercepted Iranian-supplied arms on their way to the Houthis, including a missile cache just last week. In October, the Houthis launched missile and drone attacks against Israel in response to its war on Gaza, but it later began targeting what they believed to be Israeli-bound ships in the Red Sea. While the Houthis' stated objective is to stop the war in Gaza, there is little evidence that their antics have influenced matters there. And since at least Nov. 19, the militia has widened its targets to include other vessels that do not necessarily have any links to Israel.

Further afield, an IRGC commander said in late December that the Mediterranean Sea "could be closed." Iranian media reported, without explaining how that would happen, since Iran has no direct access to the Mediterranean itself. "They shall soon await the closure of the Mediterranean Sea, (the Strait of) Gibraltar and other waterways," the semi-official Tasnim news agency quoted Brig. Gen. Mohammed Reza Naqdi, "coordinating commander" of the IRGC, as saying. At the time, Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group had begun its attacks on merchant vessels sailing through the Red Sea, leading some shipping companies to switch routes. Naqdi talked of "the birth of new powers of resistance and the closure of other waterways." He added that "yesterday," the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz had become "a nightmare for them," and "today, they are trapped ... in the Red Sea."

Many of these attacks and

threats are taking advantage of the devastating war in Gaza, which is now in its fourth month and where the official death count has exceeded 24,000, while the suffering and destruction have surpassed any this region has witnessed before. A key contributing factor has been the failure of the UN Security Council to enforce international law, stop the war and deliver sufficient humanitarian assistance. When Israel is allowed to flout the rules of international law with impunity, with the support or acquiescence of great powers such as the US, UK and Germany, other countries will try to test those rules and do the same. As a result, the longer Israel's naked aggression against Gaza grinds on, the more likely other countries and armed groups are to also take the law into their own hands to expand their influence and settle scores, further destabilizing the region in the process. Similarly, the lax enforcement of the arms embargo imposed on the Houthis by UNSC Resolution 2216 of 2015 has enabled them to build up their offensive capabilities to what we see today, allowing them to flout freedom of navigation.

A restoration of faith and respect for the global rules of conduct and the enforcement of international law is therefore sorely needed. While the US appears to be held hostage by a legacy policy of knee-jerk support for Israel, especially during an election season, other powers, big and small, need to step up to the plate. South Africa has done its part by taking legal action at the International Court of Justice against Israel, first for its actions in the West Bank and now against the war in Gaza, in the hope of stopping the war and providing accountability.

Arab News

US government shutdown threats center around Senate border bill

Aline Barros

AS budget negotiations continue on Capitol Hill, US lawmakers face two government-shutdown deadlines - one on Friday - while trying to agree on separate legislation addressing funding for Ukraine and measures to curb the influx of migrants at the US-Mexico border.

Speaker of the House Mike Johnson and other Republicans have criticized the administration of US President Joe Biden for its immigration policies and said a Senate compromise has no chance of passing their chamber. Biden has called on Congress to authorize \$61 billion in assistance for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan. Conservative Republicans insist this funding must be tied to more robust border security measures to curtail migrant arrivals.

Republicans also say their version of the bill, H.R.2, which passed the Republican-controlled House in 2023 without Democratic support, will prevent hundreds of thousands of migrants - including thousands of unaccompanied children - from crossing the southern US border without authorization. Critics of the House bill disagree. They say that scrapping asylum-like immigration protections is counterproductive and would drive migrants into the hands of smugglers. Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, president and CEO of Global Refugee, formerly known as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, told reporters on Tuesday that although the Biden administration instituted restrictions on asylum last year, federal border officials reported a record number of apprehensions at the southern border in fiscal 2023.

"We've seen kind of daily highs, and I think it's a reflection of the fact that the push factors that so many are fleeing are more powerful," Vignarajah said, referring to the various crises, social problems and persecution that compel people to emigrate. The legislation endorsed by Republicans would increase the requirements that asylum-seekers must meet to establish credible fear in their initial interview. Individuals failing to meet the higher standard would be removed through an expedited removal process to their home countries. US federal law allows people from other countries to seek asylum in the United States if they fear persecution at home. They must be present in the US and prove a fear of persecution on one of five grounds: race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social class, which can include things such as gender or caste. Currently, asylum-seekers must meet three requirements laid out by the United Nation's 1951 Convention on Refugees, which was adopted by the United States. Applicants must prove they have a reasonable fear of persecution in their home country. Reasonable fear is defined by the United Nations as at least a 10% chance of persecution. They must fear persecution on one of five grounds and prove the government of their home country is either involved in the persecution or unable to control it.

Under H.R.2, it would be more difficult for people to pass the initial credible fear screening. "And this will, of course, reduce the number of people who qualify, but it won't have a major impact on the number of people crossing our borders," Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, policy director at the American Immigration Council, told VOA. "But in some ways, if you want to know what it would look like to raise the credible fear standard, it looks like the border today."

The Biden administration in 2023 announced a new asylum restriction that applies to nearly every migrant who crosses the border between ports of entry and turns themselves into Border Patrol. "So that means nearly everyone who's crossing the border today unlawfully is already banned from asylum and already has to meet a heightened standard in order to avoid a rapid deportation," he said.

H.R.2 also would require a migrant to be physically present in the United States

or to have arrived at a US port of entry in order to apply for asylum. Currently, US law allows any person arriving in the United States to pursue asylum regardless of manner of entry. H.R.2 would increase the use of expedited removal, which is a process that empowers immigration officers to deport certain noncitizens quickly and efficiently without a hearing before a US immigration judge.

Expedited removal can apply to migrants who have entered the United States unlawfully, cannot prove they have been in the country for at least two years, and do not qualify for humanitarian relief. The guideline also can apply to immigrants who have com-

30 days. Sponsors themselves, if undocumented, can also face the same proceedings. Under H.R.2, humanitarian parole would be allowed "on a case-by-case basis, and not according to eligibility criteria describing an entire class of potential parole recipients." Currently at the border, officers from US Citizenship and Immigration Services decide most of the parole requests.

If parole is granted, it would not mean the applicant is officially admitted into the US. Therefore, once the two-year parole benefit runs out, the person "shall immediately return or be returned" to their home country. Under the Biden administration, the United States has significantly increased the use of human-

If these sponsors are undocumented, DHS would have to start deportation proceedings of the children within 30 days. Sponsors themselves, if undocumented, can also face the same proceedings. Under H.R.2, humanitarian parole would be allowed "on a case-by-case basis, and not according to eligibility criteria describing an entire class of potential parole recipients." Currently at the border, officers from US Citizenship and Immigration Services decide most of the parole requests. If parole is granted, it would not mean the applicant is officially admitted into the US. Therefore, once the two-year parole benefit runs out, the person "shall immediately return or be returned" to their home country. Under the Biden administration, the United States has significantly increased the use of humanitarian parole. In response to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, through Operation Allies Welcome, the US welcomed about 88,500 Afghan nationals and their families and resettled them in communities across the country using the parole authority. Operation Allies Welcome was originally set up to coordinate efforts to resettle vulnerable Afghans. It also has granted admission and helped resettle tens of thousands of Ukrainians who sought refuge following the Russian invasion nearly two years ago.

mitted fraud. Currently, if a person is removed via this fast-track deportation process, they are banned from reentry for at least five years. If the applicant is removed on grounds of fraud or other criminal activities, a lifetime bar on entry can apply. The Republican proposal says if a migrant "knowingly files a frivolous asylum application," they will be barred permanently from entering the United States. H.R.2 also would modify how immigrant minors are protected under the Flores settlement - a 1993 court case that has influenced federal immigration law on detention of migrant children. The bill proposes speeding up the deportation process for unaccompanied minors.

Under the bill, the Department of Homeland Security would be allowed to detain families with children indefinitely. It would also extend the time children can be held in adult detention facilities at the border from three to 30 days. The bill would prevent states from imposing licensing requirements on these detention facilities, even when state law mandates oversight. Migrant children can claim Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ) status if they cannot reunite with one or both parents in the US, but H.R. 2 would limit it to children whose parents have neglected or abandoned them while making it harder for unaccompanied migrant children to qualify for SIJ status.

The Department of Health and Human Services would have to share information about local sponsors of unaccompanied migrant children with DHS. If these sponsors are undocumented, DHS would have to start deportation proceedings of the children within

itarian parole. In response to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, through Operation Allies Welcome, the US welcomed about 88,500 Afghan nationals and their families and resettled them in communities across the country using the parole authority. Operation Allies Welcome was originally set up to coordinate efforts to resettle vulnerable Afghans. It also has granted admission and helped resettle tens of thousands of Ukrainians who sought refuge following the Russian invasion nearly two years ago.

In a press conference on Wednesday, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said there will be "no deal" if parole is "not fixed." "There needs to be a hard cap on parole," he said. Global Refugee's Vignarajah told reporters that "one of our greatest concerns is seeing implementation of policies where we would continue funding for Ukraine, but do away potentially with a measure that actually allowed for 200,000 Ukrainians to come into the country, and so there's obviously an irony in how that would impact Ukrainians and beyond."

Vignarajah also said she thinks some lawmakers are aiming to change immigration policies without fully grasping the potential outcome, and that policy modifications proposed in H.R.2 won't alter prevailing migration patterns at the southern border. "We know just how lifesaving humanitarian parole is in an emergency situation," she said, "because we've had the honor of walking alongside tens of thousands of families forced to flee the only homes they've ever known and to find a new life here."

VOA

Dangers of ocean warming should not be underestimated

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

IT is unacceptable that the Earth's oceans - vast expanses of water that have long been considered the heartbeat of our planet - are currently undergoing a profound transformation. The current state of the world's ocean water presents a noteworthy concern, as it is exhibiting temperatures that surpass any previous records. This increasing warmth ought to serve as a stark indicator, sounding a crucial warning to the global community.

In recent years, scientists from around the world have warned of the startling phenomenon that is the record-breaking temperature rise being observed in our oceans. A recent collaborative analysis conducted by a team of scientists from China, the US, New Zealand and Italy, published this month in the Advances in Atmospheric Science journal, revealed a substantial increase in oceanic heat in 2023. The findings indicated an annual rise of 15 zettajoules, which is about 25 times greater than the total energy produced by all human activities worldwide in 2021.

This unprecedented rise in temperatures has far-reaching implications. Firstly, however, it is important that we delve into the complexities of this issue in order to comprehend why our oceans are experiencing such alarming warmth and to understand the underlying mechanism. Driven pri-

marily by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, climate change has unfortunately led to a rise in greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. These gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, trap heat and contribute to the warming of the Earth's surface. A significant portion of this excess heat is then absorbed by the oceans, which are acting as a colossal reservoir that plays a crucial role in regulating the planet's climate.

The vastness of the oceans has historically served as a buffer against the impacts of climate change.

Oceans absorb and store massive amounts of heat, modulating global temperatures and mitigating the effects of rising greenhouse gas levels. However, this resilience has now become a cause for concern, as the sheer volume of heat absorbed by the oceans is pushing them to unprecedented temperatures, challenging their capacity to act as an effective heat sink. The problem is that the intensification of human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, has significantly contributed to the alteration of the Earth's climate. The release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere has enhanced the greenhouse effect, trapping more heat and leading to an overall warming of

the planet. This anthropogenic influence has direct repercussions for the oceans, as they absorb the lion's share of this excess heat.

One of the major threats is that the warming of the oceans has been exacerbating the melting of the polar ice caps and glaciers. As these icy expanses thaw, they contribute to rising sea levels, posing a serious threat to coastal communities and low-lying regions. The global economy, particularly industries tied to coastal regions, faces substantial risks as a result. These include impacts on trade, shipping and the infrastructure connected with coastal zones. This synergy between oceanic warming and melting ice creates a feedback loop, intensifying the impacts of climate change and further elevating ocean temperatures. This complex interplay between oceanic warming and various feedback loops amplifies the challenges we face.

