

### Elections postponed

ISLAMABAD (INP): The upcoming elections in NA-83 and NA-85 Constituencies have been postponed due to the passing away of an independent candidate Sadiq Ali. The candidate who passed away on Monday, January 15, was vying for the NA-83 Sargodha-II constituency with a sheep as his election symbol and simultaneously contested as an independent candidate in the NA-85 Sargodha-IV constituency.



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DAMASCUS: A heavy-duty machine removing debris of a destroyed building after an apparent Israeli attack killed members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps in Syria.

## Others parties waiting for Khalayi Makhlooq: PPP

F.P. Report

KOT ADDU: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a public gathering of the Party in Kot Addu, expressed his gratitude to the Jiyalas for coming out in huge numbers as well as the media despite the harsh weather conditions. The PPP has been campaigning all over the country since December in connection with the elections.

Bilawal said that he is the sole politician in the country who is only looking towards them and asking them for their vote. The rest of the politicians are expecting to be aided by the 'Khalayi Makhlooq'. Chairman Bilawal said that he is the grandson of Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and has been taught that the people are the source of power. This is why, the PPP has approached the people of Pakistan to ask for their support. The country is currently going through a challenging phase, coupled with a historic economic crisis. Inflation, poverty and unemployment are increasing rap-

idly and the burden is being carried by the people. The threat of terrorism is again rising and our law and order situation is becoming concerning. International conspiracies are being hatched against Pakistan and all of this is being observed by the PPP. We can combat all of these crises with the help of the people.

Bilawal said that there is no reason as to why the PPP cannot help the country emerge from this plethora of crises. The PPP's 10-point economic charter has the solutions to the problems faced by the people. Be it Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto or President Zardari, the PPP's leadership has always represented common people, labourers, farmers and the downtrodden masses. The rest of the political parties have only ever caused harm and pain to the common people while simultaneously protecting the elite and their interests. The PPP aims to put an end to this practice, and provide relief to the poor. The 10-point agenda is

met with speculation when the question of implementation arises, but Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's efforts serve as a guiding light for the Party as he fulfilled his promise of 'Roti, Kapra Aur Makaan' to the people.

Bilawal said that it is his promise to the people that he will strive to double their income within five years and construct three million houses for the poor while giving ownership to the women of the households. These are not tall claims or empty promises, since the PPP has already initiated this in Sindh. 300 units of electricity will be provided to the people free-of-cost, and the internationally-acclaimed Benazir Income Support Programme will be expanded so that the women of this country are provided interest-free loans and can make their contribution to the economy. Chairman Bilawal said that his own mother was martyred, but he wishes to serve the women of Kot Addu, South Punjab, Punjab and the entire country just like a son would.

## ECP issues postal ballots for Feb 8 polls

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has begun the process of providing postal ballot papers ahead of the upcoming general elections. The development was announced by the electoral body today.

According to the ECP, all eligible individuals will complete the process of casting their votes by January 22 through the postal ballot paper. They can download an application form for the postal ballot from the electoral authority's website. Upon receiving the postal ballot, the voter shall then send his vote to the District Returning Officer (DRO) as per the prescribed time.

General elections in Pakistan are set to take place on February 8 for which the ECP's preparations are in full swing with the electoral body looking to ensure foolproof arrangements across the country. To ensure strict security measures in place ahead of the polls, the ECP issued its "Code of Conduct for Security Personnel", warning them against bias while being on election duty.

The ECP's protocol, which excludes the Armed Forces and Civil Armed Forces, directs the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to perform their duties in accordance with the law and within the confines of the mandate assigned to the police. Security personnel — who will provide security for the printing and transport of ballot papers along with the polling bags — will perform their duties under Article 220 of the Constitution of Pakistan, Section 5 read with Section 193 of the Election Act, 2017.

Directing the security apparatus to cooperate with district returning officers (DROs), returning officers (ROs) and presiding officers (POs), the electoral body has stressed the need for LEAs to "remain impartial and neutral throughout the election process [...] and shall not act in favour of or against any political party or candidate in any manner whatsoever". Underscoring the significance of ensuring a peaceful and transparent polling process, the ECP has warned security personnel against disallowing a voter to cast his/her vote.

## 4 astronauts, including Turkey's first, arrive at space station

ISTANBUL (Reuters): A four-man crew including Turkey's first astronaut arrived at the International Space Station (ISS) early on Saturday for a two-week stay in the latest such mission arranged entirely at commercial expense by Texas-based startup company Axiom Space.

The rendezvous came about 37 hours after the Axiom quartet's Thursday evening liftoff in a rocketship from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. Both the Crew Dragon vessel and the Falcon 9 rocket that carried it to orbit were supplied, launched and operated by Elon Musk's SpaceX under contract with Axiom, as they were in the first two Axiom missions to the ISS since 2022.

Once the astronauts reach the space station, they fall under the responsibility of NASA's mission control operation in Houston. The Crew Dragon autonomously docked with the ISS at 5:42 a.m. EDT (1042 GMT) as the two space vehicles were flying roughly 250 miles (400 km) over the South Pacific, a

live NASA webcast showed.

Both were soaring in tandem around the globe at the hypersonic speed of about 17,500 miles per hour (28,200 km/h) as they joined together in orbit. With coupling achieved, it was expected to take about two hours for the sealed passageway between the space station and crew capsule to be pressurized and checked for leaks before hatches can be opened, allowing the newly arrived astronauts to move aboard the orbiting laboratory.

Plans call for the Axiom-3 crew to spend roughly 14 days in microgravity conducting more than 30 scientific experiments, many of them focused on the effects of spaceflight on human health and disease. The multinational team was led by Michael López-Alegria, 65, a Spanish-born retired NASA astronaut and Axiom executive making his sixth flight to the space station. He also commanded Axiom's debut mission - the first all-private voyage to the ISS - in April 2022.

His second-in-command

for Ax-3 is Italian Air Force Colonel Walter Villadei, 49. Rounding out the team are Swedish aviator Marcus Wandt, 43, representing the European Space Agency, and Alper Gezeravci, 44, a Turkish Air Force veteran and fighter pilot, making his nation's first human spaceflight. They will be welcomed aboard ISS by the seven members of the station's current regular crew - two Americans from NASA, one astronaut each from Japan and Denmark and three Russian cosmonauts.

Since its founding eight years ago, Houston-based Axiom has carved out a business catering to foreign governments and wealthy private patrons aiming to put their own astronauts into orbit. The company charges at least \$55 million per seat for its services organizing, training and equipping customers for spaceflight. Axiom also is one of a handful of companies building a commercial space station of its own intended to eventually replace the ISS, which NASA expects to retire around 2030.

## No country gives media access to those involved in serious crimes: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Saturday said no country in the world gave media access to those people who were involved in serious crimes.

Speaking to WION News, the minister said the former chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had been convicted and his conviction was not set aside. "He remains convicted and charged with serious crimes," he added. "As we speak, the PTI remains registered political parties and if people bring them in the federal and provincial assemblies the caretaker government has no prob-

lem. It's the people of Pakistan who have to make this decision," the minister remarked.

To a query, he said all political parties were being treated equally as the state had no favorites. The state media was giving due coverage to all the political parties. "So far, only constitutional body entrusted with holding free and fair elections is the Election Commission of Pakistan that stands committed to hold the elections on Thursday February 8, 2024," said Solangi in response to another query.

He said the constitutional caretaker government was committed to supporting the ECP in every possible

way for elections and "we will support the election commission in administrative, financial and security matters". Every political party was playing role of the victim, he said, adding "if you ask PTI they will say we are not getting level-playing field especially in Punjab and KPK and if you ask Peoples Party they will say we are not getting level-playing field in Punjab."

"Likewise, if you ask PML-N they will say we are not getting level-playing field in Sindh. If you ask Maulana Fazlu Rehman of JUI they will say we are not getting level playing field in Balochistan and KPK due to security issues," the

minister noted. He said the caretaker government had no vested interests in any political party. "We are there to provide any kind of support to the election commission which is responsible for holding the elections and creating conducive environment."

"We should wait for the results after elections conducted on February 8. Once people speak their mind when they go to polls to elect a party or a group of party I am sure we will get political stability," the minister said in response to another query. He said it was written in the preamble of the constitution that the country would be run by the people's

representatives through credible elections.

As regards the Pakistan and Afghanistan relation, he said it was squarely depended on the behaviours and actions of the interim government of Afghanistan. "If they continue harbor terrorists including TTP, I am afraid the future of those relations does not seem to be right," he remarked.

He ruled out negotiation with any armed group until and unless they laid their arms and recognized the constitution of Pakistan as governing document the supreme law of land. To another query, he said elections were on the cards both in India and

### Judge Bashir seeks leave

ISLAMABAD (INP): Accountability Court Judge Muhammad Bashir has requested medical leave until his retirement, citing health issues. According to media reports, concerns about the health of Accountability Court Judge Muhammad Bashir have come to light as he has requested medical leave until his retirement. Judge Muhammad Bashir is set to retire on March 14, 2024.

## Israeli strike on Syria kills four Iranian Revolutionary Guards

BEIRUT/DAMASCUS (Reuters): An Israeli missile strike on Syria's capital Damascus on Saturday killed four members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, including the head of the force's information unit in Syria, a security source in the regional pro-Syria alliance told Reuters.

In a statement carried on Iranian state television, the Revolutionary Guards confirmed that four of its military advisers were killed in the Israeli strike and said further details would be announced later. State TV said the targeted building was the residence of Iranian advisers in Damascus.

There was no immediate comment from Israel, which has long pursued a bombing campaign against Iran-linked targets in Syria. It has shifted to deadlier strikes in the wake of the Oct. 7 attack on Israel by militants of the Iranian-backed Palestinian Islamist group Hamas from Gaza.

Syrian state media said a building in the Mazzeh neighborhood of Damascus was targeted in a likely Israeli attack, without giving further details. Other local media in Syria said explosions were heard across the

Syrian capital.

The security source, part of a network of groups close to Syria's government and its major ally Iran, said the multi-story building was used by Iranian advisers supporting President Bashar Assad's government, and that it was entirely flattened by "precision-targeted Israeli missiles." The source said a fifth person was also killed but could not immediately identify the nationality.

Essam Al-Amin, head of the Al-Mowasat Hospital in Damascus, told Reuters that his hospital had received one corpse and three wounded people, including a woman, following Saturday's attack. A Reuters witness in Mazzeh saw ambulances and fire trucks gathered around the site of the strike, which had been cordoned off. Rescue operations for people stuck under the rubble were ongoing throughout the late morning.

A spokesman for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad told Reuters that no members of their group were wounded in the strike, following reports that some were at the bombed-out building. Israel responded to the shock Hamas assault on Oct. 7 by launching

a devastating air and ground war in Gaza with the aim of eradicating its ruling Islamist group. The conflict has reverberated across the Middle East with violence surging in Syria, Lebanon, northern Iraq and in the Red Sea.

In December, an Israeli air strike killed two Guards members, and another near Damascus on Dec. 25 killed a senior adviser to the Guards who was overseeing military coordination between Syria and Iran. Iran and its military allies in Syria have entrenched themselves in wide areas of eastern, southern and northern Syria and in several suburbs around the capital.

Meanwhile, an Israeli strike on southern Lebanon on Saturday killed two members of the Palestinian militant group Hamas as they were traveling in a car, three security sources in Lebanon told Reuters. Israel has been carrying out air strikes on southern Lebanon against Palestinian militant groups based there as well as their Lebanese ally Hezbollah, a powerful armed group, which have fired rockets across the border at Israel.

## Access to information right of every citizen: CJP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has said that access to information is a constitutional right of every citizen, and it is not just a matter of the court's will. He further said that the Supreme Court was also subject to Article 19A of the Constitution. The CJP was addressing a training workshop for journalists reporting on the higher judiciary on Saturday.