The second threat is that the temperature increase in the oceans can disrupt established currents and patterns of circulation. These currents play a crucial role in distributing heat around the globe, regulating climate systems and supporting marine ecosystems. The alteration of these patterns can lead to unpredictable and potentially detrimental consequences, impacting marine life, weather systems

and ocean-dependent economies. In addition, the rising temperatures in the oceans pose a direct threat to marine ecosystems. Coral reefs, which are known for their vibrant biodiversity, are particularly vulnerable to thermal stress. Elevated temperatures result in coral bleaching, a phenomenon whereby corals expel the symbiotic algae that provide them with nutrients and color. Prolonged bleaching events can lead to the death of coral reefs, disrupting entire ecosystems and jeopardizing the livelihoods of the communities that are dependent on them.

Furthermore, as ocean temperatures continue to rise, marine species are then forced to adapt or migrate to more suitable habitats. This shift in biodiversity and migration patterns can have cascading effects throughout the food chain, impacting fisheries and the communities reliant on them. It also poses a challenge for the conservation of vulnerable species, as they experience increased threats in the face of a changing climate. In a nutshell, the record-breaking heat currently being observed in our oceans is a clear and urgent signal of the profound changes underway in our climate. Unfortunately, human activities have set in motion a chain of events that are reshaping the very foundation of our planet - the oceans. The fate of our oceans is intricately linked to the fate of humanity.

Gaza war highlights need for US

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

THE US is backing Israel's campaign on Gaza. The war, which is now in its fourth month, risks spreading into a regional war. The Houthis are attacking ships heading toward Israel, Iraq is witnessing turbulence and a significant confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel is looking more and more likely. A ceasefire is necessary for regional stability. The only one that can coerce Israel into a ceasefire is the US. According to a November Reuters/Ipsos poll, 68 percent of Americans favor a ceasefire. Yet, the US continues to give Israel a blank check. Why?

This is mind-boggling. The US is supporting Israel even though the American public is for a ceasefire. To add to that, a regional war is not in the US' interest, especially if it gets sucked into it. US policy toward the Middle East seems to be more about showing support for Israel than attending to the American public's preference or the country's best interest.

Mohammed Baharoon, a well-known Dubai-based think tank, commented on X: "The US will go to outer space to protect its own national interest, yet today it subordinates its interests in the Middle East to a foreign politician who is facing legal charges," referring to Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister.

The answer is very simple. The US support for Israel is driven by the pro-Israel lobby. While we look at the lobby as a cabal or some type of conspiracy, it is a totally legitimate operation under US law. Under the First

Amendment of the US Constitution, citizens can "petition the government for a redress of grievances." This led to the inception of lobbying.

American citizens can organize and constitute pressure groups that can plead with the government and push for their policy preferences. This is part of the democratic process, whereby groups can contribute to the country's decision-making process. Pressure groups or lobby groups also finance election campaigns. Campaign promises can then become policies once a candidate is elected. This all comes across as an expression of democracy.

However, when it comes to foreign policy, this system allows certain groups to influence the policy of the entire nation. There is no more flagrant example than the case of the pro-Israel lobby and its influence on US policy toward the Middle East.

Today, in the case of the war on Gaza, the discrepancy between the national interest and public opinion and the actual US Middle East policy is very visible. In 2007, Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer wrote a best-selling book on the pro-Israel lobby's influence on US foreign policy. The pro-Israel lobby is a group of organizations that work toward promoting a US Middle East policy that is favorable to Israel. Its most important element is an organization called the American Israel Political Affairs Committee, known as AIPAC. Its members and funders are US citizens and hence it falls under the

lobbying laws of domestic groups. Like other domestic lobby groups, AIPAC has the right to finance election campaigns.

When foreign states hire a lobbyist or public relations consultant to advance their interests in the US, the agents working for them have to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. This law was put in place to limit the ability of foreign governments to influence US policy. However, domestic groups can organize and advocate for a certain foreign policy outcome and they have a lot of room to maneuver because they are considered as American citizens who have the right to contribute to the country's policymaking.

In theory, it should be acceptable for American citizens to lobby for foreign policy the same way they have the right to lobby for teacher benefits, elderly rights, etc. However, foreign policy decisions do not only affect the group advocating for them - they affect the entire country.

Unless there is a ceasefire in Gaza soon, the Middle East could easily slip into a regional war. However, neither the US Congress nor the Biden administration has called for a ceasefire. Except for a few voices here and there, policymakers are standing with Israel. Beyond the poll that showed that a majority of Americans are in favor of a ceasefire, major cities are being flooded with pro-Palestine demonstrations. Yet, the policy has not changed. In fact, what we see today is the undemocratic

result of lobbying: A small group of well-funded individuals is pushing the US to adopt a policy that most Americans do not support.

It is time for the US to change the law to prevent its national interest being dictated by one small group. Domestic lobby groups should be restricted to lobbying on domestic policy. If they want to lobby on foreign policy, they should register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Once the money element is removed from the lobbying for foreign policy, it will become more balanced and more in tune with the real interests of the country.

Activists in favor of a ceasefire recently revealed how much certain politicians have received from AIPAC. President Joe Biden is the leading recipient of AIPAC funds. When a lawmaker depends, to a large extent, on the financing of their campaign by a single generous donor, are they likely to go against that benefactor's will? I would say it was very unlikely.

AIPAC is known to go after those politicians whose votes or opinions it disapproves of by generously financing their rivals. Money should no longer be a factor that can affect foreign policy decisions. One would think that now would be a good time to make this change. Unfortunately, now more than ever, politicians need AIPAC's money to finance their campaigns, as the US is about to enter an election season. Until a US administration takes the bold step to free America's foreign policy from the control of a privileged few, expect more and more disastrous decisions, especially regarding the Middle East.



Weekly inflation up by 0.34 pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.34 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on January 18, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 319.00 points as compared to 317.92 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 44.64 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, increased by 0.61 percent and went up to 314.12 points from last week's 312.23 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517; Rs. 29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, increased by 0.54 percent, 0.46 percent, 0.40 and 0.23 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 22 (43.14%) items increased, 08 (15.68%) items decreased and 21

(41.18%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included potatoes (3.85%), petrol (2.99%), sugar (0.90%), tea packet (0.20%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.14%), cooking oil 5 litres (0.08%), wheat flour (0.07%) and gur (0.04%).

The items that recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included onions (8.69%), tomatoes (7.51%), energy sever (2.72%), chicken (2.26%), garlic (2.18%), bananas (2.14%), eggs (1.89%), matchbox (1.67%), pulse mash (1.59%) and pulse

moong (1.46%)

On a year-on-year basis, the items that witnessed a decrease in prices included mustard oil (6.86%), bananas (2.39%), onions (2.00%) and vegetable ghee 1 kg (1.17%).

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices on year-on-year basis included gas charges for Q1 (1108.59%), tomatoes (183.16%), cigarettes (93.22%), chillies powder (81.74%), wheat flour (65.03%), garlic (60.45%), gents sponge chappal (58.05%), sugar (57.26%), gents sandal (53.37%), rice irri-6/9 (49.95%), gur (49.45%) and eggs (47.54%)

Food group exports grew by 49.84% in first half of FY2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): Food group exports from the country during the first half of the current financial year grew by 49.84 per cent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year.

During the period from July-December, 2023 food commodities valued at \$3.481 billion were exported as against the exports of \$2.323 billion of the same period of the last year, according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

During the period under review, rice exports increased by 76.53 per cent and over 2.570 million tons of rice worth \$1.638 billion were exported as compared to the exports of 1.732 million tons valued at \$927.918 million in the same period of last year, it added.

Meanwhile, the exports of fruits grew by 9.31 per cent and pulses by 79.01 per cent as 446,901 metric tons of fruits and 96 metric tons of pulses valued at \$171.280 million and \$48,080 were exported during the period under review, the data revealed.

Meanwhile, the exports of tobacco increased by 64.92 per cent and spices by 21.37 per cent respectively as 14,239 metric tons of tobacco worth \$44.919 million and 19,500 metric tons of spices valued at \$57.125 million were exported during the last six months of the current financial year.

In the first two quarters of the current financial year the exports of oil seed and nuts grew by 250.45 per cent, whereas exports of sugar increased by 100 per cent as compared to the exports of the same period

of last year, it added.

In the last 06 months, the country earned \$363.998 million by exporting about 225,102 metric tons of oil seeds and nuts, whereas \$21.071 million was fetched by exporting about 33,102 metric tons of sugar respectively. The country earned \$239.711 million by exporting about 59,310 metric tons of meat and meat products as the exports of meat and meat preparations grew by 24.90 per cent during the period under review.

As compared to the corresponding month of last year, the food group exports grew by 111.63 per cent in December 2023 as compared to the same month of the last year.

During last month food commodities worth \$840.819 million were exported as compared to

the exports of \$397.307 in the same month of last year. It may be recalled here that during the period under review, the exports increased by 5.17 per cent to \$14.981 billion compared to the exports of \$14.244 billion during the corresponding period of last year, according to the latest PBS data.

On the other hand, the imports narrowed by 16.28 per cent and were recorded at \$26.129 billion compared to \$31.209 billion last year.

Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the exports from the country increased by 22.21 per cent in December compared to the exports of the same month of last year. The exports during the month were recorded at \$2.812 billion as against the exports of \$2.301 billion in December 2022.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor making and selling Kashmiri tea at his roadside setup at Aabpara Market in Federal Capital.

US, China, UK remain top destinations for Pakistani exports during Jul-Dec

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States (US) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the first six months of the current financial year 2023-24, followed by China and the United Kingdom (UK).

Total exports to the US during July-December 2023 were recorded at US \$2745.700 million against the exports of US \$3067.748 million during July-December 2022, showing a decline of 10.49 percent, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan

exported goods worth US \$1481.499 million against the exports of US \$1058.088 million last year, showing an increase of 40.01 percent.

UK was the third top export destination, where Pakistan exported products worth US \$1014.727 million during the months under review against the exports of US \$1003.396 million, SBP data revealed.

Among other countries, Pakistani exports to UAE stood at US \$1000.916 million against US \$726.020 million last year, showing an increase of 37.86 percent while the exports to

Germany were recorded at US \$731.033 million against US \$881.192 million last year, data said.

During July-December, the exports to Holland were recorded at \$669.763 million against \$747.770 million whereas the exports to Italy stood at \$568.178 million against \$572.823 million.

Pakistan's exports to Spain were recorded at \$747.858 million against the exports of US \$692.167 million while the exports to Afghanistan were recorded at \$260.716 million against \$251.580 million last year.

The exports to

Bangladesh stood at US \$305.443 million against US \$420.829 million.

Similarly, the exports to France during the months under review were recorded at US \$253.495 million against US \$297.335 million while the exports to Belgium stood at US \$277.173 million against US \$372.480 million.

Pakistan's exports to Saudi Arabia were recorded at US \$328.232 million during the current year compared to US \$221.376 million last year whereas the exports to Türkiye stood at US \$180.632 million against US \$164.255 million.

Global stocks rebound as tech snaps losing streak

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Global stocks rebounded Thursday in choppy trade as investors assessed the outlook for interest rates and tech giants rebounded from recent losses.

All three major indexes on Wall Street finished the day firmly in the black, led by the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite index, which closed up 1.4 percent.

Among individual firms, the chip-making behemoth Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company saw its share price in New York surge almost 10 percent after beating earnings expectations.

Apple's share price was lifted by 3.3 percent after its stock was upgraded to "buy" by a Bank of America analyst.

European markets also closed higher, as did most Asian markets, while oil prices rose amid continued unrest in the Middle East.

Thursday's optimism stands in stark contrast to trading a day earlier.