He told the gathering that a committee was working to nominate judges for the judicial commission, adding that the goal was to appoint good judges who understood the law well. "Judges should not look at each other with suspicion, but understand that they have also come to lend a hand," CJP Isa said, adding that efforts were being made to run the Supreme Judicial Council properly.

He said he had been told not to tell reporters what he had in his heart, adding that he was told that if he did so, everybody will write from the angle of their choice. "Truth is our salvation," Justice Isa said, adding that the goal for every citizen should be truth, whether they agreed with someone or not. The CJP further said that the way to change the destiny of a country is to improve the quality of educational institutions. "In the Syndicate meeting of the Quaid-e-Azam University, it was ordered to restore student unions," he revealed.

The CJP also said that important cases were being broadcast live so that people understood and raised questions. "People have the right to disagree," he added. At the event, the CJP released the three-month performance report of the judiciary. "What could have been a better opportunity than this for us to start our accountability in front of journalists," the CJP remarked, adding that information about the judiciary reached

the public only through journalists.

He said two clauses of the Constitution related to the day's ceremony were important, adding that Article 19 mentioned freedom of the press, while the second clause, Article 19A, was about the fundamental right of access to information. "As a citizen, it is your right to get any information," he maintained, adding, "Now it is not our will." He further said that it was the duty of the institutions subordinate to the federal government to provide any information demanded. "Every citizen can get information from the website of the Supreme Court. The effort is to settle more cases in less time, CJP Isa said, adding that this week, 504 cases were settled and 335 new cases filed.

**A judge who is affected by social media, violates his oath:** Supreme Court Justice Athar Minallah on Saturday said social media should not influence judges, adding that if a judge is affected by it then they are violating their oath.

Addressing the second law bridge workshop on superior court reporting at a private hotel in Islamabad, Justice Minallah said if even critics trusted the court then it was a test of the judiciary. Everyone should criticize, but also trust the judiciary, he maintained.

Referring to the lack of freedom of speech in the country, the top court judge said the endless process of censor kicked off after the state's censoring Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's August 11, 1947 speech. Reminiscing his first case as a judge, he said it was a bail plea and a 16-year-old suspect was before the court for putting up a banner against an apex court judge. The subordinate court rejected the plea saying he had committed a crime against the entire judiciary, he said adding that nobody tried to find out who got the banners made.



LAHORE: Members of civil society holding placards during protest against Israel's attack on Gaza.

## Siraj vows reforms in bureaucracy

F.P. Report

CHICHAWATNI: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq has pledged to implement comprehensive reforms in the bureaucracy after securing victory in the election on February 8.

Addressing an election rally in Chichawatni on Saturday, he criticized the prevailing civil structure and VIP culture, characterizing them as remnants of the colonial era. Sirajul Haq regretted that despite the end of British rule, their influence still permeated the country, describing it as a system that needed to be overhauled.

He emphasized that the JI would bring about changes in line with principles derived from the Quran. Asserting that Islam had governed the world for a millennium, he expressed confidence in its applicability today. To establish a system based on the Quran and Sunnah, he urged voters to support the JI, whose struggle was rooted in these principles.

The JI chief criticized former ruling political parties, labeling them as dynasties subservient to the United States and implementing policies dictated by Washington. He accused these parties of remaining silent on Israeli atrocities in Gaza and human rights violations in Occupied Kashmir, highlighting their failure to advocate for the causes of Palestine and Kashmir. He vowed that the JI, if elected, would genuinely represent the issues of Kashmir and Palestine.

Siraj contended that the country was not founded for the rule of dynasties and dictators but for the people of Pakistan to determine leadership through free and fair elections. He criticized the tested parties for creating artificial rifts and deceiving the masses. Asserting that the youth were now well-informed and unwilling to accept the status quo, he positioned the JI as the sole alternative for voters seeking genuine change in the country's destiny.





PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtinkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali addressing of the CECOS University convocation in 2024 in Hayatabad.

## Governor urges students to focus research, innovations

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtinkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali here Saturday highlighted the significance of modern technology and said that we can meet the challenges of existing era of transformation by venturing into emerging fields of science and technology.

He was addressing annual convocation of CECOS University Hayatabad as a Chief Guest. The ceremony among others was attended by caretaker minister for education, Dr. Qasim Jan, President CECOS

University, Engineer, Muhammad Tanveer, faculty and senate members besides students and parents.

Governor said that educated youth can play role in achieving goals of development and prosperity adding that global challenges demands that our youth must venture into contemporary fields of technology and education.

He congratulated students and parents and stressed upon students to set target for their lives and work with dedication to achieve them. He said

that youth should bring positive changes in the society by utilizing their skills and capabilities.

KP Governor also urged students to focus innovations and research on new technologies aiming progress of the country and nation. He said that certain elements are trying to misguide youth and added that we must join hands and work in cohesion to foil certain attempts.

He also appreciated efforts of university administration and faculty members for providing

quality education to students and expressed that efforts would be continued to prepare students for combating challenges of competitive world.

Governor distributed certificates and degrees among 129 students who completed studies in civil engineering, electrical engineering, software engineering, mechanical engineering, computer science, engineering management, business administration and architecture. He also distributed gold medals among 15 outstanding students.

## KUCJ office bearer takes oath

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The oath taking ceremony of Khyber Union of Citizen Journalists while Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader and well-known businessman Haji Iqtar Afridi administered the oath from the newly elected office bearer.

The newly elected office bearer including President Iqar Ahmed General Secretary Muhammad Ibrahim Senior Vice President Seemab Afridi Vice President Ashfaq Zirk Afridi Finance Secretary Suez Afridi. Expressing his thoughts, President Iqar Ahmed said that Khyber Union of Citizen Journalists is a group of journalists which is run according to the constitution and law and the welfare of the members is our mission.

In our area, any kind of abuse will not be tolerated by any working journalist, journalists will promote journalism in a positive way. In the End special guest Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Haji Iqtar Ahmed said that Without a doubt, journalism is the small pillar of the country.

The chief minister said that government was aware of the issues faced by journalists. He said that all possible steps would be taken to resolve those issues. He added that We believed in freedom of media and welcomed positive criticism.

## Police arrest three robbers, recover cash: Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Police claimed to have arrested the three culprits who allegedly robbed millions of cash from a house in Lahore's Defence area on Saturday.

According to private news reports, the police stated that the arrested culprits allegedly looted Rs 2.6 million from a house and went into hiding in different areas of Lahore.

In a statement, the law enforcers claimed that the police party stopped the culprits near the Bambawali-Ravi-Bedian (BRB) Canal and recovered the looted amount, a bike, and a pistol. They were sent to lockup for further investigation.

## 60pc desilting work completed

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Irrigation Department has completed 60 per cent work of desilting of canals in the province.

According to official sources here on Saturday, under-training officers at the Civil Services Academy participated in the ongoing desilting campaign.

Superintending Engineer Sarfraz Khalid and XEN Rana Tariq Saif briefed the officers about advantages of canal desilting. A spokesman for the Irrigation Department said that canals desilting operation was going on as per its schedule.

The department officials were in the field and monitoring the desilting work to meet the desilting targets.

## Minister saddened by Journalist Parveen death

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Caretaker Minister for Information Amir Mir expressed deep sense of grief over the death of a senior council member of the Lahore Press Club and a prominent journalist Parveen Khan.

# CM says all parties allowed to run polls campaigns

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi presided over the 36th provincial cabinet meeting at the CM Office, here on Saturday.

Addressing the cabinet meeting, the CM said all political parties and independent candidates would be permitted to hold their electoral activities.

Conduct of free and fair elections would be ensured under any circumstance, he added.

In the light of the code of conduct, issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), all candidates would be allowed to hold their rallies, going door-to-door and displaying banners and posters. All political parties would be provided level playing field, Naqvi promised.

The CM underscored that action would definitely be taken in case of making a speech against

the Pakistan Army or the institutions. "Holding free and fair elections is my prime responsibility which I will duly fulfill. We will fully cooperate with the Election Commission in order to ensure holding of elections in a peaceful and fair environment," the CM added.

Approval was granted during the Cabinet meeting for allocation of Rs 4.10 billion for making foolproof arrangements for elections and providing security. Approval was accorded for allocation of funds worth Rs 8 billion for establishment of Punjab Cancer Care Hospital at Manawan Lahore. Approval was also granted to undertake new measures for treatment of patients under the Sehat Sahulat Programme.

The CM, during the meeting, ordered stopping

increase in lab test fee in big hospitals. Approval was granted for allocation of additional funds for early completion of additional work of Akbar Chowk flyover project.

It was also decided to undertake remodeling of choking points so as to improve traffic flow on various boulevards and roads of Lahore. Remodeling work at choking points would be completed at the cost of Rs 700 million.

The decisions made during the 16th meeting of the Cabinet Standing Committee for Finance and Development were endorsed in the cabinet meeting.

Provincial ministers, advisers, chief secretary, IG Police, Advocate General Punjab, secretaries of departments concerned and senior officials attended the meeting.

# Establishing harmony based society holds key significance: Aneeq

KARACHI (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed has said that establishing a harmony based society, based on patience, love and brotherhood holds key significance.

Addressing 'Interfaith Harmony Conference' organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony at St. Patrick's Cathedral here on Saturday, the minister urged the people to end strictness in their behaviours and come forward with the message of brotherhood for a liveable society.

Alluding to the minorities, Aneeq Ahmed said, 'We will work jointly.' He said we all agreed to make the society a better place to live in. He further said that no religion taught killings and bloodshed but they taught love and peace.

The law had great importance and it played a significant role in society, he said adding, 'We have

faith in all heavenly holy books and the Holy Quran is the custodian of all these books.'

The minister said that non-Muslim brothers had rendered great services and beautified the metropolis.

# Commissioner directs to ensure implementation of ECP's CoC

KARACHI (APP): The Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Saleem Rajput has directed all District Returning officers to strictly ensure the implementation of the Election Commission of Pakistan's code of conduct in letter and spirit.

He said this while presiding over a meeting with senior officers of the Election Commission of Pakistan at the Cabinet Committee Room, Sindh Secretariat late Friday night. The meeting reviewed arrangements made for holding general elections in the Karachi Division in February 2024.

The meeting was

attended by Joint Provincial Election Commissioner (Admn) Ali Asghar Siyal, joint Provincial Election Commissioner (Election) Nazir Abbas, Regional Election Commissioner Abdul Rehman Arain, concerned DROs and ROs the Karachi Division.

The Commissioner asked all DROs and ROs to hold meetings with participating candidates at their offices and make sure that ECP's Code of Conduct is implemented. The meeting also took notice of complaints of Code of Conduct violations, especially the use of public places and roads for the display of

panaflex banners and pamphlets of the candidates belonging to different political parties.

All contesting candidates were asked not to use city roads and other public places for election campaigns as sticking banners and pamphlets over public places is a violation of the Code of Conduct for which structured action would be initiated against the violators.

The District Returning officers and Returning officers briefed the meeting about arrangements made for holding the peaceful, free and fair election on February 08, 2024.

Addressing the meeting,

the Commissioner said all efforts would be made to hold impartial, free and fair elections in the division and in this respect, the Election Commission of Pakistan's directives would be strictly followed. The Commissioner asked the city administration to remove panaflex banners of election candidates from public places and roads.

The DROs and ROs informed the meeting that all arrangements were finalized for holding general elections while sensitive polling stations have been identified where CCTV cameras would be installed to avoid any untoward incidents.

# Governor urges students to use knowledge, research in national affairs

LAHORE (INP): Governor Punjab/Chancellor Muhammad Balighur Rehman has urged the students to apply knowledge, mind and research in national affairs to reach the right conclusion and should tolerate the opposite point of view with patience.

This was stated by him while addressing the Punjab University's 132nd Convocation at Faisal Auditorium here on Saturday. The caretaker education minister Mansoor Qadir, PU Acting Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Abdullah Khan Durrani, Registrar Dr Ahmed Islam, Controller of Examinations Muhammad Rauf Nawaz, deans, principals, directors of institutes, heads of departments, faculty members and a large number of students and their parents attended the convocation.

Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that performance should be given priority over personalities. He

said that everyone has got a chance to rule here, so it should be seen what was the ranking of the country in various matters before the government and what was the ranking of the country on those matters when the government was over. He said that an educated person learns how to speak with logic.

He said that the Acting Vice-Chancellor told the participants about the decrease in the budget of the university by the federal government, so the students should research by themselves how much money the federal government allocated for higher education in 2013 and how much money was allocated for higher education until 2018. While after 2018, the amount for higher education continued to be reduced, he added.

The Governor Punjab said that until 2018, the number of out-of-school children was decreasing,

but, it was a pity that after 2018, this number had increased to more than 25 million by 2022. He said that it should be seen under whose regime more educational institutions were opened and during whose regime the most opportunities were provided. He said that students should develop critical and analytical skills in themselves.

He said that attempts were being made to create division in the society by spreading hateful material. He said that it is our responsibility to research any message before forwarding it on social media. He said that by getting lost in trivial matters, we have forgotten the basic ethics and norms which existed in our society. He urged the students to maintain good relations with others despite differences.

Baligh said that the main purpose of universities is to do research. He said that artificial intelligence and

technology have now become game changers. He said that the students should strengthen their grip in these fields. He said that it is unfortunate that Pakistan has not progressed in the field of education as desired. He said that some people highlight flaws and shortcomings too much while we should also focus on the good and positive things and be happy with the blessings that are available.

The Governor Punjab said that one should look at ones shortcomings only in a way to improve them. He urged the students to pay special attention to character building. He said that degree gives new opportunities but success comes with good character. He said that the success of students is connected with the success of humanity. He said that students should be grateful to their parents and after parents; they should thank their teachers who enabled them to move ahead.



KARACHI: The Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed in a group photo with Ulema, Bishops, Pandits, Sikh, Parsi and other Minority leaders during 'Interfaith Harmony Conference'. —APP Photo

Government of Pakistan

Ministry of National Food Security and Research

National Oilseed Enhancement Program

Pakistan Oilseed Department

No. F.6-10(13)/NOEP/NPD/

Tender Notice for Consultancy Services

The Federal Project Management Unit (FPMU), National Oilseed Enhancement Program, Pakistan Oilseed Department, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Islamabad invites eligible consultancy firms(s)/ lead firms in case of joint venture(s) having at least 05 years proven experience in respective category under similar geographic conditions to submit Technical and Financial Proposals in the English language along with relevant complete details, as described in the tender document, for the following Consultancy Services:

Third-Party Validation and Impact Assessment of Interventions under the PSDP-funded "National Oilseed Enhancement Program" (NOEP)

Interested consulting firm(s)/joint venture(s) shall provide all the requisite information as envisaged in the tender document of respective consultancy services. Consulting firm(s)/joint venture(s) will be selected on Quality and Cost-based Selection (QCBS) method as per evaluation criteria given in tender in accordance with PPRA Rules and Regulations as well as relevant procurement guidelines and procedures.

A complete set of the respective tender documents comprising the project brief, TORs, evaluation criteria, etc. shall be available immediately after advertisement. Interested consultants may obtain the respective tender documents from the office of the FPMU (NOEP), 10-D West, Taimoor Chamber, 2nd Floor, Blue Area, Islamabad during office hours on written request on firm's letter head and CDR payment of Rs.2,000/- (non-refundable) within fourteen (14) days of publication of this advertisement. Thereafter, tender documents will not be issued in any circumstance. It is mandatory for the lead firm to purchase the tender documents in its name.

The Proposal package (comprising technical and financial bids in separate sealed envelopes), complete in all respects in accordance with the requirements, shall reach at the address mentioned below by 01-02-2024. The technical bid opening will be held on 02-02-2024 at 12:00 PM respectively in the presence of bidders or their authorized representatives who choose to attend. Financial bids of the shortlisted firms will be opened after scrutiny of the technical bids is completed.

Incomplete and late submission of proposals will not be accepted. No extension will be allowed in proposal submission date and time in any circumstance. The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals without assigning any reason according to PPRA Rule 33 of the PPRA 2004.

(Muhammad Nazir Malik)

Director (Admn)

2nd Floor, 10-D West, Taimoor Chamber, Blue Area, Islamabad, Ph. No. 051-9216872

PID(I) 4385/23





PESHAWAR: A view of different political parties banners displayed on street lights for upcoming General Election-2024 at Dalazak Road.

## SCCI, Tajikistan team agreed to hold a catalog show

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry vice president Ijaz Khan Afridi and a businessmen delegation from Tajikistan have agreed to launch joint initiatives to hold catalog show, aiming at highlighting investment potentials of Pakistan/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Tajikistan through chamber platform.

Besides, both sides have shown commitment to make efforts to bring the business community of Pakistan and Tajikistan closer to each other. Ijaz Khan Afridi invited Tajikistan companies to make investments in potential sectors, like hydel power generation, tourism, mine and mineral agriculture, oil and gas and industries and trade.

According to a press release here, a meeting between SCCI Vice president Ijaz Khan Afridi and a leading businessman of Tajikistan Mr Abdur Rahman Abdu Jabborov was held at the chamber house here on Saturday. The meeting was attended by Mr Muhammadjon Eidozoda, Dr Muqbool, Secretary General of the chamber Sajjad Aziz, members of the business community and others.

Participants of the meeting discussed the potentials of Pakistan/Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Tajikistan and modalities to further strengthen bilateral trade and economic relations. The meeting was told that huge investment opportunities were available in KP's potential sectors and emphasized the need for bringing business community of Pakistan/KP and Tajikistan closer to



each other and to hold a catalog show, consisting on products of the both countries at chamber house, provision facilitation to business community and promotion of mutual trade.

Prospects are brighter to enhance bilateral trade between Pakistan/KP and Tajikistan, says Afridi while commenting during the meeting, stressing the need for taking mutual benefits from each other's experience for trade promotion between the two countries. The SCCI vice president said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa/Peshawar is a gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asian Republic, stating that our province is a lucrative destination for local and foreign investments and invited the Tajikistan investors to make investment in potential sectors in K-P.

Ijaz Afridi assured measures would be taken under the SCCI platform to facilitate Tajikistan investors under one window operation, highlighting potentials of both countries and hurdles in the mutual trade. Mr Jabborov said vast opportunities exist to make investment in various sectors in Tajikistan, saying that his country wanted to further enhance bilateral trade with Pakistan.

He said the atmosphere for Pakistani investors is highly favorable, adding that foreign companies have made huge investments in Tajikistan. Therefore, he asked the Pakistan/KP investors to take full benefits for investment opportunities in Tajikistan and play their proactive role in improving bilateral trade relations between the two countries.

## FIA arrested 4 suspects of Hundi business

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: FIA Commercial Banking Circle Peshawar have arrested 4 suspects involved in hawala handi and illegal currency exchange here on Saturday.

Among the arrested accused are Siraj Wali, Ismat Afridi, Siraj Ahmed and Muhammad Allah, a spokesman of the FIA said here. The accused was arrested from Chowk Yadgar and Sadar area of Peshawar, FIA spokesman said.

A total of Rs. 20.01 million was recovered from the accused, FIA spokesman said, adding, the currency included 1100 Saudi riyals and 1000 Qatari riyals were also recovered from the accused. The accused were doing currency exchange business without license, FIA spokesman said, adding, the records related to handi reference were also recovered from the accused. The accused could not satisfy the authorities regarding the recovered currency and cases have been registered against the accused with further investigation underway.

## Dastar Fazilat Conference held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam, Chitral chapter organized Dastar Fazilat Conference at Darul Uloom Sarhad in which Maulana Samiullah Jan Farooqui was the special guest of the event. Introductory documents were distributed to the readers from the Dastar Fazilat Conference by Maulana Hidayatul Haque. Chairman of the committee Maulana Muhammad Akbar.

## Is anti-trafficking Act 2018; A toothless law?

Amjad Makhdoom

**A**S a serious issue, the "Trafficking in Person" does no longer require any introduction since it has already been criminalized as an offence under section 3 of the PTIP (Prevention of Trafficking In Person) Act 2018, yet it has been rendered as a toothless law that has miserably failed to bring any significant change in Pakistan's society.

As a Western issue, the "Anti Trafficking" problem seems quite relevant to Pakistan's society since it has significantly eroded its society in term of "Bonded labour", "Forced marriages" and even forced labour and forced prostitution as a modern slavery. The aforesaid PTIP-Act 2018 and PSMA-Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Act 2018 have been enacted to curb the alleged menace, resulting from human trafficking and

smuggling of migrants.

It is worthy to note that the aforesaid PTIP Act has successfully brought to the courts the pressing issue of human trafficking with its above noted certain consequential cases like forced labour, forced marriages, bonded labour and smuggling of migrants. However, apart from its aforesaid initial value, the existing law of PTIP Act 2018 can then be seen losing its hold on the cases so brought to the dock.

In fact, whatever might be the reason for not successfully dealing with the case and whatever might be the factors accountable for this failure, the existing law of this PTIP Act-2018 has materially lost its "deterrent value" that is often taken in consideration for curbing a criminal activity.

An international conference is being held in Pakistan on "Combating Trafficking and Boded Labour of Pakistani Women and Girls". It is

high time to question why and how the existing law of PTIP Act-2018 has been rendered a toothless law, what are those factors accountable for this failure, and how would it be rejuvenated to bring material fruits to Pakistan's society.

## Child killed, 2 injured in blast

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A child killed while two women injured due to mortar blast inside the house at Aman Garh area of Nowshera district.

According to details, Ahmad son of Roohullah five years of age was playing mortar when it was blasted while his mother along with one other woman was critically injured in the mishap. The injured women were shifted to nearest hospital for treatment while their condition is report out of danger.



PESHAWAR: A vendor displaying oranges to attract the customer at Haji Camp.

## Huge cache of arms recovered

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Huge cache of arms including 121 pistols, 18 rifles and several magazines were recovered during operations in Bhana Mari and Sarband area, Police said here Saturday.

Bhana Mari Police of City Division recovered a huge consignment of illegal weapons from a suspicious motor car during the blockade at Tor Baba stop on Ring Road. During the operation, 18 rifles and 87 pistols were recovered and the vehicle used in illegal arms smuggling was also taken into police custody.

Naqeeb Khan and Ishfaq from Dara Adam Khel were arrested during the operation. Similarly, Sarband Police Station of Cantt Division has conducted an important operation on Ring Road. Suspect Haseebullah was arrested after recovering weapons from a suspected car. The arrested accused belongs to Dara Adam Khel.

During the operation, 34 pistols and more than 50 spare magazines were recovered and the vehicle used in smuggling was also taken into police custody. The arrested accused have also given the names of their other accomplices, who are expected to be arrested soon. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigation has been started.

## Tourism Dept plans ITZ in Mankyal valley

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism Department KITE Project DoT is all set to develop the first-ever Integrated Tourism Zone (ITZ) in Mankyal Swat, on Public Private Partnership (PPP) basis, aimed promoting sustainable tourism and accelerating socio-economic development in the province.

KP Government has declared three tourist spots as Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZs) to promote tourism industry in the province. The new ITZs include Mankyal (Swat), Ghanool (Mansehra), and Madakalasht (Lower Chitral) respectively, said spokesman on Saturday.