Then, global stocks sank after stronger-than-expected

US retail sales data dimmed hopes for an early start to US Federal Reserve rate cuts, while weak Chinese growth data gave cause for concern, and the UK saw an unexpected acceleration in inflation.

"Stock markets are modestly higher on Thursday, recovering some of Wednesday's losses as investors seemingly struggle to determine where things stand," said market analyst Craig Erlam at OANDA. "There's clearly a desperate desire to cling on to the optimism that enabled such a strong end to the year but unlike in that period, the data isn't really playing ball," he added.

It wasn't all good news in the United States, however, as retail store Macy's announced it was cutting more than 2,300 jobs as part of a new strategy to streamline the company.

The news sent its share price down around 0.3 percent in after-hours trading.

Earlier Thursday, a senior Federal Reserve official indicated he expected the

US central bank to cut interest rates in the third quarter -- and maybe even earlier than that.

"If we continue to see a further accumulation of downside surprises in the data, it's possible for me to get comfortable enough to advocate normalization sooner than the third quarter," Atlanta Fed President Raphael Bostic told a conference in the city.

"But the evidence would need to be convincing," added Bostic, who is a voting member of the Fed's rate-setting committee this year. Bostic's comments follow those of other Fed officials, whose remarks appear intended to cool market expectations of an interest rate cut in March.

But despite their interventions, futures traders still assign a probability of more than 55 percent that the Fed will cut interest rates in March, according to data from CME Group.

The British capital's FTSE 100 also shifted back into the black following bright news in the betting

sector, where gambling giant Flutter revealed surging annual sales and an imminent US listing.

The news sent its share price rocketing 15 percent to top the FTSE 100 risers board.

In Asia, stocks mostly trod higher, but gains were capped by a lack of meaningful measures by Beijing to boost China's economy following news of poor 2023 growth.

Hong Kong and Shanghai enjoyed some rare gains on bargain-buying after recent losses, though worries about China's economic outlook continued to drag on sentiment following Wednesday's soft economic growth figures.

New York - Dow: UP 0.5 at 37,468.61 points (close)

New York - S&P 500: UP 0.9 percent at 4,780.94 (close)

New York - Nasdaq: UP 1.4 percent at 15,055.65 (close)

London - FTSE 100: UP 0.2 percent at 7,459.09 (close)

Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at the Port where six ships namely, Meratus Jayakarta, Lucky Star, Victoria Kosan, Benue, Ullswater and Jal Kalpavriksh carrying Containers, Palm oil, Chemicals, LNG, LGM and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Engro Terminal, Gas Terminal, Sui Southern Gas Terminal and Bulk Cargo Terminal respectively on Thursday.

Meanwhile seven more ships, Wide Alpha, RDO Concord, Hafnia Raven, Bolan, Sea Delta, Al-Ruwais and IVS Windsor to load/unload Containers, Petroleum Product, Chemicals, LNG and Coal also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

A total of ten ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them Bulk cargo carrier 'Poly-World' left the port on today and five more ships, Lucky Star, Parnassos, Victoria Kosan, Hafnia Myna and Wide Alpha are expected to sail on same day afternoon. A cargo volume of 165,334 tonnes, comprising 117,112 tonnes imports cargo and 48,222 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,500 Containers.

PSX turns to bullish trend, gains 79 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Friday, gaining 79.83 points, a positive change of 0.13 percent, closing at 63,282.23 points against 63,202.40 points the previous trading day.

A total of 287,310,860 shares valuing Rs.9,320 billion were traded during the day as compared to 445,797,697 shares valuing Rs.14,236 billion the last day. Some 339 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 160 of them recorded gains and 158 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 21 remained unchanged. The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 49,814,334 shares at Rs.5.54 per share, PIAC(A) with 43,353,500 shares at Rs.12.04 per share and PTCL with 14,161,766 shares at Rs.13.83 per share. Mari Petroleum

Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.26.19 per share price, closing at Rs.2,375.37, whereas the runner-up was Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) Limited with a Rs.15.35 rise in its per share price to Rs.274.59. Sapphire Fibres Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.63.14 per share closing at Rs.1,600.00, followed by Bata Pakistan Limited with Rs.35.06 decline to close at Rs.1,705.05.

the Regional Tax office, said a press release issued here on Friday. The meeting was attended by SCCI Senior Vice President Sanaulah Khan, Vice President Ijaz Khan Afridi, Commissioner Inland Revenue RTO Peshawar Dr Syed Farooq Jamil and Additional Commissioner Audit RTO Peshawar Fazli Malik.

During the meeting, the participants thoroughly discussed reforms in the tax system, reduction in tax rates and holding of an open forum at the Chamber

President SCCI, RTO Peshawar discuss reforms in tax sector

PESHAWAR (APP): President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Fuad Ishaq and Chief Commissioner, Regional Tax Office Peshawar Zafar Iqbal have agreed to hold an open forum at the Chamber level aiming to resolve the problems of the business community at their doorstep.

According to the details, an important meeting between SCCI President Fuad Ishaq and Chief Commissioner RTO Peshawar Zafar Iqbal held at

level for immediate resolution of taxpayers' problems.

On this occasion, the SCCI chief expressed his satisfaction with the tax officers for facilitating the business community. Fuad Ishaq made several suggestions regarding reforms in the tax system, simplifying the tax system and solving the problems faced by the taxpayers, on which the Chief Commissioner Regional Tax Office Peshawar Zafar Iqbal and other senior officers fully agreed.

Pakistan attracting major investments into tech sector

LAHORE (NNI): Muhammad Zohaib Khan, Chairman of Pakistan Software Houses Associations (P@SHA), has represented the country's private-sector at World Economic Forum 2024 at Davos Switzerland; and, the highlight of IT delegation's visit was Pakistan Pavilion - which attracted renowned investors, entrepreneurs and tech founders.

It is pertinent to note that Chairman P@SHA was keynote speaker at the Digital Pakistan event on the sidelines of World Economic Forum 2024; and, the theme of his address was the remarkable emergence of Pakistan as the next big tech destination on the world map. He also acknowledged Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) as the catalyst for generating the interest of investors in Pakistan.

Pakistan Pavilion was organized by Pathfinder Group and also saw the participation of *Dr. Amjad Saqib, Founder of Akhuwat Foundation; Jehanzeb Khan, Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Governance Effectiveness; Ikram Sehgal, Chairman of Pathfinder Group and Aamir Ibrahim, CEO of Jazz Pakistan.

ICCI, UNICEF sign MoU

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have signed an Memorandum of understanding to collaborate on many initiatives to promote the economic empowerment of marginalized people.

The initiative also aimed at to make progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Pakistan, said a press release received here on Friday. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawri, President ICCI,

and Abdullah A. Fadil, UNICEF Representative Pakistan signed the MoU during a ceremony held at ICCI. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawri, President ICCI lauded the efforts of UNICEF Pakistan to address issues in health, education, child protection, skills development, climate change, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene and social protection and other fields. He assured that ICCI would support UNICEF in its initiatives to advance children's rights and economic empowerment of

neglected segments of society. He said that ICCI would mobilize its members to support UNICEF and facilitate partnerships between ICCI members and UNICEF in areas of interest for the well-being and welfare of poor people. Abdullah A. Fadil, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan thanked ICCI for signing the MoU and added that UNICEF Pakistan would like to strengthen its cooperation with ICCI to undertake joint initiatives in the areas of education, youth entrepreneurship, climate change, and others.

Textile exports earn \$8.283 billion for Pakistan in 1st half

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned \$8,283,261 million from exports of textile products during the first half of the current financial year (2023-24), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported here Friday.

The exports of the product however witnessed a decline of 4.97 percent during July-December (2023-24) when compared to the exports of \$8,716,437 million during July-December (2022-23).

The textile commodities that witnessed positive growth in trade included raw cotton, the exports of which grew by 374.66 percent, from \$11.253 million last year to \$53.412 million this year. Likewise, the exports of cotton yarn

increased by 54.25 percent, from \$381,545 million last year to \$588,529 million this year and towels by 1.72 percent, from \$491.696 million to \$500.133 million. The textile commodities that witnessed negative growth include cotton cloth, the exports of which declined by 13.10 percent, from \$1,066.360 million to \$926.677 million; cotton carded or combed by 27.33 percent, from \$0.809 million to \$0.588 million; yarn other than cotton yarn by 13.85 percent, from \$22.708 million to \$19.562 million, and knitwear by 10.65 percent, from \$2,464.971 million to \$2,202.529 million.

Likewise, the exports of bed wear declined by 3.55 percent from \$1,427.730

million to \$1,377.109 million, tents, canvas and tarpaulin by 1.45 percent, from \$61.838 million to \$60.941, ready-made garments by 8.93 percent, from \$1,832.835 million to \$1,669.253 million. The exports of art, silk and synthetic textile also decreased by 15.29 percent by declining from \$209.225 million to \$177.237 million, madeup articles by 6.81 percent, from \$378.660 million to \$352.864 million whereas the exports of all other textile materials also went down by 3.37 percent, from \$366.807 million to \$345.428 million.

Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the textile exports increased by 3.33 percent by going up from \$

1,354.523 million in December 2022 to \$1,399.655 million in December 2023.

On month-on-month basis, the exports grew by 6.15 percent when compared to exports of \$1,318.536 million in November 2023.

It is pertinent to mention here that the country's overall merchandise trade deficit contracted by 34.29 per cent during the first half of the current fiscal year compared to the corresponding period of last year.

The Trade deficit from July-December (2023-24) was recorded at \$11.148 billion as against the deficit of \$16.965 billion in July-December (2022-23), showing negative growth of 34.29 per cent.

The Frontier Post
classified@s

TO ADVERTISE IN
The Frontier Post
For Classified advertisements please contact
Mobile: +92-334-1001900
Email:
shoaib@thefrontierpost.com

COURT NOTICE
BUNER
IN the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No.355/1 Institution.13/12/2023. date of

hearing 20/1/2024. Mst. Arojet VS Chairman Board. Notice to no 3.Said Mukhtiar s/o Amjad Said resident of Kandow Baba Jowar tehsel Gadezai district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 20/1/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

NAMES CORRECTION
In the credentials of my children, the actual names are as follows:
1.Kashmala Inam, 2.Abdullah Inam, 3.Khkula Inam, 4.Dua Inam, However, there has been a mistake in the documentation where the names were listed as: 1.Kashmala, 2.Abdullah, 3.Khkula, 4.Dua. We kindly request the correction of these names in all relevant records. Name of Father: Inamullah, Son of Habibullah, Resident of Zaintara Town, near Ring Road Bridge, Charsadda Road, Peshawar.



In brief

Zone-II Whites, Zone-I Whites qualify

KARACHI (APP): The Zone-II Whites moved into quarter-final after beating Zone-I Whites by 58 runs from Group "C" at Young Fighter Ground while Zone I Whites reached the quarter-finals by securing the second position despite the defeat. The tournament is being organized by the Regional Cricket Association Karachi. Scores in Brief: Zone-II Whites beat Zone-I Whites by 58 runs at Young Fighter Ground. Zone-II Whites scored 202/9 in 45 overs. Aun M. Jaffri 42, Shaheryar Usmani 38, Waheed Khan 27, Burhan Mehmood 20. Fahad Khan (ob) 4/15, Farman Ahmed (ob) 2/23. Zone-I Whites 144 all out in 35.4 overs. Dawar Malik 36, Farman Ahmed 35, Aleem Mohsin 33, Ahmed Aleem (sla) 4/23, Syed Rehan Shah (mf) 4/32.

FDA City Sports Complex completed

FAISALABAD (APP): Divisional Commissioner Madam Silwat Saeed on Friday said that state-of-the-art Sports Complex of FDA City had been completed while finishing touch to its various installations and equipment was continuing in full swing. During his visit to the Sports Complex here, she exclaimed joy on the completion of most modern Sports Complex in the FDA City and said that it would provide sports facilities to the sports lovers according to international standard. She said that separate gymnasiums were constructed for male and female players while quality material was used to ensure durability of the complex. She directed the FDA Director General to convene meeting of management committee of Sports Complex so that its affairs could be started in a transparent manner. Director General FDA Muhammad Asif Chaudhry briefed the commissioner about latest progress of the complex and said that necessary equipment was provided in all areas including swimming pools, badminton, squash courts, lawn tennis and basketball courts while jogging track was in final stage. Similarly, finishing touch was also being given especially to the work of various offices and courts, he added. Chief Engineer FDA Mehar Muhammad Ayub and others were also present on the occasion.

Hazlewood leads Australia to huge win

ADELAIDE (AFP/APP): Australian Josh Hazlewood produced an inspired spell of seam bowling as Australia crushed the West Indies by 10 wickets in the first Test at the Adelaide Oval on Friday. Bowling with almost metronomic precision, Hazlewood ended with 5-35 in the second innings after at one stage having figures of 4-2. Leading by 95 runs in the first innings, Australia dismissed the West Indies Friday morning for 120. They then cruised to the winning target of 26 in under seven overs, although there was some late drama when, with the scores level, Australian opener Usman Khawaja was forced to retire hurt after being struck on the jaw by a Shamar Joseph bouncer. There had been plenty of disquiet in Australia when the West Indies announced a touring squad missing a number of top players including former captain Jason Holder. Only eight of the 15-man squad had played Test cricket before, meaning there would have to be three debutants in the team for Adelaide.

Rizwan's unbeaten 90 in vain as New Zealand beat Pakistan in 4th T20I

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mohammad Rizwan's unbeaten 90 goes in vain as New Zealand beat Pakistan by seven wickets in the fourth T20I at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch on Friday. This was New Zealand's fourth win in the five-match series, and they now lead by a margin of 4-0. The fifth and final T20I of the series will take place at the same venue on Sunday.

After being put into bat, Pakistan scored 158 for five in 20 overs, courtesy of an undefeated 90-run knock from wicketkeeper-batter Rizwan, according to information made available here by Pakistan Cricket Board.

The opening batter struck six fours and two sixes during his 63-ball innings. He added a 51-run partnership with

Babar Azam (19, 11b, 2x4s, 1x6) and knitted a 40-run partnership for the fifth wicket with Iftikhar Ahmed (10, 14b). Left-handed Mohammad Nawaz was the other contributor with the bat, scoring an unbeaten 21 off nine balls, and hitting three sixes in the 19th over of the innings.

For New Zealand, Lockie Ferguson and Matt Henry bagged two wickets apiece.

In turn, captain Shaheen Shah Afridi led from the front and struck twice in the first over of the run-chase, and again in the third over to put the hosts in a spot of bother leaving them three for 20 in 2.4 overs. At that stage of the match, Daryl Mitchell and Glenn Phillips got together and stitched an unbroken 139-run partnership for the

fourth wicket to help New Zealand achieve the target in 18.1 overs.

Mitchell scored an unbeaten 72 off 44 balls, laced with seven fours and two sixes. Right-handed Phillips scored a 52-ball 70, hitting five fours and three sixes. For the losing side, Shaheen ended up with match figures of three for 34 in four overs.

Scores in brief: New Zealand beat Pakistan by seven wickets. Pakistan 158-5, 20 overs (Mohammad Rizwan 90 not out, Mohammad Nawaz 21 not out; Matt Henry 2-22, Lockie Ferguson 2-27).

New Zealand 159-3, 18.1 overs (Daryl Mitchell 72 not out, Glenn Phillips 70 not out; Shaheen Shah Afridi 3-34).

Player of the match - Daryl Mitchell (New Zealand)



CHRISTCHURCH: Daryl Mitchell and Glenn Phillips finished the job for New Zealand.

Confident Sinner lays out Australian Open title credentials

MELBOURNE (AFP/APP): Jannik Sinner said he was confident and relaxed after reinforcing his Australian Open title credentials with a straight-sets mauling of 26th-seed Sebastian Baez Friday.

The 22-year-old Italian fourth seed was in a different class from the Argentine, spending just one hour and 52 minutes on court for the 6-0, 6-1, 6-3 romp.

It set him up for a fourth-round clash against Russian 15th seed Karen Khachanov, who made the semi-finals last year.

Sinner is yet to drop a set in his three matches so far, unlike the trio of players ahead of him in the rankings - defending champion Novak Djokovic, Carlos Alcaraz and Daniil Medvedev.

"I do feel confident," he said. "I came here with a good off-season, preparation.

"I'm just quite focused and also relaxed on the court at the moment. Let's see how I handle the situation when the score is even or I'm down, how I react. It's going to be interesting to see."

Sinner enjoyed a breakthrough 2023, winning his first Masters title in Toronto and reaching the championship match at the ATP Finals, beating Djokovic in group play.

He then led Italy to the Davis Cup title, again topping Djokovic along the way, to finish the year in the best form of his life.

The Italian advanced to the quarter-finals at the year's first major in 2022 and exited in the fourth round last year, but he has higher expectations this season after surging up the

Djokovic admits 'trash talk' as he coasts through at Australian Open

MELBOURNE (AFP/APP): Novak Djokovic says he motivates himself with "trash talk" after returning to form to sweep past 30th seed Tomas Martin Etcheverry and into the fourth round in his 100th match at the Australian Open on Friday.

The 10-time champion dropped sets in each of his first two matches but was never in trouble in his third-round contest against the Argentine, cruising to a 6-3, 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) win.

The Serbian world number one has been under the weather in Melbourne, searching for form and struggling with a virus which he said was in its final stages.

Despite the comfortable nature of the win on Rod Laver Arena, Djokovic occasionally looked frus-

trated with himself, exchanging gestures with his coaching team.

"It's not always a positive pep talk," he said. "There's a lot of trash talk happening inside of my head."

"I guess it's part of the game, it's part of who I am. I mean, I'm quite certain that everyone goes through their crisis moments, particularly in the matches where they don't feel their best and they have doubts."

He added: "I'm trying to fight the demons that I have, as anybody else, on the court."

Djokovic did not face a single break point in the match, which brought up a century of appearances at his most successful major -- he now trails only Roger Federer (117) and Serena Williams (105).

rankings.

First he must get past Khachanov. "Every time we played, was very long matches, tough matches," Sinner said. "But this is why also I practise, to see where my level is, where I can find the right solution every time."

'Perfect' Sabalenka smashes Tsurenko 6-0, 6-0 at Australian Open: Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka described Friday's 6-0, 6-0 demolition of Lesia Tsurenko at the Australian Open as "perfection", but said she could get even better in a chilling warning to her rivals.

The Belarusian world number two has dropped just six games in her three matches at the tournament so far. The 25-year-old, who won her maiden Grand Slam crown in Melbourne last year, is seeking to become the first woman to retain the title since compatriot Victoria Azarenka completed the feat in 2013. Sabalenka, wearing vivid red, bristled with intent from the start against the Ukrainian 28th seed on Rod Laver Arena, cantering home in just 52 minutes.

"I think today's performance was really, yeah, was perfection," she said. "I'm happy with the level I played today."

Saad optimistic of leading Pakistan to glory in U19 WC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan skipper Saad Baig, was hopeful of leading his team to glory in the U19 World Cup at South Africa. Saad has led Pakistan U19 in 17 One-Day matches where the team ended up winning 10 games.

Saad Baig, who hails from Karachi, started his career at Customs Cricket Academy in Karachi and was part of their touring party on the trip to India. He received a lot of support from his parents and straightaway impressed in the PCB's Under-13 Regional Tournament 2018-19 where he scored 128 runs and bagged four dismissals along the stumps.

He was the leading run-scorer in the National U16 One-Day Tournament 2019-20, accumulating 206 runs in four games.

Saad had a stellar run in the year 2022 where he was the second leading run-scorer in the National U19 One-Day Cup, pouched eight catches

and stumped one batter. He was rewarded with a call-up to Pakistan U19 for the home series against Bangladesh U19 and was appointed captain of the team.

"My father used to play cricket and he took me to the academy. My first breakthrough was an U15 tour to India where I did very well with the bat and gloves. It gave me a lot of confidence to excel at all age group levels. I believe if you are exposed to quality cricket at the club level and good coaches, then you can kickstart a great career."

My alma mater, St Paul's High School, has also played a great role where my coach Sir Lenny used to train me even in summer breaks," he told PCB Digital.

Saad brings stability to the middle-order and has shown the ability to bat for longer periods while also churning runs at a healthy rate. He stitched an unbeaten 125-run partnership with

Azan Awais in a successful chase against India U19 in the ACC Men's Asia Cup 2024. Behind the stumps, Saad has a trusted pair of hands which provides confidence to all bowlers. His decision-making is deemed sound as he commands respect from his teammates.

Saad would be hoping to contribute to Pakistan's success by being on top of his game in all three facets - batting, leadership and wicket-keeping. Saad was aware of Pakistan's 17-year-long U19 World Cup trophy drought and looks excited to bring back the trophy home. "I'm glad the PCB has trusted me with the leadership role of a very talented bunch of players," he said. "The journey so far has been very good and I want to continue making fine memories. My next goal is to win the U19 World Cup for Pakistan as I know it's been a long time since we lifted that trophy in 2006."

Three more matches decided in Peshawar PFL Season-I

PESHAWAR (APP): Three more matches were decided on the fourth day of the ongoing Peshawar Premier Football League Season I being played here at Tehmas Khan Football Stadium on Friday.

District Sports Officer Miss Gul Rukh was the chief guest on this occasion and before the start of the matches, the players were introduced to her. Chief Organizer of the Peshawar Premier League Khalid Khan, Match Commissioner and FIFA Referees including Syed Imtiaz Ali Shah, Zahid Khan, Ikram Khan, Abdul Rehman and a large number of Friday spectators were also present and witnessed the matches.

In the first match, Dara 90 Group recorded a victory against Khyber Club by 4-0 in a one-sided affair. Dara 90 Group took the lead in the 7th minute through a field attempt when right winger Shehzad netted a fine goal to make the tally 1-0 and after 10 minutes Luqman doubled the lead

through another fine move made by centre striker Jabbar along with inner strikers Tahir, Iqbal and Niamat Ullah. The four strikers played well and after exchanging the ball they reached the danger zone where Luqman netted a fine goal to double the lead. With the two early goals lead, Dara 90 Group dominated the first session.

In the second half, Khyber players did some resistance to reduce the margin and they got some good goal-fetching attacks but due to poor finishing, they failed to utilize and thus the first half ended 2-0 in favour of Dara 90 Group Football Club.

Dara 90 Group Club kept up the pressure and succeeded in getting two more goals in the 53rd and 69th minutes through Siraj Khan and Bilal Afzal on the field attempt. Khyber team players tried their hardest to reduce the margin but failed and thus Dara 90 won the match.

In the second match, SDFC beat FC Buner Red by 2-0 in another one-

sided match. Rehan and Sajid scored one goal each for the SDFC club while FC Buner Red failed to score any goal. There were some occasional attacks but none of them could be materialized and thus SDFC won the match by 2-0. In the third match, Dara Dostan Atish Club beat Akhakil Club 1-0. Both Dara Dostan Atish Club and Akhakil Club played well and made some beautiful moves but despite it all the first-half was ended in a goalless draw.

It was the second half in which Dara Dostan Atish Club took the lead through Murad Ali on the field attempt. It was a very superb goal right from the 25-year distance and gave no chance to the rival goalkeeper to stop the ball. Akhil Club tried their hardest to level the tally but they failed due to tight marking and defensive approach adopted by Dara Dostan Atish Club. Zahid, Ikram, Abdul Rehman and Syed Imtiaz Ali Shah supervised the matches.