KP Government to establish Integrated Tourism Zones in the province in partnership with the World Bank through KITE Project DoT, Tauseef Khalid. The development of ITZs would promote tourism, and create job opportunities, besides generating good revenue for the national exchequer, Tauseef Khalid. We are working under an integrated strategy to promote tourism as an industry in the province, which will also stabilise the local economy and provide job opportunities to people, Tauseef Khalid added.

## Motorway closes due to Fog

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Motorway M1, from Peshawar to Islamabad temporarily closed along with Swat Expressway from Colonel Sher Khan to Ismailia.

The purpose of closing the motorway is to prevent accidents and protect the life and property of the users of the motorway, said the spokesperson of the Motorway Police. Citizens are requested to avoid unnecessary travel during foggy hours, Spokesman Motorway Police said.

Complete your journey in daylight and reach your destination before the onset of fog, Spokesman Motorway Police. Use fog lights in vehicles, Spokesman Motorway Police advised the citizens as said.

The spokesman also advised the citizens to avoid speeding and keep a proper distance from the next vehicle more than usual. Information can be obtained from the Motorway Police helpline 130 before starting the journey, Spokesman Motorway Police said. Apart from this, the latest information can also be obtained from the official social media account of the National Highways and Motorway Police, spokesperson of the Motorway Police said.

## Election brings boom to floriculture business in KP

PESHAWAR (APP):

Besides advertising and printing business, election 2024 has brought boom to floriculture business in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the supporters of electoral candidates used it to attract voters besides expressing love with their leaders.

Fawara Chowk, the flowers and rose petals business hub at Peshawar Cantonment where shopkeepers associated with the floriculture started roaring business these days. "The sale of flowers and rose petals have increased mainfolds in Peshawar due to ongoing election campaign and will further shine once the poll day becomes closer," said flowers seller Omar Khayam while talking to APP.

Associated with flowers business for the last 10 years, the motivated flower sellers wake early in the morning and continued preparation of flowers bouquets and petals to fulfill demands of election candidates and their supporters. "Before election, his flower sale was about Rs2000 to Rs2500 per day that now jumped to Rs10,000 to Rs12000 per day," he said. Omar said that he engaged five extra labourers to fulfill huge orders placed by the supporters of candi-

dates.

"My father has also visited Pathoki Qasor district to bring fresh stock of flower petals to meet overwhelming demands." "I have purchased five kilogram of rose petals on Saturday that would be showered on my favorite leader who would address public meeting at my hujra today," said Bahadar Khan, former Nazim of Pabbi while taking to APP. He said that it was a nice way to express love with leaders.

Tarnab, a hub of flowers business located some seven kilometers north of Peshawar, is also attracting a large number of buyers these days.

"I came from Nowshera district to buy flowers for preparation of garlands for my favourite political leaders who will address public meeting on Sunday at my village," Riaz Khan, a former PST teacher of Mohib Banda while talking to APP. He said Pakistan was a unique country with plenty of sunshine, substantial rainfall, winter, summer and spring seasons while its climate was ideal for all kinds of flowers plantations.

He said preference should be given to native flowers in spring season under Plant for Pakistan

imperative to promote floriculture industry. Flowers plants sellers at Tarnab said Patokai Qasur district was hub of ornamental plants and flowers from where seasonal plants were being transported in large quantity to cater people's demands. One flower sapling was being sold at Rs100 to Rs150 while Karachi born Araucaria of five feet height was being sold at Rs4000-Rs5000 against Rs 2000 to Rs2500 of Lahore and Peshawar's origin specie.

Traders of merged areas are also being seen these days purchasing flowers from Tarnab to get maximum profits keeping in view of tribesmen overwhelming response to election 2024. Flowers with colorful and eye-catching designs besides indoor ornamental plants were being transported to South Waziristan, North Waziristan, Orakzai, Kurram, Bajaur, Khyber and Mohmand tribal districts. The florists said they often face great financial losses in case death of plants or become dry. The traders urged KP Govt to give flowers an industry status and give special financial incentives to people associated with this hard-earned business for its growth and promotion.

## Rs67.2m distributed among flood survivors families

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Saturday launched a campaign of cash distribution under the recovery for the flood survivors Families in Dera Ismail Khan district.

In the first phase, 2,100 families are provided Rs 32 thousand cash per family in two installments of 16000 rupees to ensure transparency, cash is being provided to registered families after entering into an agreement with a private bank with the support of IFRC.

In this regard, Pakistan Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chairman Habib Malik Orakzai has said that the

flood 2022 has left stories of destruction behind. "We are grateful to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with their support, we have been able to provide assistance to Dera Ismail Khan district flood affected vulnerable families, which was severely affected by the floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa."

He further said that for the distribution of money in a transparent manner, the affected areas were selected with the help of the district administration, where our officials and volunteers went door to door and completed the registration process. after verifying the lists from the provincial and national headquarters, the

said money is being delivered to these families through a private bank online cash providing service.

According to Officials, the Pakistan Red Crescent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa headquarters, There is no restriction on the use of money, which can be utilised by the beneficiaries for any need. It is said that in the second phase of the recovery program, those flood-affected families, who lost their jobs due to natural calamities will be provided buffaloes and motorcycle loaders that meet specific Criteria. A transparent procedure will be established for this. The rehabilitation program will also include the improvement of health facilities.



PESHAWAR: PPP women wing provincial president Senator Rubina Khalid in a group photo with newly joining female PPP members.

## Public authority, justice crucial to address people's issues: Faig

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faig Shah, Founding leader and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party asserted transfer of power at grass root level and resolved issues of common people at their doorstep.

Furthermore, he asked that power and authorities should be delegated to ordinary citizens by altering the primitive political culture and system.

Solution of all problems lies with joint efforts and under a single unified platform and we have already given a concrete proposal in this regard, says Shah while addressing a public gathering, ahead of the Feb 8 general election, which was held here on Saturday.

Efforts are afoot for lust of power and curtailing true representation and participation of ordinary people in election process is rampant as political parties, who remained in power for decades have started deceiving people with fake

promises, agenda and manifesto ahead of the election, the ATP said.

Shah said this is the right of youth and competent people to give them power and authorities. He vowed to eliminate politics based on inherited and personal gain forever, the same will be a big revolution. The party chief said traditional and previous political allies are becoming mad for power gain and slugfest against each other as it seems quite visible now that the former PDM alliance fragmented into part.

Talking about real issues of the ordinary people that have been put into the backburner, Shah said prices have touched a new peak and the purchasing power of the common man has completely died. Faig was of the view that people, particularly poor and underprivileged segments of the society, were deprived from basic amenities and fundamental rights, such as education, health, justice and

jobs. Shah said his party brought a transparent system and collective leadership plan that can change the destiny of the country and people if it is implemented with true spirit.

## Rahat Khan appointed as AAG

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Senior lawyer Rahat Ali Khan Naqai advocate has been appointed as Assistant Attorney General (AAG) of Pakistan for Peshawar High Court.

On Saturday the law and Justice division Islamabad has issued the notification of his appointment as Assistant Attorney General. The senior lawyer Rahat Ali Khan Naqai advocate is practicing lawyer at Peshawar High Court since long.





## In brief

### Section-144 imposed F.P. Report

NOWSHERA: Deputy Commissioner Nowshera imposed Section-144 against wastage of water at car-washing centers. According to details, the initiative is taken on request of Public Health executive to stop waste of clean water. The Section 144 implementation will be remain imposed for one month until the condition to be batter.

### 2 robbers killed in encounter

Sheikhupura (INP): Two robbers were killed while their two accomplices managed to escape after exchange of fire with police. The robbers also shot injured a citizen over resistance. According to details, a four-member gang of robbers was engaged in picket looting near Polka Chowk in jurisdiction of Factory Area police station in Sheikhupura. The robbers shot injured a citizen over resistance. Getting the information, a police team reached the scene. Upon sight of police, the robbers started firing and attempted to flee which led to an encounter. In cross firing, two robbers were killed while their two accomplices managed to flee. Arms were recovered from possession of killed robbers. The police shifted the injured citizen and bodies of killed robbers to hospital.

### Solar power plant installed

HUNZA (INP): The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) of the government, in partnership with solar firm Energy NPAK has installed a one-megawatt solar power plant in Hunza district of Gilgit-Baltistan. The solar plant aims to meet the energy deficit in the region and ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity to the people living in these valleys. This public-private partnership project will play an active role in generating clean energy as well as mitigating global climate change. More than 2,300 solar panels of the plant, located at an altitude of 2,800 meters above sea level, will generate 1,600MW of electricity per year for local households and industries. The project will generate clean energy that will avoid greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 1,100 metric tonnes of carbon annually. The local government will launch more renewable energy programs to overcome the power shortage in Gilgit-Baltistan. In the second phase of the project, a 2MW solar plant will be commissioned in 2024.

### DIG conducts Orderly Room F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: To promote transparent communication and address concerns within the police force, Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Hazara police Muhammad Ijaz Khan conducted an orderly room, where fourteen police officers and others from various districts of Hazara presented legal proposals and expressed grievances. The DIG Hazara after listening the grievances, issued directives, taking into consideration the legal requirements. He clarified that the orderly room serves as a dedicated space for police officers to voice their concerns related to transfers, postings, and other professional matters without the need for external recommendations. Muhammad Ijaz Khan emphasized the importance of preventing the misuse of non-departmental influence by police officers.



SHANGLA: PML-N leader Amir Muqam addressing party workers during election campaign.

## Nawaz eyeing record fourth term: Aurangzeb

SIALKOT (INP): PML-N Spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb on Saturday said those who had chosen the PTI founding chairman as the favourite "are facing the consequences even now" – a reference to the controversial victory of the PTI founder in 2018 after the removal of three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif a year earlier.

She said three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who eyeing a record fourth term in office, had the solution to all the problems currently faced by Pakistan.

Nawaz Sharif had the

formula to get rid of poverty, inflation and power outages, told reporters outside an anti-terrorism court in Lahore and added that the people would stamp the tiger [the PML-N election symbol] on February 8, which usher in a bright future for the youth of Pakistan.

Marriyum said, "We appear before the court because we know that these cases are bogus. On the other hand, a person doesn't want to be held accountable by the courts despite his involvement in corruption cases and attacking the state institutions, the PML-

N spokesperson said about the PTI founding chairman.

It is worth noting that the PTI former chairman has been using delaying tactics in all the cases he has been nominated in by filing motions on technical issues and challenging the court proceedings. Those who launched long march and attacked the Jinnah House [the corps commander house torched on May 9 by the PTI supporters in Lahore] filed terrorism cases [against the opponents], she said about the charges levelled against her and other PML-N leaders.

### Awards, prizes distributed F.P. Report

BANNU: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Bannu Qasim Ali Khan and District Police Officer Ittikhar Ali Shah distributed certificates of appreciation and cash rewards among officers showing excellent performance.

According to the details, the Regional Police Officer Bannu Qasim Ali Khan has congratulated many officials including SP Raza Muhammad, DSP Imran Aslam, DSP Mahmood Nawaz, SHO Benjamin, SHO Maryam Altaf, SHO Ghoriwala Arshad Khan for their excellent performance and duty. Officers were called to his office for their good performances and awarded them the certificates of appreciation and cash prizes to encourage him.

Meanwhile, RPO appreciated performances and said that he is proud of such police officers who are performing their duties honestly and gracefully. The Regional Police Officer said that this is my message to the police officers and youths of the entire region to treat the people with good manners and provide them legal support as they are the servants of the people.

### PPP candidate mobilizes party workers F.P. Report

TAKHTABHI: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) provincial vice president and NA-23 candidate argued party's activists to mobilize public for upcoming general election.

This he claimed while addressing corner meeting at Sheikh Kaly area of Takhtabhai and claimed PPP will fulfil their narrative of breed, shelter and cloth. He argued that PPP will secure majority in general election.

PPP candidate claimed that their government will uphold constitutional supremacy and rule of law in the country. He blamed opponents for corrupt practices and incompetence.