First National Women Lacrosse Championship to start in Abbottabad on Jan 20

PESHAWAR (APP): The first National Women Lacrosse Championship and International Official Coaching and Referee Course will start from January 20, 2024 simultaneously at Kunj Football Stadium and Police Ground, Abbottabad.

The National Women Lacrosse, is an American originated Games introduced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan wherein teams from all four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Islamabad are taking part. It is for the first time that Lacrosse, an Olympic Game was introduced in Pakistan by Pakistan Lacrosse Federation and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Lacrosse Association got the initiative to host it at hilly station Abbottabad.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali, who also sent a message to the Federation and KP Lacrosse Association for his support and good

wishes in holding the Games in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said involving youth in healthy sports activities would lead to establish a healthy society and we badly needed such activities so thanks to Pakistan Lacrosse Federation and KP Lacrosse Association for holding the Games for the first time in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wherein women players from all across Pakistan are taking part. He said it is the responsibility of the government to extend support to such people so that more such healthy activities could be organized in befitting manners.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali also thanked the World Lacrosse Federation Office-Bearers for extending support to Pakistan and their generous support distribution of Rs. 50 million Lacrosse Games equipment. He also

appreciated President KP Lacrosse Association Ijaz Ahmad Khan Daudzai and Secretary Dr. Taifoor Zarin for their dedicated efforts as they worked day and night for a successful hosting of the National Championship.

Governor KP also assured all out support to the Association for hosting the Championship at Abbottabad. He also welcomed the guests and office-bearers of the World Lacrosse Federation for visiting Pakistan along with Lacrosse equipment and expressed the hope that the Championship would have a successful one.

Commissioner Hazara Syed Zaheer Ul Islam, DIG and DPO Hazara also met with the officials of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Lacrosse Federation and assured them all support. However, there is no financial support either from the government or from any private sector companies despite repeated requests.

13th Rashid D. Habib Memorial Golf Zubair Hussain achieved hole-in-one on second day

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The 13th Rashid D. Habib Memorial National Professional Golf Tournament 2024 witnessed its second round on Friday, January 19th, at the Karachi Golf Club (KGC). Zubair Hussain from PAF achieved a remarkable Hole-In-One on the tournament's second day. Employing a 5

Iron on the Red Course's 7th Hole, a Par 3 at KGC with a distance of 210 Yards, his skillful shot not only earned him acclaim but also rewarded him with a brand-new Toyota Corolla car.

Lahore's Ahmed Baig is maintaining his lead from first day with a gross of 137- 7 under par. KGC's Muhammad Zubair and Muhammad Munir from Rawalpindi

are following Ahmed with their joint 139- 5 under par. Defending Champion Waheed Baloch, Dilshad Ali, Muhammad Alam and Akbar Mahroz have carded gross 142- 2 under par on second day.

After first round's cut, 55 golfers will play in second round of professional category from Saturday. Tournament's Final Round will be played on Sunday 21st January.

Lahore, Karachi, Multan win matches in National Women's T20

ISLAMABAD (APP): Lahore, Karachi and Multan earned victories in the fourth-round matches of National Women's T20 Tournament which saw the action unfold at three venues across two cities.

In Rawalpindi, Lahore continued their unbeaten streak after defeating Quetta by six wickets at Shoaib Akhtar Cricket Stadium. Rawalpindi fell 22 runs short of chasing 131 against Karachi at Ayub Park Ground. In Islamabad, Multan dominated over Peshawar with a nine-wicket win after dismissing the side for a paltry 57 in the first innings.

Quetta posted 115-7 in 20 overs after choosing to bat first against Lahore. Quetta got off to a breezy start courtesy of a 41-run opening partnership between Fareeha Mahmood and Dua Majid.

Left-arm spinner Nashra Sandhu, brought into the attack in the last over of the powerplay, struck to remove Fareeha (15, 16b, 3x4s). Jannat Rashid (10, 7b, 2x4s), the next batter in,

was caught by Sidra Amin off captain Nida Dar's bowling. Nashra disturbed Dua's stumps, who walked back after 34 from 23, including six boundaries. Leg-spinner Ghulam Fatima got Subhana Tariq (6, 9b, 1x4) and Saima Malik (1, 4b) out to further deplete Quetta's scoring rate. Khizra Rani made seven runs before falling to Ayesha Zafar, while Khairun Nisa was run out by Sadaf Shams. Tuba Hassan, the fifth batter in, remained unbeaten at run-a-ball 36, including five boundaries. Fatima and Nashra picked up two wickets each, while Nida and Ayesha got a batter out each as well.

Anam Amin landed an early blow to send Lahore's opening batter Sadaf Shams walking back for a duck. Soon after, Khairun Nisa removed Ayesha Zafar and Kaynat Hafeez cheaply to bring Lahore down to 26-3 inside the powerplay.

Sidra Amin and Sidra Nawaz built a 37-run partnership to bring stability to the innings. Ayesha Asim

broke the partnership by dismissing Sidra Amin (34, 27b, 4x4s, 1x6).

Skipper Nida Dar (38 not out, 23b, 6x4s) joined Sidra Nawaz (26 not out, 21b, 3x4s) on the crease. The two put up an undefeated 53-run stand to take Lahore over the line, in the 16th over with six wickets in the bag. Nida, the top-scorer in the game, was adjudged player of the match.

Rawalpindi won the toss and invited Karachi to bat first at Ayub Park Ground, Rawalpindi in the second match. Muneeba Ali and Javeria Khan gave Karachi a solid start with a 63-run opening stand. Left-arm spinner Tania Saeed broke the partnership by removing Muneeba (36, 33b, 5x4s). Waheeda Akhtar ran out Javeria (21, 24b, 2x4s) in the 11th over. Omaira Sohail and skipper Fatima Sana both could only chip in five runs each before getting out to Aima Saleem and Tania respectively. Yusra Amir added 25 from 26, including two boundaries before she was trapped leg-before by Waheeda.



In brief

IESCO imposes fines of Rs. 480m

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has imposed fines of Rs 480 million against consumers involved in power theft during the ongoing anti-power theft campaign. The company examined over 628,000 meters, identifying approximately 10,723 meters as slow, 76 meters as tampered, and 894 meters involved in direct theft. As part of the campaign, 652 electricity thieves have been apprehended. IESCO is committed to eradicating electricity theft in the region and encourages consumers to report any incidents of electricity theft to the relevant Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) office or call 118.

AC inspects fuel stations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Assistant Commissioner Nellore Uzair Ali on Friday inspected petrol pumps in PS Shehzad Town and Khanna areas against rate violations and irregularities. During the inspection, one person was caught for flagrant violation and immediately transferred to the police station for further legal action, ICT spokesperson Dr Abdullah Tabasim said. Additionally, four individuals were fined heavily as a result of non-compliance with the rules and regulations. The Assistant Commissioner of Nellore went a step further by issuing a stern warning to all petrol pump owners, emphasizing the importance of adhering to the prescribed standards. Any instances of non-compliance will be met with even stricter measures, he added.

Police arrest five kite sellers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police on the directives of a City Police Officer, Rawalpindi are making efforts to control kite flying and managed to arrest five kite sellers on recovery of 148 kites and 34 kite flying string rolls, said a police spokesman here on Friday. He informed, Airport police arrested two kite sellers namely Shahzeb and Yasir Khan and recovered 100 kites and two kite flying string rolls. Westridge police conducted a raid and netted Aqdas Arif on recovery of 48 kites and two string rolls while R.A.Bazar police rounded up two accused, Abdul Wahab and Hamza and recovered 30 string rolls from their possession. Divisional Superintendents of Police directed the police teams to accelerate operations against kite sellers and flyers. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi said that strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against the rules violators and they would be sent behind bars.

Police arrest five drug peddlers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The district police here on Friday arrested five outlaws and recovered drugs from their custody. The spokesman said Dhamial police arrested Umer Razaq for having 1.45 Kg of hashish while Taxila police arrested Sajid and recovered 510 gm of hashish from him. Ratta Anml Police arrested a criminal namely Nawaz and recovered 10 liters of liquor from him. The police registered cases against the accused and started investigations.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage Jamal Shah cutting ribbon to inaugurate calligraphic exhibition titled "Mashq-e-Ishq" by Gen. (R) Humayun Khan Bangash at PNCA.

Munnu Bhai remembered on sixth death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sixth death anniversary of Munnu Bhai, the acclaimed columnist, poet and playwright, whose influence in the realms of literature and journalism remains unforgettable was observed on Friday. Born as Munir Ahmed Qureshi in 1933 in Abbottabad, Munnu Bhai was a distinguished alumnus of Gordon College, Rawalpindi.

His journey in the world of letters began early in life, fueled by a deep-seated passion for poetry. Over

the years, this passion transformed into an enduring flame that illuminated his prolific career.

In 1982, Munnu Bhai penned the widely acclaimed drama 'Sona Chandi' for PTV, capturing the hearts of audiences across Pakistan. Notable dramas like 'Dast' and 'Ashiana' further solidified his position as a master storyteller. Beyond the world of television, Munnu Bhai authored thousands of columns that reflected his insightful perspectives on

various issues.

Among his celebrated literary works are 'Mohabbat Ki Ek Sau Nazmein,' 'Jangal Udaas Hai,' and 'Insani Manzar Nama,' showcasing the depth and diversity of his creative genius.

Munnu Bhai's impact extended beyond the realms of arts and literature. In his commitment to social causes, he founded the 'Sundas Foundation,' an organization dedicated to supporting children suffering from thalassemia.

Elections to be held on time: Tariq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) senior leader Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Friday said that the elections will be held on time and PML-N will soon unveil a comprehensive and dedicated election manifesto for the welfare of the people.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that the leadership of Pakistan Muslim League (N) has always fulfilled its promises and will do so again. He said that his leadership had successfully offset the energy shortfall and eliminated terrorism from the country. He claimed that PML-N is fully prepared to go to the polls and will emerge as an effective parliamentary force.

He said Mian Nawaz Sharif always believed in practical work instead of making hollow slogans.

PML-N likely to unveil its written manifesto in next couple of days: Irfan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Senator Irfan Siddiqui said on Friday that his party will unveil its written manifesto in the next two days.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that his party would win the general elections based on its commendable performance. PML-N would come to power with the help of public voters to resolve the issues of common people and remove

the sense of deprivation among its people living in remote areas, he added.

He said that his opponents had performed poorly during their government in the past and they could not compete with PML-N again.

In response to a question, he said that if the voter turnout increases in this election, it will be a big success for all political parties where women, men and youth need to participate equally.

Madad Ali directs to accommodate teachers serving on deputation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi Friday issued directives for accommodating those teachers serving in Islamabad under the Federal Directorate of

Education (FDE) for more than 20 years on wedlock policy. The minister said this during a meeting with a delegation of teachers serving on deputation in FDE from provinces, said a press release.

Madad Ali Sindhi said

that teachers that have served in the capital for more than 20 years through the wedlock policy would be regularised in FDE. He said that these teachers have spent numerous years in FDE and Islamabad and hence should be accommodated.

ANF seizes 155 kg drugs in seven operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover 155 kg drugs and arrested eight accused, said an Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that 2 kg heroin was recovered from a parcel booked for the UK at a cargo office at Allama Iqbal Airport while an accused was also arrested.

In the second operation, 102 kg of hashish was recovered from the Kuchlak bypass area in Quetta.

In the third operation conducted at Karkhano market Peshawar, 30 kg charras were recovered.

14 kg hashish was recovered from two accused rounded up from Jail Road Haripur area while 5 kg hashish was recovered from Theera Orakzai area.

In the sixth operation, 1 kg of hashish was recov-

ered from three accused arrested from the Pirwadhai Mor area in Rawalpindi.

In the seventh operation, 300 intoxicated tablets (ecstasy) were recovered from the possession of two accused netted in the Bahria Town Phase-4 area in Rawalpindi.

Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

Police to ensure foolproof security arrangements

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Police is constantly engaged to ensure effective security arrangements and deal with any untoward incidents during the protests of religious and political parties in the high-security zone.

According to the details, following the special directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police is constantly engaged to maintain the law and order situation in

the federal capital, ensuring the safety of lives and property of the citizens.

In this regard, the officers and officials of the Islamabad Capital Police are performing their duties effectively to ensure security arrangements and deal with any untoward incidents during the protests of religious and political parties in the high-security zone. The senior police officers issued instructions to the officers and personnel posted on duty and said that the protection of all

public and private offices and embassies located in the high-security zone is of utmost importance.

Islamabad Capital Police is using all resources to maintain the law and order situation in the federal capital. The citizens are requested to call "Pucar-15" or report via the "ICT-15 App" regarding any suspicious person or activity. The protection of life and property of citizens is among the top priorities of the Islamabad Capital Police.

Chinese embassy delegation visits Central Police Office

ISLAMABAD (APP): The delegation of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Pakistan visited the Central Police Office (CPO) here and met with Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan.

The Additional Inspector General of Police, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other senior police officers were also present on the occasion, said a press release issued on Friday. The delegation, under the leadership of the Chinese Consul, gifted protective equipment to the

Islamabad Capital Police and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police on behalf of the People's Republic of China, for which the ICCPO thanked the Chinese Ambassador.

He told the delegation that the Islamabad Capital Police has taken several crucial measures for the security of the Chinese Embassy.

The delegation was also briefed about the establishment of the Special Protection Unit (SPU) of the Islamabad Capital Police.

ICCPPO also expressed its gratitude to the People's

Republic of China for organizing various training programs to increase the capacity building of police officials. The Chinese delegation appreciated the efforts of the Government of Pakistan and the Islamabad Capital Police in ensuring the effective security of the citizens of the People's Republic of China in Pakistan. Furthermore, the Chinese delegation affirmed that cooperation between Islamabad Capital Police and Beijing Police will be boosted in the future as well.

Time to upgrade clean drinking water facility for Isoolites

ISLAMABAD (APP): With federal capital's population surpassing two million, the natural resources available for the city are getting under severe stress as citizens have to face issues like water scarcity, waste disposal and roads infrastructure.

The citizens are worried about uninterrupted supply of water for domestic use especially clean drinking water as contaminated water in most parts of the country had already resulted in ailment of millions of Pakistanis with Hepatitis, Diarrhea and other stomach related diseases.

Although the Capital Development Authority (CDA) continuously remains on its toes to meet growing water demands of citizens, many residents of Islamabad believe to expand this network across the Capital Territory. Keeping in view the density of the underground water, the Authority has installed water filtration plants at various locations to facilitate residents and save them from water borne diseases.

The Authority is presently operating over 100 filtration plants in settled sectors of Islamabad. But, the situation in some adjacent areas yet needs improvement where these plants are managed by the representatives' local governments.

Despite scattered complaints about hygiene and cleanliness, overall situation is stated to be better than three, four years ago.

"This is a noble endeavor by CDA as clean drinking water is requirement of every individual," said Kashif Munir, a resident of sector G-10. "But, the Authority needs to fully cognizant of fulfilling health and hygiene standards at these plants."

Claiming about lesser efficiency of filtration plants in Sabzi Mandi, G-

10/3 and I-9, Kashif drew attention of the Authority towards proper maintenance of these plants.

"Some plants are in poor condition with water leakage becoming a routine matter," he said. "These plants need proper supervision and security and timely repair and maintenance to control water wastage and keep the places clean."

As contaminated drinking water poses serious health hazards and ailment and death sometimes, there is dire need for policies to ensure clean drinking water for all.

Such initiative would not save the precious money of citizens being incurred on curing water borne diseases but also help save this precious resource for coming generations.

Qasim Khan, a resident of I-9 has also mentioned to problems like delayed repair of poorly performing plants as well as their capacity to cater the needs of people.

"The Authority must comply with the protocols of cleanliness, repair and upgradation of these plants to make the citizens fully benefit from this facility," he suggested.

"Sometimes the ground staff keeps oblivious to maintenance that worsens the situation," he said. "Therefore, periodical maintenance and checking water quality was imperative."

He observed that at some plants the taps were insufficient to meet masses needs. "At such plants people have to wait for inordinate amounts of time to get water because of the lesser taps." On the other hand, the officials of Capital Development Authority claim that Water Supply Department of CDA takes all necessary steps to ensure supply of clean drinking water in the city.

"We are presently running over 100 filtration plants operated by designated staff. This figure is three times higher what we had on ground four years back," the official claimed.

"With the construction of more filtration plants in Islamabad, we have ensured that clean drinking water is easily available to the citizens," he remarked. He informed that filtration plants in all sectors of Islamabad are operational and people are fully benefiting from this facility. "Our senior staff and officials randomly inspect these plants to monitor their performance. The area is cleaned and the filters are replaced in time."

He said the tests of water supplied from these plants are conducted every month by PCRWR and the CDA laboratory to ensure that contaminants are properly removed and healthy and safe water is provided to citizens.

"To avoid rush at these plants, we have now started them operating round the clock," he said. "Now it is up to their convenience as when can come to these facilities for getting water." He also mentioned to CDA's collaboration with NGOs to continuously monitor water quality and proper maintenance of the plants. "The CDA has also appointed focal persons in every sector to address citizens' complaints about these plants."

Due to contaminated water resource in the catchment areas as well as heavy density of minerals in the ground water, there is an urgent need for regular testing and verifying of all drinking water sources through effective mitigation measures. Simply by doing this, we can save extra money spent on water borne diseases, control wastage and conserve our precious resource to provide healthy environment to our people.



ISLAMABAD: People crossing nullah through temporary wooden ladder along road at Pirwadhai.

10.5b Afs paid to orphans: MMD

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled Affairs (MMD) announced the payment of 10.5 billion Afghanis to orphans and the disabled in 1402 (current solar year). The ministry spokesman, Faisal Khamosh, said that 620,000 widows and disabled people are registered at the ministry. Khamosh told TOLONews: "In the current financial year of 1402, 10.5 billion Afghanis have been paid through the banking system to orphans, widow women and disabled people.

Afghan national flees to Kabul

KABUL (Agencies): In a recent unveiling by Crime Stoppers, Mansor Abdul, a 34-year-old Afghan national, has been identified as a key figure in a major auto theft ring in Canada, now seeking refuge in Kabul to escape Canadian law enforcement. During a press conference, York Regional Police, in collaboration with the Equite Association and Crime Stoppers of York Region, disclosed their top five most wanted suspects for auto theft in 2023, with Abdul topping the list.

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

Kabul University attack mastermind found in Iran, linked to Kerman bloodshed



KABUL (Agencies): On Friday, January 19th, the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence revealed that Adel Arif, the perpetrator of the Kabul University attack in 2020, had a role in the recent attacks in Kerman, Iran.

Despite being sentenced to execution by the previ-

ous Afghan government, Adel Arif was released from Bagram Prison following the Taliban's resurgence in August 2021. Iran's Ministry of Intelligence announced that Adel Arif, also known as Adel Panjshiri, has been in western Tehran and is currently under pursuit.

The ministry released images of Adel Arif and urged Iranian citizens to cooperate in his apprehension and detention, as he is a member of ISIS-Khorasan. According to the statement by the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence, Adel had direct communi-

cation with Abdul Hakim Tuhidi, the ISIS-Khorasan commander in Kerman, and was previously detained for planning a suicide attack at Kabul University, only to be released from Bagram Prison after the Taliban took Kabul.

The statement also noted that after his release from prison, Adel Arif returned to criminal activities.

Iran's Ministry of Intelligence confirmed that several of his associates, all members of ISIS-Khorasan, have been identified and detained, but Mohammad Adel Arif remains at large and under pursuit.

Adel Arif's involvement in the deadly attack at Kabul University in 2020, which lasted for about six hours, resulted in nearly 20 casualties, primarily young students. Despite initial denials, it was revealed that the attack was carried out by the ISIS-Khorasan branch, and Adel Arif, who had studied Sharia at a university, was later recruited by extremist networks and implicated in the crime.

US admits sending \$40m weekly to Afghanistan amid controversy



KABUL (Agencies): The U.S. Department of State has confirmed that it sends \$80 million in cash to Afghanistan under Taliban control every 10 to 14 days. This comes as the Taliban, since June, does not disclose the receipt of \$40 million packages through the media to avoid criticism.

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan

Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported on Friday, January 19th, citing the United Nations Office (UNAMA) that this cash is held in a dedicated account at a private bank and is not transferred to the Central Bank under the Taliban control.

However, critics argue that the Taliban still influence how this money is spent. In June 2023, a reliable

source at the Central Bank of Afghanistan under Taliban control confirmed that \$40 million packages of humanitarian aid are being sent to Kabul, but the Taliban no longer publicizes this news through the media.

The Central Bank of Afghanistan under Taliban control last time announced in April of 2023 that a \$40 million

aid package had arrived in Kabul.

Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, they have not been recognized by the international community and remain under sanctions. Despite this, the US continues to send \$40 million in so-called humanitarian aid, raising concerns about the group's influence over the financial assistance.

Over 70pc Rabies vaccine not available: MoPH

KABUL (Pajhwok): Dog bite incidents have increased by 14 percent in the first six months of the ongoing solar year comparing to the same period of the last year, according to the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH). This comes at a time when the MoPH is faced with 70 percent shortage of Postexposure prophylaxis (PEP) vaccine. The MoPH in a report said 15,906 dog bite incidents in the centre and provinces registered in the first six months of the ongoing solar year.

Most of these incidents had happened in capital Kabul, four victims of dog bit incidents had been lost.

This comes that last year during first six months around 12,000 incidents had registered. According to the officials in the past two years the incidents related to dog bite had increased nationwide while the vaccine provided for this purpose by the World Health Organisation (WHO) was not sufficient.

Dr. Fakhruddin Stanikzai, head of the Zoonosis Diseases section at the MoPH, said Rabies disease was one of the viral diseases and zoonosis that caused acute brain inflammation, this virus can cause disease in all warm-blood-



ed animals, including humans. The virus enters a person's body from the saliva of an animal suffering from this disease, through the bite site, goes to the muscles towards the central nerves and starts growing.

He said Initial symptoms of rabies include generic signs like fever, pain and unusual or unexplained tingling, pricking, or burning sensations at the wound site. As the virus moves to the central nervous system, progressive and fatal inflammation of the brain and spinal cord develops. Finally the patient start

fear from light, water and wind and within less than 10 days the person dies.

14 percent surge in dog bite incidents

According to the information of the MoPH in the first six months of ongoing year 15,906 dog bite incidents happened while last year 12,000 dog bite incidents happened during the same period last year. This year's facts and figures included 2,337 children, 2980 women and the remaining men.

According to the MOPH, last year 33,089 dog bite incident registered nationwide, 18 victims of these incident

had lost their lives. The World Health Organisation (WHO) report said that Rabies is a vaccine-preventable disease which existed in over 150 countries and caused the death of thousands of people mainly in Asia and Africa, 40 percent victims of this virus are children under the age of 15. According to Stanikzai, most numbers of dog bite incident recorded in Kabul which are 5,207, in the second number is Herat province with 1,453 incidents, Nangarhar 960 while Logar and Jawzjan recorded the last number of cases with 30 dog bite incidents each.

KABUL (Agencies): Her face showed that she had accepted the forced marriage with no other option. She looked resigned, knowing there was no way out, but she carried it with a heavy heart.

International organizations are aware that early and forced marriages, as well as the sale of underage girls in the name of marriage, are ongoing issues in Afghanistan. These issues often involve heartbreaking personal stories of human rights violations. This report features the story of a victim of forced marriage who once aspired to wear a doctor's white coat.