### Free medical camp held F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Frontier Corps North Khyber Pakhtunkhwa organized a free medical camp to provide timely medical facilities to the patients.

A free medical camp was organized to provide medical facilities to the people of Ashroge, Khazana, Kargha, Rana Manze, Misturi, Mashwanon, Takhtfar Mane, Karin, Karubagh, Tangoderi, Kore, Markhani areas. The children were examined free of cost and medicines were distributed among them, while sugar, ECG and other tests were also done for the patients. Citizens and patients expressed their happiness for organizing the free medical camp.

The people demanded to organize such free medical camps for the patients also in the future. Assistant commissioner Nurzali Khan while, wing commander and MS Lal Qila Maidan hospital Dr Inam Ullah assured the citizens that such free medical camps will be organized for the convenience.

### Three killed

KASUR (INP): At least three people were killed and two others were wounded in a fog-related road accident in Kasur.

The accident occurred at the Kutchery Road in Pattoki where a truck collided with a trailer parked on the road side due to dense fog, killing three persons on the spot and injuring two others.

## Election campaign gears up in Mardan

### F.P. Report

MARDAN: Contesting candidates of different political parties and independent circles in the district have accelerated their election campaign with the purpose to make their victory sure in the up-coming general elections scheduled to be held on February 8, of next month. Mardan which is considered the second largest district after Peshawar district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, having total population more than 2.5 million as per the last population survey.

The number of total registered voters is 1538078, out of which 841696 are male while 696382 are female voters for three national and eight provincial assemblies constituencies. As per the data provided by relevant officials, total 42 candidates were contesting their elections over the three national assembly seats i.e. NA-21, NA-22 and NA-23.

Fourteen candidates belonging to different political parties and independent circle were going to contest their polls over the NA-21 constituency. The strength of total registered voters is 521739 in the said constituency.

However, prominent among them were included the JUI-F candidate Azam Khan who is also brother of

senator Dilawar Khan, ANP candidate Ahmad Ali, Asadullah Khan who was the son of ex-senior provincial minister Rahim Dad Khan (late) was in the field on PPP ticket, Dr. Ata-ur-Rehman of Jamaat-e-Islami, the PTI ex-district president and former MNA Mujahid Ali was contesting polls as an independent candidate.

However, political experts were expecting tough contest between the JUI-F candidate Azam Khan and Mujahid Ali on NA-21 seat. On one hand, Mujahid Ali on PTI ticket had won the said NA seat twice in last general elections held in 2013 and 2018 while on the other hand, the JUI-F won both the chairmanship seats of tehsil Katlang and tehsil Rustam in the local government elections held two years back as both tehsils were come within the remits of NA-21 constituency.

Similarly, seventeen candidates were in the run for NA-22 seat. As per the election commission data, the strength of male voters is 300509 while women voters 254228 out of total registered voters 554737 in this constituency. Prominent among the contesters were included ex-chief minister and ANP candidate Ameer Haider Khan Hoti, Qari Niyaz Ali of JUI-F, PTI Peshawar region president and former

provincial minister Muhammad Atif Khan as an independent contestee, Syed Abid Ali Shah of PPP, Anbareen alias Hina of TLP and Moulana Shuja-ul-Mulk of JUI (Sherani group).

However, thrilling contest was expected between the ANP candidate Ameer Haider Khan Hoti and the independent candidate Muhammad Atif Khan. It values to mention here that Ameer Haider Khan Hoti had won the NA-22 seat twice in general elections held in 2013 and 2018.

Likewise, eleven candidates were taking part in the polls on NA-23. The said constituency was consisted of 255185 male voters and 206417 female voters out of total registered 461602 votes. The ANP candidate Ahmad Khan Bahadar, Kaleem Khan Toru of JUI-F, Shoib Alam Khan of PPP, Jalal Khan Khattak of PML-N, Bashir Khan of Aman Tariqi Party, PTI central leader and ex-state minister Ali Muhammad Khan as an independent candidate, Aqib Ismail of JI were the key contesters in NA-23 constituency. However, the political observers and experts were predicting neck to neck contest between the JUI-F candidate Kaleem Khan Toru and Ali Muhammad Khan over the NA-23 seat.

## Pak's armed forces holds potential to every threats

### F.P. Report

QUETTA: Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri, while reacting to Operation Marg Bur Sarmchar by the security forces, said that Pakistan's sovereignty was challenged by Iran, to which Pakistan responded sensibly. She said that the Iranian government should have shown disgrace for the attack on innocent civilians in Pakistan or admitted the mistake but it was not done. She said that Pakistan will not allow any attack on its sovereignty and security and any capable of responding effectively to an action that threatens national security.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri praised the professionalism of the armed forces for targeting terrorist hideouts while saving Iranian citizens from casualties. She said that Pakistan and Iran are brotherly countries, the issues need to be resolved through dialogue and mutual consultation, but Pakistan has the right to respond vigorously to acts against its sov-

ereignty. She more said that terrorists do not deserve any concession and action will be taken against them wherever they are. Terrorists, whatever organization they belong to and wherever they are, want to make them believe that the enemies of the nation wherever they are. The infiltrators will be confronted by our brave security forces and the terrorists will be crushed with their nefarious intentions.

In her press statement, Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri further said that Pakistan's armed forces are always ready to ensure the safety of Pakistani citizens against terrorist acts and are fully capable of dealing with any cowardly act of terrorists. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that Pakistan is a responsible country and Pakistan's action was not against Iran but against terrorist organizations that were involved in terrorist activities in Pakistan. She said that Pakistan wants peaceful relations with all neighboring countries including its

neighbor Iran and always tries to solve challenges through dialogue. She said that Pakistan considers the Iranian people as friends and brothers and has no interest in aggravating the situation further.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri further said that Pakistan is a peace-loving country, but this desire of ours should not be considered as weakness. We have all weapons and power, enemies know it, friends also think. She said that Iran is our brother and neighboring country and this problem should be resolved at the foreign level for which both countries have to take positive steps because the enemy can take advantage of any kind of tension between the two brother countries. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri expressed hope that Iran will take effective action against terrorists and hideouts of organizations involved in anti-Pakistan activities within its borders so that terrorists cannot succeed in their nefarious intentions against Pakistan.



QUETTA: A view of waster material on the main Saryab Road, needs attention of authorities concerned.

## Balochistan CM visits Sibi to review polls arrangements

### F.P. Report

QUETTA: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki on Saturday visited Sibi division to review the law and order situation and preparations for the upcoming polls 2024.

Caretaker provincial Home Minister Mir Zubair Khan Jamali, Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Home Zahid Saleem, Additional IG Police Jawad Dogar, Commissioner Naseerabad Division, DIG Police and Deputy

Commissioners of six districts participated in the review meeting held in this connection.

Addressing the meeting, the chief minister said that funds for transportation would be released to the deputy commissioners by the provincial government in two days. A comprehensive security plan has been created for peaceful elections, he said and directed that provision of drinking water, washrooms and basic facilities should be ensured at the polling stations in districts.

The CM emphasized that

in all six districts of Naseerabad division, effective steps should be taken to maintain peace. He noted that the Election Commission has kept the transport rate higher than other provinces in consideration of communication difficulties in Balochistan. Earlier, the meeting was briefed that the agreement for installation of CCTV cameras at sensitive polling stations had been finalized and all the deputy commissioners have been asked to nominate a focal person for the operation of CCTV cameras in the next 24 hours.



QUETTA: Former senator and National Party leader Kabir Muhammad Sahi addressing a press conference.





# Germany’s parliament approves easing citizenship laws

BERLIN: German lawmakers have approved legislation to ease the rules on gaining citizenship and end a ban on holding dual citizenship. The bill, put forward by centre-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s socially liberal coalition, passed parliament by a 382-234 vote with 23 lawmakers abstaining.

The legislation will allow people to become eligible for citizenship after five years in Germany or three in case of “special integration accomplishments”, rather than the eight or six years at present. German-born children will automatically become citizens if one parent has been a legal resident for five years, down from eight.

Dual nationality, customarily allowed only for citizens of other European Union countries, will be permitted, letting tens of thousands of German-born Turks become voters. In a video welcoming the citizenship law, Scholz said the legislation was for those who had lived and worked in Germany for “decades”. “With the new citizenship law, we are saying to all those who have often lived and worked in Germany for decades, who abide by our laws, who are at home here: You belong to Germany,” Scholz said.

The main centre-right opposition bloc criticised the project and argued it would cheapen German citizenship. “Two passports is the most normal thing in the world in 2024 and has long been reality in most countries,” said Social Democratic legislator Reem Alabali-Radovan. “We, the 20 million people of migrant back-



grounds, we are staying here. This country belongs to us all, and we won’t let it be taken away,” she added of the legislation, which President Frank-Walter Steinmeier must sign for it to become law.

The citizenship overhaul was one of a series of social reforms Scholz’s coalition agreed to undertake when it took office in 2021. Germany previously had one of the world’s most restrictive naturalisation laws with citizenship available only to people who could show German ancestors. But progressives have long demanded a citizenship law that acknowledges that Germany has been ethnically diverse and multicultural since the arrival of guest workers from Italy and Turkey to ease labour shortages in the 1960s.

The far-right Alternative for

Germany (AfD), a target of protests after senior members were caught discussing plans to deport “unassimilated” German citizens, opposed the law and, along with opposition conservatives, warned against “devaluing” the German passport and importing division.

“You want to create new votes for yourselves with this law,” conservative legislator Alexander Throm told coalition politicians. “But careful: Most [Turks] who live here vote for AKP [Turkey’s ruling party] and [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan. ... You’re bringing the conflict to us.” But surveys have shown that German Turks, many of whom are of ethnic Kurdish or Arab backgrounds, vote for the full range of Turkish parties, none of which runs in German elections. — Al Jazeera

## Palestinians in Ukraine decry ‘double standard’ as Kyiv supports Israel

KYIV: When Russia launched a full-scale war on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Amer Aroggi, a 30-year-old journalist based in the Gaza Strip, felt compelled to report on the European conflict.

Having lived through the Israeli occupation, he felt he could relate to the plight of the Ukrainians. The move was seamless, especially because his older brother had lived in Ukraine for many years. Aroggi quickly secured a new role for himself as a correspondent for a prominent news channel.

Less than two years later, war broke out again in his homeland with the latest escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict. To some observers, there were parallels between Russia and Israel and Ukraine and the Palestinians. But in a swift and unequivocal response to the outbreak of the war in Gaza, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy threw his support behind Israel, like much of the Ukrainian population, and almost all Western leaders.

“I saw a double standard. ... The world helped the Ukrainians, and no one helped us. No one even helped me evacuate my mother and sister out of Gaza,” Aroggi told Al Jazeera. Ukrainians were the “victims of massive propaganda” during the first stages of the war, which is why they often supported Israel’s bombardment of Gaza, according to Aroggi.

He said he would like to leave but is unable to because he has a Palestinian passport. He spends his days glued to the TV, fearing for his family in Gaza. “My mother asks me, ‘Are you OK? Is there a Russian bombing?’ I say to her, ‘Are you OK? Is there an Israeli bombing?’”

The latest escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict began on October 7 when Hamas attacked southern Israel, killing 1,139 people and triggering a violent response. At this point in the war, at least 24,762 Palestinians had been reported killed by Israeli forces in Gaza. While Israel has said it aims to wipe out Hamas, which governs the besieged enclave, the toll on civilians and its conduct have been heavily criticised.

Ukrainian first lady Olena Zelenska said on October 7 that Ukrainians understand and “share the pain” of the Israeli people as billboards across Kyiv lit up the capital with Israeli flags. Hashem\*, a medical professional from Gaza who relocated to Ukraine nine years ago, remained resolute in his allegiance to his adopted home when Russia invaded Ukraine. Yet the Ukrainian reaction to Israel’s offensive in Gaza left him grappling with conflicting emotions in the initial months of the war, particularly since “Ukraine suffers from occupation like Palestine”, he said. The prevailing narrative in the national media favours Israel and influences public sentiment, he said. Hashem also suffered personally. — Al Jazeera

# South Africa seeks to stop auction of Mandela artefacts

JOHANNESBURG: The South African government has said it will challenge the auctioning of dozens of artefacts belonging to the nation’s anti-apartheid stalwart Nelson Mandela, saying the items are of historical significance and should be preserved in the country.

The 75 items belonging to Mandela – the country’s first democratically elected president who spent 27 years in jail for his anti-apartheid struggle against white minority rule – are to go under the hammer on February 22 in a deal between New York-based auctioneers Guernsey’s and Mandela’s family, mainly his daughter Makaziwe Mandela. But South Africa’s Ministry of Culture said it has filed an appeal to halt “the unpermitted export” of the objects.

“Former president Nelson Mandela is integral to South Africa’s heritage,” Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture Zizi Kodwa said in a statement. “It is thus important that we ... ensure that his life’s work and experiences remain in the country for generations to come.” Mandela passed away in 2013.

The items include the late leader’s iconic Ray-Ban sunglasses and “Madiba” shirts, personal letters he wrote from prison, as well as a blanket gifted to him by former US President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle. A champagne cooler that was a present from former President Bill Clinton is also on the list, with bidding on it starting at \$24,000. Among the items is also Mandela’s ID “book”, his identification document following his release from prison in the 1990s. Last month, the North Gauteng High Court in Pretoria gave the go-ahead

for the auction after dismissing an interdict by the South African Heritage Resources Agency, which is responsible for the protection of the country’s cultural heritage.

On its website, Guernsey’s says the auction “will be nothing short of remarkable”, and that proceeds will be used for the building of the Mandela Memorial Garden in Qunu, the village where he is buried. “To imagine actually owning an artefact touched by this great leader is almost unthinkable,” it says.

In an interview with US media published, Makaziwe Mandela said her father wanted the former Transkei region where he was born and raised to benefit economically from tourism. “I want other people in the world to have a piece of Nelson Mandela – and to remind them, especially in the current situation, of compassion, of kindness, of forgiveness,” she told the New York Times. Reports of the auction have sparked heated debates on social media platforms in South Africa, with many criticising the auctioning of what they consider to be the nation’s cultural heritage.

The planned auction has come as many African countries seek to have treasured African artworks and artefacts that were removed from the continent during colonial years returned to Africa. Most recently, Nigeria and Germany signed a deal for the return of hundreds of artefacts known as the Benin Bronzes. The deal followed French President Emmanuel Macron’s decision in 2021 to sign over 26 pieces known as the Abomey Treasures, priceless artworks of the 19th century Dahomey kingdom in present-day Benin. — Al Jazeera

# Soldiers raid Ecuador prison; two arrested

ECUADOR: Ecuador’s security forces have stormed a major prison complex as part of a “war” between the government and powerful criminal gangs as police arrested the suspected killers of a prosecutor. Hundreds of soldiers and police launched an operation in a vast penitentiary complex in the port city of Guayaquil – the same one from which gang boss Adolfo Macias, alias “Fito”, escaped last week. The jailbreak sparked a government crackdown and, in turn, fierce retaliation from criminal groups.

After raid, the army shared photos of cuffed inmates in their underwear lying face down in prison courtyards. Similar images have been released in recent days as the government tries to wrest control of prisons back from the gangs. Uniformed officers are “in control of the external and internal perimeter of the penitentiary complex” at Guayaquil, the army wrote on X.

Meanwhile, two suspects were arrested for their alleged role in the prosecutor’s shooting death, police commander Cesar Zapata said on social media. A rifle, two pistols and two cars were seized as “evidence”. Prosecutor Cesar Suarez was gunned down in his car on the streets of Guayaquil, which has become a dangerous hub for the export of cocaine from neighbouring countries.

The slain prosecutor had been in charge of the investigation into last week’s live-broadcast assault by gangsters on a state-owned TV studio, also in Guayaquil. Al Jazeera’s Alessandro Rampietti, reporting from neighbouring Colombia, said security forces were concerned that the inmates might have been heavily armed in the Guayaquil prison they raided.

“However, there has been no confrontation with the police and soldiers who intervened in the prison,” he said from Bogota. “The killing of the prosecutors shows that despite having been hit hard, the gangs are willing and able to inflict damage on the government through high-profile assassinations,” he said. “It also tells us that the conflict will most likely continue for a long time.”

Once considered a bastion of peace in Latin America, Ecuador has been plunged into crisis after years of expansion by transnational cartels that use its ports to ship drugs to the United States and Europe. In response to Fito’s escape, President Daniel Noboa imposed a 60-day state of emergency and nightly curfew. The cartels reacted swiftly, threatening to execute civilians and security forces and taking hostage dozens of police and prison officials, who have since been released. On January 9, attackers stormed the TV station, firing guns and forcing staff to lie on the ground as a woman could be heard pleading: “Don’t shoot. Please don’t shoot.”

Police entered the studio after about 30 minutes of chaos, arresting 13 assailants, many of them teenagers. Noboa then declared the country to be in a “state of war,” deploying thousands of soldiers and police to patrol the streets, hunt down gang members,

drugs, and weapons. In the past nine days, they have carried out more than 23,000 operations and arrested 2,174 people – 158 of whom were wanted for “terrorism”, according to the army.

The uptick in violence comes weeks after Attorney General Diana Salazar announced an investigation highlighting links between the gangs and powerful state officials from judges to a former prison chief. Salazar launched the “Metastasis” investigation after the prison death in 2022 of powerful drug lord Leandro Norero. Her team scoured through chats and call logs from Norero’s cellphone, finding links to high-ranking officials who handed out favours in exchange for money, gold, prostitutes, apartments and other luxuries.

More than 900 people took part in the investigation, which resulted in more than 75 raids and dozens of arrests. Those investigating the gangs have become targets. Suarez had probed cases involving organised crime infiltration of the judicial system and corruption scandals linked to the purchases of medical equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic. In June, another prosecutor, Leonardo Palacios, was shot dead in the town of Duran near Guayaquil, and in 2022, two prosecutors and a judge were shot in other parts of the country. Anti-graft and anti-cartel presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio was killed in a barrage of automatic gunfire after a campaign speech just weeks before elections last year that were won by Noboa. — Al Jazeera

# Purges in China’s military allow Taiwan some respite – for now

BEIJING: Danny Jia was walking down a street outside Taiwan’s Taoyuan city in late December when he suddenly heard automatic gunfire. Not far from Jia’s location that morning, the 249th mechanised infantry brigade of the Taiwanese armed forces was conducting military drills at Guanyin beach on the island’s north-west coast. “I was so startled that I almost dropped my phone,” the 46-year-old civil servant told Al Jazeera.

“The exercises are also a scary reminder that a war might actually come to Taiwan in the future,” Jia said. Guanyin beach is one of Taiwan’s so-called “red beaches” – stretches of the coastline that in the event of a Chinese invasion, offer the most favourable conditions for amphibious landing assaults. For China’s military planners, Guanyin beach would be particularly suitable as it lies less than 18 kilometres (11 miles) from Taiwan’s primary international airport, and only about 50 kilometres (31 miles) from the outskirts of the Taiwanese capital, Taipei.

Democratic and self-ruled Taiwan has never been part of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), but Beijing considers Taiwan to be part of its territory and has not ruled out using force to bring the island under its control. In his new year speech, Chinese President Xi Jinping called Taiwan’s unification with mainland China “inevitable”. With the ever-present threat of China’s troops spilling onto Taiwan’s shores one day, Jia believes that the military drills on red beaches serve an important purpose in preparing the Taiwanese military for the worst.

Recently, however, Jia has found himself convinced that such a scenario is far from certain due to events in China’s own military ranks. At the end of December, nine high-ranking military officers were removed from their positions. Several of those axed were from the Chinese military’s elite “rocket force”, which oversees China’s tactical and nuclear missiles.

Earlier, in August, two leading figures in the rocket force were likewise removed. That same month, the then-

Chinese defence minister, Li Shuangfu, went missing. Li has since been dismissed and replaced by Dong Jun.

With so many changes among the top brass, Jia said he failed to see how the Chinese armed forces could be prepared for the complex planning involved in a large-scale assault on Taiwan in the near future. “I think there is too much chaos in China’s military for that,” he said. People in Taiwan have reasons to feel more secure, according to Christina Chen, a research fellow at Taiwan’s Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR) think tank. “The removal of senior officers demonstrates that Xi Jinping is clearly not confident in the military, and that reduces the likelihood of a Chinese attack on Taiwan in the near term,” Chen told Al Jazeera.

The relatively large number of Chinese officers expelled in such a short time can also affect the armed forces’ fighting spirit as uncertainty spreads as to who will be targeted next. “More removals might follow and that could further weaken the morale of the military and its ability to fight,” Chen said.

While the risk of an imminent conflict in the Taiwan Strait may have been reduced, Chen sees Beijing’s long-term goal of taking over Taiwan staying firmly in place. China’s new defence minister, Dong Jun, has experience with military matters regarding Taiwan from his previous roles as commander of the Chinese navy, deputy commander of the Southern Theatre Command and deputy commander of China’s East Sea Fleet. Although a defence minister serves mostly a diplomatic and public role in China, the appointment of the highly experienced Dong Jun was not arbitrary, according to Chen.

It reflects Beijing’s overall ambition of turning China into a maritime power that can rival the United States and eventually annex Taiwan, she said. Beijing has in recent years increasingly projected its growing maritime and

air power in Taiwan’s direction. Airborne and maritime incursions into Taiwan’s air and sea space have become a daily occurrence by the Chinese armed forces.

Sabre-rattling rhetoric and large-scale military drills in the waters close to Taiwan have also accompanied times of particular tension. This was the case in the aftermath of then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taipei in 2022 and after Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen’s stopover in San Francisco last year where she met with Pelosi’s successor, Kevin McCarthy. Some observers expect a similarly assertive Chinese reaction leading up to President-elect William Lai Ching-te taking office in May following his victory in the Taiwanese presidential election on January 13.

Beijing has branded Lai a separatist and declared that the election result would not change the Chinese government’s stance on Taiwan’s unification with the mainland. Chen sees Beijing’s pressure campaign directed at Taiwan continuing despite the dismissals in the Chinese military ranks. “That will not change no matter how many military officers are removed,” she said. According to Associate Professor Alfred Wu, a scholar specialising in corruption and governance in China at the National University of Singapore, the removal of Chinese military officials is more than a simple shake-up. “In addition to the anticorruption effort, it is a purge,” Wu told Al Jazeera. “Xi Jinping is strengthening his hold over the military and sending a signal to all those that are not completely aligned with him that they might be next and therefore should be afraid,” he said. Wu described the use of fear as a tool employed to try to secure loyalty in China’s authoritarian state structure where a lack of oversight and transparency can easily result in corruption and poor governance. Since Xi came to power in 2012, several anticorruption campaigns have resulted in purges throughout the Chinese state apparatus. — Al Jazeera

# Haley and the anti-Trump movement’s last best hope

WASHINGTON: New Hampshire — the next stop in the Republican primary calendar — is known as the Granite State, named for the rock that gave rise to some of its mightiest peaks and mountains. For former United Nations envoy Nikki Haley, however, the Granite State could be the cliff off which her presidential ambitions tumble.

Tucked in snow-covered New England, a region in the northeastern United States, New Hampshire offers a unique opportunity for Haley. Its conservative voters lean more moderate, making the state’s primary on January 23 a beacon for rivals of Republican frontrunner Donald Trump. Haley could potentially win big in New Hampshire: A survey released from the American Research Group showed her with 33 percent support among the state’s Republican voters, just behind Trump’s 37 percent.