Just one week ago, Gul Afrouz was detained along with a group of girls on charges of "improper dress" by the authorities promoting virtue and preventing vice. When her father and brothers released her from custody and brought her home, they decided to marry her off the same night.

Gul Afrouz says she is supposed to be married to a man whom she barely knows. She feels trapped and exclaims with despair and anger, "Why should I get married just because the Taliban imprisoned me? Wasn't it my own choice?"

Over the past month,

Taliban authorities have detained many girls, mostly from western Kabul, on charges of "improper dress." Most of these girls were released on bail after spending at most one night in detention, but according to Gul Afrouz, the situation is different for girls who were subjected to the "Taliban prison experience." Like thousands of other girls, she had her own dreams. Pursuing an education and securing a respectable job topped her list of aspirations. She says, "I had a dream of becoming a doctor. I had a strong fascination with the white coats that doctors wear. Whenever I saw them, I felt inspired."

Before the Taliban took over, Gul Afrouz worked

half a day at a beauty salon to cover her university expenses. While gazing at the scattered flowers, she recounts, "First, we lost our freedom of choice in clothing, then they deprived us of education, threatened beauticians, closed the doors of beauty salons, issued a ban on women working, and... How far will this situation continue?" Gul Afrouz's mother, who is herself a victim of forced marriage, told Khaama Press, "Gul Afrouz had gone to buy a cake from the market for Mother's Day, but due to her ill-fate, Taliban took my daughter to their police station because she was not wearing a hijab."

According to Gul's mother, "It's been a week;

she hasn't eaten properly, nor does she sleep well. She's like a statue. Whatever we say, she just does it. I curse the day I brought this girl into the world." She continues, "Taking a young girl to the police station is a stain of shame. My daughter has no honour left among our tribe and relatives. They laugh at my grey hair and the pride of my children, saying that a certain girl was taken to the police station."

Gul Afrouz has not spoken about her experience of detention by the Taliban. She has not shared her experiences even with her family members. However, her mother reveals that her daughter has not been in good spirits since her detention.



UNDP Report: Women's rights and reviving productive sectors vital for Afghanistan's recovery



KABUL (Agencies): The UNDP Afghanistan revealed a socio-economic report on Thursday, shedding light on the country's challenging situation since August 2021.

The report, titled "Two Years in Review: Changes in Afghanistan's Economy, Households, and Cross-Cutting Sectors," highlights restrictions on women's rights and a weakened banking sys-

tem are urgent concerns requiring international cooperation. Despite some positive developments in areas like macroeconomic stability and security, Afghanistan's overall path remains challenging.

The report shows that Afghanistan's economy has shrunk by 27% since 2020. It also introduces the Subsistence Insecurity Index (SII), which indicates that

69% of Afghans don't have enough resources for basic living.

The report highlights some progress in certain areas like macroeconomic stability, security, and control of opium production and illicit trade. However, it emphasizes that these gains have not been sufficient to alter Afghanistan's overall course.

It added that the severe

impact of humanitarian and economic crises, along with restrictions on women's rights, on Afghanistan's female population. Women face limited access to public spaces, reduced food consumption, and increased income inequality compared to men. Alarming, the proportion of employed women has nearly halved, dropping from 11% in 2022 to just 6% in 2023 across all sectors.

Stephen Rodrigues, UNDP Resident Representative in Afghanistan, emphasized the role of international assistance and said, "International assistance has helped save millions of Afghans from starvation, sustained the delivery of essential social services, and ensured the continuation of hundreds of thousands of livelihoods."

"However, humanitarian assistance is declining at a time when an overwhelming majority of the Afghan population remains highly vulnerable, and subsistence insecurities remain very high. The assistance and efforts require complementary investment to stimulate the recovery of the private sector, financial system, and overall production capacity of the economy," the

report added.

It further highlighted the importance of addressing challenges in the banking system, particularly the microfinance sector. This sector plays a vital role in financing women-led micro and small enterprises, which have seen a significant 60% contraction

since 2021.

UNDP emphasizes the need for urgent actions to prevent further decline in Afghanistan. The organization calls for a comprehensive approach that prioritizes sustaining livelihoods, ensuring the well-being of the most vulnerable, especially women and girls, and

focuses on local economic development, resilience to shocks, and strong private sector-led growth.

Meanwhile, the report stressed that it is crucial to prioritize women's economic participation at the forefront of any efforts aimed at addressing Afghanistan's crises.



Israel president hit with criminal complaint in Switzerland

GENEVA (AFP): Israeli President Isaac Herzog has been targeted with a criminal complaint during a visit to Switzerland, Swiss prosecutors said Friday, amid allegations of crimes against humanity over the war in Gaza. The Federal Prosecutor's Office (BA) confirmed that it had received a criminal complaint against the Israeli president, who was at the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s annual meeting in Davos on Thursday to discuss the Gaza war.

"The criminal complaints will now be examined in accordance with the usual procedure," BA said in a statement, adding that it was in contact with the foreign ministry "to examine the question of the immunity of the person concerned." It did not say what the specific complaints were, or who had filed them. WEF confirmed to Arab News that Swiss authorities did not contact them regarding the complaint against the Israeli president.

But a statement allegedly issued by the people behind the complaint, entitled "Legal Action Against Crimes Against Humanity" and obtained by AFP, said several unnamed individuals had filed charges with federal prosecutors and with cantonal authorities in Basel, Bern and Zurich. The statement said the plaintiffs were seeking a criminal prosecution in parallel to a case brought before the UN's International Court of Justice by South Africa, which accuses Israel of genocide in its offensive in Gaza.

Addressing the issue of immunity, the statement suggested that it could be lifted "in certain circumstances," including in cases of alleged crimes against humanity, adding that "these conditions are met in this case." South Africa launched the emergency case at the ICJ in The Hague this month, arguing that Israel had breached the 1948 UN Genocide Convention. South Africa demanded that the judges order Israel to halt its offensive in the Palestinian territory. Israel has denounced the case as "distorted."

Fighting has ravaged the Gaza Strip since Hamas's attacks on Israel on October 7 that resulted in the deaths of about 1,140 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures. Israel responded with a relentless offensive that has killed at least 24,762 Palestinians, around 70 percent of

Israeli minister says only a deal can free captives as rifts split cabinet

JERUSALEM: A deal will be needed to ensure captives still held in the Gaza Strip are released alive, Israeli war cabinet minister and former military chief Gadi Eizenkot says, adding that a lightning raid would be extremely unlikely to succeed.

Eizenkot, whose youngest son was killed in fighting in Gaza last month, said the fate of the captives should take priority over other war aims, even if that means Israel missing out on an opportunity to take out the political leader of Hamas. Asked if the captives could be released in a rescue mission similar to the 1976 operation in which Israeli commandos freed about 100 hostages in Entebbe, Uganda, he said it was unlikely to happen. "The hostages are scattered in such a way – even underground – that the likelihood [of such an operation] is extremely low," Eizenkot told Israel's Channel 12 programme Uvda late on Thursday.

"We are still making efforts and looking for every opportunity, but the likelihood is low and to say that this is how it will happen is to sow an illusion," Israel estimated that about 130 captives remain in Gaza and 27 have died in captivity. More than 100 captives seized during Hamas's cross-border attack into southern Israel on October 7 were freed during a week-long November truce. "I think it is necessary to say boldly that it is impossible to bring the hostages back alive in the near future without a deal," Eizenkot said in the interview. But he added that the broader war aims would "still be valid" after any temporary ceasefire. At least 24,762 people have been killed in Israel's air, ground and sea offensive in Gaza. The revised death toll in Israel from the October 7 Hamas attacks stands at 1,139. Eizenkot's comments were the latest sign of disagreement among Israel's political and military leaders over the direction of the offensive in Gaza, now in its fourth month. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant have said the fighting will continue until Hamas is crushed and argued that only military action can win the captives' release. Hamas seeks an end to the war before discussing releases and has demanded thousands of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel be released in exchange for those held captive in Gaza. Eizenkot is one of four members of the war cabinet along with Netanyahu, Gallant and former Defence Minister Benny Gantz.

In his interview, he also said he had convinced officials in the group to hold off on any attack on Hezbollah in Lebanon in the days after the Hamas attacks, confirming that a preemptive strike was called off at the last minute during the early days of the war. He described himself as being among those arguing against such a strike in an October 11 cabinet meeting that left him hoarse from shouting. "I think our presence there prevented Israel from making a grave strategic mistake," he said. Both Israel and Hezbollah have signalled they want to avoid war, but both said they are ready to fight if necessary. Eizenkot also dismissed suggestions that the military has delivered a decisive blow against Hamas. Gallant said Israeli forces have disabled the Hamas command structure in northern Gaza, from where significant numbers of soldiers were withdrawn this week, and that Israel's focus is now on the southern half of the territory. But Hamas has continued to fight back across Gaza, even in the most devastated areas, and launched rockets into Israel. "We haven't yet reached a strategic achievement, or rather only partially," Eizenkot said. "We did not bring down Hamas." — Aljazeera

them women, children and adolescents, according to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry. Herzog told the Davos forum that Israel had launched its campaign in "self-defense" and again condemned the South Africa case as "outrageous."

"They (South Africa) basically support the atrocities and barbarism that we have seen on October 7," he

said, adding that Israel was concerned about the destruction in Gaza. "We care."

It is painful for us that our neighbors are suffering so much," he said. "But how else can we defend ourselves if our enemies decided to entrench themselves in an infrastructure of terror of unbelievable size and scope?" he said.



LIAQATPUR: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a public gathering of the party.

Iran launches air defence drill

TEHRAN (Reuters): Iran said on Friday that it successfully carried out an air defence drill using drones designed to intercept hostile targets in an area stretching from its southwestern to southeastern coasts, amid heightened tensions in the region.

"Iranian forces have successfully launched a new air defence method that uses drones to intercept and target hostile targets," state-run Press TV quoted an Iranian army spokesman as saying. The two-day drills, which began on Thursday, cover an area from Abadan in southwestern Khuzestan province to Chahbahar in southeastern Sistan and Baluchistan province that borders Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Press TV said the army's air force and navy, the aerospace force, and the navy of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) participated in the exercises. Iran and Pakistan have a history of rocky relations but both have signalled a desire to cool tensions in the wake of this week's strikes. Against the backdrop of the war in Gaza, Iran and its militia allies around the Middle East have been carrying out attacks on Israeli and US targets in the region in support of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Iran has also launched strikes on Syria against what it said were Islamic State sites, and Iraq, where it said it had struck an Israeli espionage centre.

N Korea tests underwater nuclear drone

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea has conducted a test of its underwater nuclear weapons system in a protest against this week's joint military drills by South Korea, the United States and Japan, state media KCNA said on Friday.

The test of the "Haeil-5-23" system, a name North Korea has given to its nuclear-capable underwater attack drones, was carried out by the defence ministry's think tank in the waters off its east coast, the report said, without specifying a date.

The ministry's unnamed spokesman accused the United States, South Korea and Japan of "getting frantic" with military exercises, warning of "catastrophic consequences." The three countries' navies held their three-day regular drills until Wednesday, alongside the US aircraft carrier Carl Vinson, as part of efforts to improve their responses to Pyongyang's evolving nuclear and missile threats.

"Our army's underwater nuke-based countering posture is being further rounded off and its various maritime and underwater responsive actions will continue to deter the hostile military manoeuvres of the navies of the US and its allies," the North Korean ministry spokesman said in a statement, according to KCNA. North Korean state television has aired previous atmospheric explosion tests, which have been monitored by US and South Korean authorities, but the reported underwater weapon has not been independently verified.

Later on Friday, South Korea's defence ministry issued a warning against the North's recent series of weapons tests, calling for an immediate halt.