A victory in the state could offer her campaign the validation it has been seeking, showing that the former UN envoy can indeed be a serious contender against Trump. “Haley really has to either win or be extremely close to Trump, given the expectations she’s been building up,” said Henry Olsen, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a

Washington-based think tank.

“If she doesn’t get within single digits, ideally within five points, her campaign is effectively over,” James Davis, a Republican strategist and founder of the marketing firm Touchdown Strategies, added that Haley’s prospects in the 2024 presidential race hinge on primary. “It’s within striking distance for her to put the win in New Hampshire — and that’s what she’s got to do.”

Even a victory in New Hampshire would still mean an uphill battle against Trump, who continues to trounce Haley and fellow Republican contender Ron DeSantis in national polls. Trump’s towering lead was confirmed in the Iowa caucuses, the first event in a season of primaries and caucuses that will eventually determine which candidate receives the Republican nomination for the presidency.

Even before the Iowa caucuses closed, media outlets confirmed Trump would win, setting a record for the margins of his victory with 51 percent of the vote. In the so-called “race for second”, Haley received 19 percent support, behind Florida Governor DeSantis, who snagged 21 percent. Still, Haley’s prospects may not be as low as they appear. Davis explained that DeSantis “had basically banked

his campaign on Iowa”, while Haley “invested very little” in the state. That means Haley’s “neck-and-neck” finish with DeSantis in Iowa could actually indicate momentum for her campaign moving forward, Davis said. Several other factors may give Haley a boost as she heads to New Hampshire. Robert Boatright, a political science professor and elections expert at Clark University, said the most significant element was the simplest: New Hampshire is not Iowa. Considered a “purple state” in a region otherwise dominated by Democrats, New Hampshire has a notable Republican base, not to mention a libertarian streak.

Its elections have therefore resulted in a mixed bag of political figures: Its governor is Republican, and its state legislature is Republican-controlled, but its representatives and senators in the US Congress are all Democrats. “New Hampshire voters are different from Iowa voters in a number of important ways,” said Boatright. “It’s a wealthier state. It’s a less religious state. Republicans in New Hampshire tend to be more like the old Republican Party.” That is largely why Trump’s Republican critics have singled out New Hampshire as a bellwether in this election cycle. One former candidate, former New

Jersey Governor Chris Christie, focused his campaign almost exclusively on the state before withdrawing from the Republican race on January 10.

Unlike Christie, Haley has remained more circumspect in her criticism of Trump, a former president with a devoted following. She served in his administration from 2017 to 2018. However, she has sharpened her attacks on Trump going into New Hampshire, taking particular aim at the 77-year-old’s age and the “chaos” of his leadership. Trump too has taken swipes at Haley. He recently floated a conspiracy theory that Haley — a South Carolina native with Indian heritage — was born outside the US, falsely suggesting she was ineligible to be president.

Meanwhile, DeSantis is expected to be a non-factor in New Hampshire, where his campaign has not connected with voters. He has instead focused more on South Carolina, Haley’s home state, which is set to hold its Republican primary in late February. The format of the vote itself is expected to benefit Haley, as well. Iowa holds caucuses, in which party members attend meetings across the state to debate and then choose a candidate. But in New Hampshire, a primary is organised instead — asking

that voters only cast a ballot, just as they would during a general election.

Olsen, from the Ethics and Public Policy Center, said this is an advantage for Haley. Typically, caucuses only “attract the true believers because of their time commitment”. In a primary, however, “all you have to do is show up and give maybe 15 minutes of your time rather than three hours of your time. And that always helps the candidate who is less enamoured by the base.”

Boatright and Davis also said that the low turnout in Iowa made its caucuses a less reliable predictor for success in the Republican race. Only about 108,000 Iowans participated this year, comprising 14 percent of the state’s registered Republicans. “Caucus-goers in Iowa are not necessarily all that representative of the state or even of Republican voters within the state,” said Boatright.

Davis echoed that point: “Iowa tends to be a field-narrower in terms of its process, rather than a kingmaker.” Experts say early contests in the US primary season tend to be more about establishing a narrative than winning delegates, who ultimately vote to confirm the party’s nominee at a national convention. New Hampshire is only the first primary race in a series that includes every

state in the US. But a strong showing in the state can turbo-charge a campaign, sending a signal of vitality before other votes. But Boatright questions whether Haley can make the case for the longevity of her campaign, especially as she faces potentially more Trump-friendly primary elections ahead. “It still seems like there’s not really a convincing story that she can be competitive nationally,” he said.

“So she would really have to do smashingly well at New Hampshire. I think, to change that story.” Meanwhile, a resounding victory for Trump in New Hampshire could heap pressure on Haley and DeSantis to drop out of the race “and not prolong it for the party”, said Davis. Still, he noted that there is a big “asterisk” in this year’s primary season: Trump’s age and multiple criminal indictments could potentially derail his campaign.

“We have two septuagenarian frontrunners with [President Joe] Biden and Trump, and health is always a question,” Davis said. “Then Trump has all the court cases against him that he’s got to go through. Who knows where all of that ends?” “There’s really never been any race like this, and so things could change on the dime pretty quickly.” — Al Jazeera



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## Normalization of Pak-Iran ties

**F**OREIGN Minister of Pakistan, Mr Jalil Abbas Jilani, has a tele-conversation with his Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, first time after the two neighbouring nations traded the exchange of deadly weapons during the week. The top diplomats discussed the recent developments that brought both nations to loggerheads and sparked tension in the region and agreed not to allow provocateurs and enemy agents to further distract the fraternal relationship between the two brotherly nations. According to the Foreign Office media release, Jilani briefed Abdollahian on Pakistan's position and reiterated Pakistan's quest to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity at all costs. The red lines regarding Pakistan's security were clear and Pakistan would not allow any breach of its territorial integrity. Foreign Minister Jilani also expressed Pakistan's desire to resolve the issues through dialogue and peaceful means. Both sides agreed to reduce the prevailing tension and enhance cooperation/ teamwork against the bad actors, the enemies of peace and common threats to both countries. Meanwhile, Pakistan's National Security Committee (NSC) met Friday and mentioned 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. Islamabad's topmost security forum urged that the two countries would mutually be able to overcome minor irritants through dialogue and diplomacy paving the way to further deepen their historic relations.

The bilateral relations between Islamabad and Tehran suddenly suffered a grave setback over the past week after the Iranian military carried out a missile and drone attack on what it called terrorist targets in Pakistan on Tuesday night. Pakistan in turn reciprocated the Iranian move with the same coin striking Pakistani-origin ethnic Baloch militant groups camped inside Iran later on Thursday. Pakistani military proved its mettle by using sophisticated weaponry to ensure accuracy and avoid collateral damage by professionally targeting the BLA terrorists without unintended harm to any human or animal on Iranian soil. Following Iran's incursion into Pakistan's airspace, Islamabad called back its envoy from Tehran and also announced the expulsion of the Iranian Ambassador while ceasing all diplomatic engagements with Tehran for an unspecified period.

Historically, Pakistan and Iran have had a long-standing relationship, with both countries sharing a border and a rich cultural heritage. In recent times, the two countries have been working to strengthen their bilateral ties through multiple measures including promoting border markets trade, relaxation in visa regimes to facilitate trade and tourism etc. The people of Pakistan have a special interest and respect for the Islamic Republic of Iran and their Iranian brothers because of a string of bonds including religion, shared culture, language, history and religious heritage. The government and the people of Pakistan are not in favour of any confrontation and clash with all brotherly Muslim countries including Iran and Afghanistan. During yesterday's meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC), Pakistani leadership unanimously decided to end tension with Iran and fully restore diplomatic and trade ties with Tehran while all issues relating to border management and ethnic terrorism would be dealt with through cooperation and coordination between the first door neighbours.

On the other side, the Iranian leadership is also well aware of the ground realities and the already fragile geopolitical and security situations in the region. The recent standoff between the two countries has further stoked regional tension already inflamed by the Israel-Hamas conflict in the Middle East. Luckily, the leadership from both countries demonstrated maturity and chose peace and stability instead of confrontation and chaos. In fact, both countries must remember the reality that no one will present them with a bucket of flowers in exchange for proxies, bullets and slang. It is high time, that both countries listen to each other's concerns and tackle those issues with sincerity. So no such troubling situation occurs in the region any time again.

## Election saga and dearth of political vision

**P**AKISTAN Muslim League-Nawaz Senior leader Senator Irfan Siddiqi told the media that his party will unveil its written manifesto in the next two days. Senator Siddiqi claimed that the PML-N would win the general elections based on its commendable performance in the previous tenures. PML-N would come to power through popular vote, resolve the issues of common men, and remove the sense of deprivation among the people living in remote areas.

The magnificent electoral campaigns of all major political parties including the PML-N, PPP, MQM, PTI, PML-Q, and other regional civic groups are currently underway across the country. The civic groups and their leaders blatantly made unachievable announcements, false claims, and unreal promises to attract the public and appease their voters ahead of a crucial vote scheduled for the next month. Interestingly, the PML-N and Pakistan Peoples Party, once coalition partners against the PTI government have now taken front against each other in the ongoing election campaign. The PPP has brought forward a 10-point agenda for the economic uplift of the country and the public. Bilawal vowed to double the wages and provide 300 units free of cost electricity to the poor. The PPP announced the devolvement of 17 ministries that will add Rs. 300 billion to the national exchequer. The Muslim League Nawaz perceived a counter-narrative to berate its political adversary through the launch of a written manifesto on an urgent basis.

The slogans of free-of-cost electricity, free education, and healthcare, construction of homes for the poor, and issuance of subsidy cards for laborers, farmers, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) are gaining popularity and each leader uses the same recipe to garner people sympathy. Our politicians trade in blame games and accusations instead of focusing on national issues, the economy, terrorism, foreign policy, population planning, rural development, urban planning, etc. Unfortunately, no political group has a strategy to tackle a derailed economy, revive the industry, and boost growth in a crises-hit nation. Historically, such kingly policies of successive Pakistani governments have brought the nation to this day that every institution is degraded and each aspect of the national life needs attention from the rulers. If Pakistani leaders retain such a pro-publica attitude and nation savouriness throughout the year, the country can achieve its destiny in days and months instead of years and decades.

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## For Republicans, the art of deal only applies if Trump gets credit

John Avlon

**D**O House Republicans really want to solve the border crisis? Not if they bow to Donald Trump's latest demands. This seems cynical even by current Bizarro world standards. Because if you constantly tell people that America is suffering an "invasion" that will require mass deportations on day one, you'd think there'd be real urgency to solve the problem right now.

That urgency is reflected in the actions of the US Senate, where conservative Oklahoma Sen. James Lankford has been working diligently with Democrats like Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York to come up with a border security bill that can muster 60 votes in the center. After a White House meeting, there was renewed optimism that a deal can get done with a vote soon, coupling border security with much-needed aid to Ukraine, which is fighting a literal border invasion from Russia.

But then the House of Representatives needs to take up the bill - and that's where Speaker Mike Johnson is facing more threats from his far-right flank, who have been signaling that they will balk at any border security bill until a Republican is president.

Right-wing resistance is entirely consistent with a Trump-ified GOP that is more willing to demagogue an issue than actually deal with it. In an interview with Fox News Wednesday night, Johnson confirmed he's also been getting pressure from Trump to reject the bipartisan Senate deal. Apparently, the art of the deal only applies if Trump gets credit. The MAGA crew would rather fear-monger and fundraise off an alleged invasion at the Southern border then stop it - because they're afraid President Joe Biden or Democrats might get some credit for helping to stem the tide of migrants trying to cross our border. Even the most generous explanation - that they don't believe that a Democratic president will implement the tough measures they believe are necessary - doesn't hold water if they really believe that this is the most urgent issue facing our nation. If a Republican is elected next year, they can presumably deal with those deficiencies.