EU ministers to meet Israeli, Palestinian envoys

BRUSSELS (AFP): EU foreign ministers will hold a series of meetings Monday with counterparts from Israel, the Palestinian Authority and key Arab nations about the war in Gaza and prospects for a future peace settlement, officials said.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz and his Palestinian counterpart Riyad Al-Maliki are not expected to meet each other during their Brussels visits. The foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia will also meet with European ministers in Brussels as fears swirl that a wider conflict could engulf the Middle East.

European diplomats said their aim is to sound out each side over ways to end the violence on the ground and the next steps toward a longer-term solution. The EU has struggled for a united stance on the conflict in Gaza as staunch backers of Israel such as Germany have rejected demands for an immediate cease-fire from the likes of Spain and Ireland. Hamas, the Islamist movement that controlled the Gaza Strip, launched a surprise attack

on Israel on October 7, resulting in the death of about 1,140 people in Israel, most of them civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures.

Militants also seized about 250 hostages during the attacks, around 132 of whom Israel says remain in Gaza. Israel has vowed to "annihilate" Hamas in response and its relentless air and ground offensive has killed at least 24,620 Palestinians, around 70 percent of them women, children and adolescents, according to figures from the Hamas-run health ministry. EU officials have sketched out broad demands for "the day after" the current war ends in Gaza, calling for no long-term Israeli occupation, an end to Hamas's rule and a role for the Palestinian Authority in running the territory.

The 27-nation bloc — along with the United States — believes the creation of a Palestinian state remains the only viable way to secure a lasting peace. But Israel's right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on

Thursday flatly rejected that suggestion. France has said the EU on Monday will adopt sanctions on Hamas over the October 7 attack. The Islamist movement's Gaza political chief Yahya Sinwar was added to the EU's "terrorist" blacklist on Tuesday. Hamas is already listed as a "terrorist" organization by the EU.

Diplomats say EU countries are also in the process of drawing up sanctions against "extremist" Israeli settlers in the West Bank. In the face of spiralling violence across the region, EU countries this week gave initial backing to setting up a naval mission to help protect shipping in the Red Sea from attacks by Yemen's Houthi. A proposal for deployment says it could have three frigates and a mandate to defend ships, but not attack the Houthis onshore, like a US-led coalition operating in the region. EU ministers meeting on Monday are set to discuss the mission, but it is only expected to be finalized next month. The Netherlands and Germany have said they are willing to contribute ships to mission.

All faiths preach peace and humanity: Mushaal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick has highlighted the core principles of equality saying that all citizens of Pakistan are equal before the law regardless of their faith, caste and race.

She was addressing a consultative session on the promotion of interfaith harmony in Pakistan. The consultative session was attended with equal representation by members from all faiths and organizations working for interfaith harmony. The SAPM actively listened to the participants to gain insight into challenges faced by minorities across Pakistan. In response, she assured that meaningful and effective measures would be taken to address these issues.

In her address, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, said that Pakistan derives its policies regarding minorities from the golden principles laid out by the founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in his address to the 1st Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. She highlighted that Pakistan's first cabinet comprised of members of all faiths which was a powerful illustration of Pakistan's commitment to unity in diversity. She also drew attention to the representation of unity in the national flag's colors.

Mushaal Mullick underscored the universal teachings of co-existence, humanity, and peace inherent in all faiths. She expressed concern over the misrepresentation of religions by certain factions which was leading to the promotion of hatred on a global scale. In particular,

she highlighted the menace of Zionist and Hindutva ideologies and emphasized that both posed a significant and grave threat to global peace.

Mushaal threw light on the invaluable contributions of Pakistan's minorities in the nation's progress. She also highlighted the efforts of people of all faiths in the creation of the country. She expressed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to ensuring that minorities had the opportunity to visit their sacred sites within the country. She said that the Kartarpur Corridor was an example of such commitment through which thousands of Sikh Yatries visited their holy places across the border on annual basis. This initiative served as a testament to Pakistan's dedication to the promotion of religious harmony in its diverse population, she added.

Lion may hide again

(Continued from Page 1)

Only the PPP feels for the people and supports them. The PPP is the only party that represents the poor, downtrodden and underprivileged. The other party is represented by a lion that feeds on the blood of the poor people, and its thirst has not been quenched even after coming to power thrice. It desires to do the same after coming to power for the fourth time.

When the lion came to power for the first time, the burden was carried by the people and the country. When it was imposed the second time with a two-thirds majority, it again squared up to the same entities that helped it come to power.

Then, the government ended again and the people were crushed under its weight. When the government ended for the third time with a two-thirds majority, it again fought with the same quarters that had aided it. After coming to power for the fourth

time, it will make the same hue and cry and repeat the 'Mujhe Kyun Nikala?' narrative.

The people of Punjab need to be apprised that the contest is between two parties. A majority of the people in Punjab are anti-PML-N and do not wish to see Nawaz Sharif as the PM for the fourth time. The people need to be made aware of the power their vote holds and should stamp the 'arrow' once and give Bilawal Bhutto Zardari an opportunity. Chairman Bilawal said that he will ensure that a government of the people is made, and the conspiracy being made against it is quashed.

Bilawal said that if a government of the people, and resultantly the PPP is made, then it aims to complete the struggle it had initiated for South Punjab.

The Party will establish free-of-cost healthcare institutions and universities all over South Punjab, as it has already done in Sindh. The people not only need to vote for the 'arrow', but take their family members

along and decide their own fate. They should not leave their destiny in the hands of any other entity. If the people come out in huge numbers, they can stop the conspiracy that is being made against them. The Party will be better positioned to serve the people if all of its representatives are elected.

Bilawal said that Syed Murtaza Mehmud, Ghazanfar Ali Langah, Qazi Ahmed Saeed, Hamid Saeed Kazmi, Mohammad Islam Aslam, Mian Shahzad Anwar, Makhdoom Tahir, Qamar ud Din Khan, Makhdoom Mohammad Irtaza, Chaudhary Zafar Iqbal Warraich, Mohammad Riaz Solangi, Javed Hassan, Syed Mustafa Mehmud, Habib Khan, Raees Nabeel Ahmed and Mumtaz Ali Chhang are the PPP's representatives and will be triumphant with the support of the people. Chairman Bilawal raised the symbol of the 'arrow' and said that it is the symbol of the Waseb, Punjab, farmers, labourers, youth and the entire country.

UN says Palestinians detained by Israeli forces humiliated, beaten

GAZA: A United Nations human rights official has called for an end to the mistreatment of Palestinian detainees by Israeli security forces in the Gaza Strip, who were subjected to weeks of imprisonment in unknown locations and physical abuse. Palestinian men were held by Israeli forces for between 30 to 55 days, Ajith Sunghay said in a report on Friday during his visit to Gaza, where he met some of the released detainees.

"There are reports of men who are subsequently released, but only in diapers without any adequate clothing in this cold weather," he said, adding that it was not clear why they were made to wear diapers but that "they were clearly visibly shocked and even shaken when I met them". Several videos shared by the Israeli army since the war began show hundreds of Palestinian men stripped to their underwear, sitting outdoors in the cold, sometimes blindfolded. In a few videos, women and children were also seen.

The videos were taken at locations across Gaza, including Beit Lahiya, Shujayea and Jabalia. According to the Euro-Med Human

Rights Monitor, multiple freed prisoners said that after being made to curse themselves and disparage Palestinian groups and political figures, they were transferred in trucks to open-air detention facilities where they endured beatings and other forms of mistreatment. "Israel must take urgent steps to ensure that all those arrested or detained are treated in line with international human rights and international humanitarian law norms and standards, notably with full respect for their due process rights," Sunghay asserted.

"Unless Israel can demonstrate imperative security grounds for each person remaining in detention, they must be charged or released." Separately on Friday, several prisoners released by Israeli forces in Gaza arrived at the Abu Youssef Al Najjar Hospital in Rafah, southern Gaza, accusing the Israeli army of mistreating them. "We were arrested by a special Israeli force in the al-Saftawi area. We were then subjected to torture and beatings. Then they ... transferred us to a detention centre at the Israeli army headquarters," Muhammad Abu Samra told Al Jazeera.

"The army ... threatened to shoot us while we were naked in the cold. Then female soldiers attacked us and we were subjected to obscene insults." The UN's Sunghay, who was in Rafah, said people were continuing to arrive in southern city, "in desperate situations, setting up makeshift shelters with any material they can get their hands on".

"I've seen men and children digging for bricks to be able to hold in place tents made with plastic bags. This is a massive human rights crisis," he said. "It is a pressure cooker environment here, in the midst of utter chaos, given the terrible humanitarian situation, shortages, and pervasive fear and anger," Sunghay noted, adding that there was an urgent need to scale up humanitarian aid for the coastal enclave.

As of Friday, 24,762 people have been killed and 62,108 injured in Israeli attacks on Gaza since the current conflict began in October, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health. The revised death toll in Israel from the October 7 Hamas attack stands at 1,139. — Arab News

Japan's 'Moon Sniper' makes historic lunar landing

TOKYO: Japan's high-precision "Moon Sniper" lander has touched down on lunar surface in a first for the country, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) has said. The Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM) probe began its "power descent sequence" towards the lunar surface early Saturday local time (15:00 GMT Friday).

The space agency said its unmanned spacecraft is currently on the moon, but is still "checking its status". More details will be given at a news conference that is expected shortly. By accomplishing this feat, Japan became the world's fifth country to put a spacecraft on the moon, using a technology it calls unprecedented and crucial for advancing lunar exploration, particularly in the quest for lunar water and the potential for human habitation.

Speaking ahead of the touchdown, Shinichiro Sakai, JAXA's SLIM project manager, said "proving Japan has this technology would bring us a huge advantage in upcoming international missions like Artemis," referring to US space agency NASA's crewed moon mission. "No other nation has achieved this." Japan has been actively looking to expand its role in space activities, forging partnerships with the United States, to

address the growing military and technological influence of China, extending even into the realm of space. Only four other nations have successfully landed on the moon — India, China, the US and Russia.

Japan is actively participating in NASA's Artemis programme with the goal of sending one of its astronauts to the moon. However, JAXA has faced multiple setbacks, including a launch failure in March of the new flagship rocket H3 that was meant to match cost-competitiveness against commercial rocket providers like SpaceX. In August, India's Chandrayaan-3 made an historic touchdown on the moon's south pole, a major technological feat given the rough terrain, highlighting the country's rise as a major player in space.

JAXA has emphasised that its high-precision technology will become a powerful tool in future exploration of hilly moon poles, seen as a potential source of oxygen, fuel and water. Japan also plans a joint unmanned lunar polar exploration with India in 2025. The Japanese agency has twice landed on small asteroids, but a moon landing is much more difficult due to its gravity, as seen in a number of recent failures.

Last year, a probe belonging to Japanese startup ispace Inc crashed onto the moon's surface, and

Russia's Luna 25 followed suit. A lander from US startup Astrobot Technology last week suffered a fuel leak, forcing it to abandon a touchdown attempt. JAXA says it will take up to a month to verify whether SLIM has achieved its high-precision goals after touchdown. On board Japan's Moon Sniper spacecraft is a little robot with a big mission: to pop open like a Transformer toy, wiggle across the lunar surface and beam images back to Earth.

The shape-shifting SORA-Q probe — codeveloped by a major toy company — has been compared with a friendly Star Wars droid and a sea turtle because of the way its metal form can navigate the dusty moon-landscape. Sora means "universe" in Japanese, while "Q" refers to the words "question" and "quest", its makers say. Slightly bigger than a tennis ball and weighing as much as a large potato — eight centimetres (three inches) across and 250 grams (half a pound) — SORA-Q was designed by JAXA with Takara Tomy, the toy company behind the original 1984 Transformers. After landing on the moon, the probe's cameras are expected to take valuable images of a crater where parts of the moon's mantle, usually hidden deep below its crust, are believed to be exposed. — Aljazeera