But refusing to support a bill that could help solve the problem with concrete measures negotiated by conservative colleagues in the Senate shows a fundamental lack of faith in deliberative democracy. Compromise is not the same thing as surrender.

This is one of many issues where Speaker Johnson is on a collision course with Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. Democrats have already made significant concessions to conservative priorities to get this bill down the field. Before the New Year's break, Schumer said, "I think [Republicans] realize that Democrats have moved much more to the middle on border security." To be clear, this is not the comprehensive immigration reform grand bargain that most Democrats would like to see and that President Biden has called for. It is a narrow bill dealing with border security. Given the overflow of migrants and asylum seekers at the Southern border now bleeding into cities like New York, it is pragmatic to reform enforcement of asylum laws and expedite those claims while strengthening border security. Perfect is never on the menu, especially when you're approaching politics

from an all-or-nothing perspective.

As Scott Jennings, a CNN analyst and longtime advisor to McConnell, told me via text: "Republican voters have been clamoring for something - anything - to stop what they believe is an invasion. I just don't understand how you can bring a Democratic president to his knees on the

**Even the most generous explanation - that they don't believe that a Democratic president will implement the tough measures they believe are necessary - doesn't hold water if they really believe that this is the most urgent issue facing our nation. If a Republican is elected next year, they can presumably deal with those deficiencies. But refusing to support a bill that could help solve the problem with concrete measures negotiated by conservative colleagues in the Senate shows a fundamental lack of faith in deliberative democracy. Compromise is not the same thing as surrender.**

course with Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

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from the win? Take the win!" This message was reinforced by South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, who advised his recalcitrant colleagues, "If you think you're going to get a better deal next time, in '25, if President Trump's president, Democrats will be expecting a pathway to citizenship for that ... So to my Republican colleagues, this is a historic moment to reform the border."

The sense of historic and moral urgency should only increase when you consider that the Biden administration has called for connecting border security with funding for Ukraine in its effort to repel Russia's actual invasion. In the not-so-distant past, this - like support for Israel in its war against Hamas after the horrific terror attacks of October 7 - would have received broad bipartisan support. It is a matter of America standing up for

freedom, self-determination and civilization against unprovoked acts of war. But the line between democracies and dictatorships seems blurry for some folks these days. The tough-guy posture of populists folds fast in the face of Russian President Vladimir Putin, as Trump reflexively praises the dictator even after the invasion. Largely as a result, support for Ukraine has become a divisive issue on the right - which means it's conservatives who are reluctant to stand up to Russian aggression, in a complete reversal of Reagan-era principles.

On Wednesday afternoon, I spoke to a soldier who'd volunteered to help defend Ukraine, who was at the US Capitol making the case to lawmakers. Mark is a British-born US citizen from Texas who served three tours in Ukraine with an international brigade. "This is a classic good versus evil - there's no ambiguity," he told me. "This war will go in whatever direction the US and American politicians decide. If they're too busy infighting between political parties and playing games, Ukrainians will lose and ultimately, we - in the West - will lose."

Karla Webber's son Andrew was killed volunteering in Ukraine. He was a West Point educated Army officer who graduated from law school after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. She shared with me a text Andrew sent explaining why he felt compelled to return to a combat zone, despite having a wife and two kids at home: "I view the invasion of Ukraine as the most dangerous threat to freedom and democracy abroad. I believe that for the United States to abandon the people of Ukraine at this stage, when they have experienced so much hardship and suffering in the name of freedom from fear, is nothing less than an abandonment of the cherished ideals I've spent a lifetime-at home and abroad-supporting and defending in war and peace."

Andrew, she told me, believed that "people in leadership positions need to do the right thing and usually that's the hard thing." That's the message members of Congress need to hear - and act on - as the clock ticks on Capitol Hill.

CNN

## Argentina's foreign policy erratic, misleading

Patricio Giusto

Argentina's relationship with China is Milei's refusal to join BRICS. Instead of taking advantage of joining BRICS after the decisive support of Argentina's two main trade partners, Brazil and China, Milei chose to stay away from the grouping, arguing that it is a "geopolitical club" in which Russia and Iran also participate.

But what about Brazil, India and South Africa, as well the five new members: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates? The misleading assessment is a denial of the fact that BRICS is a grouping in expansion which offers huge diplomatic and financial opportunities to Argentina. Rejecting BRICS also meant the absurdity of turning those countries away.

Diana Mondino's first trip abroad as Argentine foreign minister was to

Paris, where she joined French officials in conversations on another "geopolitical club", the G7, which could be a "good" club from Milei's naïve libertarian perspective. But unlike BRICS, Argentina has no chance of being included in the G7.

On the other hand, Mondino said Argentina wants to join the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which is an organization of a different nature and with different objectives than BRICS.

Another poor decision driven by ideology, Milei, who has already demonstrated a capacity for learning and made timely pragmatic turns in other political realms, still has time to prevent an erratic and misleading foreign policy from being the Achilles' heel of his presidency.

## Sunak's pride has allowed Labour to steal show at Davos

Matthew Lynn

**W**ITH so many problems at home, it may have seemed that the very worst thing the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak could have done this week was fly off to Davos to spend the week sipping champagne with the world's plutocrats.

But the UK needs to be sold to investors and corporate bosses, and Sunak has made a big play out of all the incentives for investment he is offering. Sure, Davos can be nauseating at times, but a British PM should still be there pitching the case for locating factories, warehouses and offices in the UK - because if he doesn't do it, no one will.

It has been wrong about globalisation, about the pandemic, and indeed about almost everything. The themes of the World Economic Forum, which gathers in Davos every January, have become almost as reliable as covers of The Economist for getting everything completely upside down. The issues it says are vital turn out to be irrelevant, and the trends it ignores turn out to be important. Even worse, it has come to symbolise the kind of smug, complacent virtue-signalling that now passes for political leadership in most of the Western world.

The criticisms of the Davos talk-fest are all very familiar, and contain more than a grain of truth. Yet despite its repeated failure to identify anything of significance, Davos survives. In reality, what is said doesn't matter very much. It is important because lots of very important people are there. Except, in this case the British Prime Minister. Sunak may have figured that as a very wealthy, public school educated former banker, he may already look a little too like the identikit Davos man. Catching up with lots of former college and work friends may have made him look like part of an out-of-touch elite. And of course, there are multiple challenges back at home that require his attention. Even so, he should have gone.

First, the UK badly needs investment. Davos may not have attracted so many major global leaders as in the past, with President Biden giving it a miss this year. It remains, however, a major draw for corporate and financial heavyweights, with the likes of JP Morgan's Jamie Dimon, OpenAI's Sam Altman, Pfizer's Albert Bourla, and Microsoft's Satya Nadella all in attendance, along with hundreds of others.

The Prime Minister has made a huge play of his policy of "full expensing", a generous tax break that allows companies to set off the full cost of investment against the new higher corporate tax rate of 25pc. It is one of the most generous tax policies in the world, so long as you are a big company with lots of plans for new factories and research centres, and might well drive down the effective tax rate to just a few percentage points.

And yet, so far we

haven't noticed the rush of new projects announced for the UK. The global business community has not really noticed yet. It needs to be sold, and the most effective person to do that would be its main champion, the Prime Minister, and there would have been no better place than at the bars and conference rooms of Davos. Second, the UK still needs to explain the benefits of Brexit. The level of negativity around the UK's departure from the European Union remains extraordinarily high among the global business elite.

There may not be much evidence that it has harmed us one way or the other - after all, we are growing faster than Germany and at roughly the same rate as France - but the perception is that Britain has been turned into a shivering basket case. It needs someone to explain that Britain is still trading successfully with the rest of Europe - indeed, oddly, the percentage of our trade with the EU has risen over the last couple of years - while also opening up free trade deals with countries in the Pacific, and perhaps soon with India as well.

Add in some modest loosening of the regulatory load, and there is a positive story to be told. But no one is making it right now, and the Prime Minister is the only person who can make a convincing case for what the post-Brexit British economy will look like. Finally, he is leaving the stage to everyone else. France's President Macron was at Davos, of course, and so was the Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, along with dozens of other global leaders. These are the UK's real competitors for investment, and while they were no doubt working the corridors to pitch for fresh investment the UK was nowhere to be seen.

The shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves was also there, telling everyone who would listen that Labour was now the party of business. While that claim may be slightly implausible, to put it mildly, busy executives will have been impressed by the charm offensive. Other people will be filling the space Sunak has left empty, and that will damage the UK. Heck, the Prime Minister might even have enjoyed himself for a few days, something that does not seem very likely at Westminster. He could have listened to the Argentinean President Javier Milei's brilliant speech explaining free market, libertarian economics, and possibly learned a thing or two. And of course he might have been able to pick up a few contacts for his next gig as finance director of one of the tech giants in California.

Davos, for all its faults, remains the best networking event in the world. The Prime Minister should be able to find 48 hours in his schedule to shake a few hands, and work a couple of rooms - and Sunak made a big mistake by skipping it this year.

The Telegraph



# Russian emigres in Georgia spark tensions ahead of election

Tornike Chumburidze & Sofia Gavrilova

A week after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine last February prompted an influx of Russian immigrants into neighboring Georgia, a young Georgian politician published a series of instructions on "how to treat Russians" on social media. "Maintain a cold distance," advised Giorgi Noniashvili, a member of the European Georgia opposition party. Other advice included not smiling - "you don't smile at the enemy" - and not responding to questions asked in Russian.

Noniashvili's suggestions encapsulate widespread attitudes in Georgian society toward recent waves of Russian immigration: a certain sense of inevitability, but also a deep distrust, if not outright fear. Since the outbreak of the war, and particularly after the partial mobilization declared by President Vladimir Putin last September, the number of Russian nationals crossing into Georgia has risen significantly: 148,000 in the third quarter of 2022 alone, and 160,000 in the first three quarters of 2023, a roughly fivefold increase from the corresponding period in 2021.

There was also a huge spike in the number of Russian businesses registered in Georgia. According to Transparency International, between March 2022 and June 2023, Russian nationals registered 21,000 companies: almost three times as many as the entire total of the preceding quarter of a century.

The economic impact of these developments has been major. On the one hand, the country has seen double-digit economic growth for the first time since 2007. The Georgian lari has risen in value by 18%. At the same time, the country has experi-

enced runaway inflation of almost 12%, and rent prices have almost doubled in major cities, making life difficult for locals, especially groups such as students and day laborers.

Still, the main concerns regarding Russian immigration are not economic, but political: specifically, the perceived security challenges. Georgian policy experts and politicians have expressed concerns that undercover operatives may infiltrate immigrant communities to turn them into tools of Russian soft power - and a pretext for yet more military aggression by Russia, which fought a five-day war with Georgia back in 2008, and still has military control over one-fifth of Georgian territory. A rise in crime and corruption has been identified as another major risk.

None of these concerns are unfounded. On Oct. 10, two former Russian agents admitted they had been sent to Georgia for espionage purposes following the invasion of Ukraine. There has already been an instance of an establishment of a Russian-language school that was illegally using materials from Russia's heavily ideological school curricula.

Most ominously, Russia has indicated that it will monitor the protection of the Russian-speaking minority's rights in Georgia: the pretext cited by Moscow for sending troops to Georgia's breakaway territory back in 2008, and to parts of Ukraine in 2014.

These concerns are shared by the majority of the Georgian population. Graffiti reading "Russians go home" is not an uncommon sight on the streets of Tbilisi; immigrants have been

met with demonstrations at the Larsi crossing into Georgia; and, according to an International Republican Institute survey, as of early 2023, 79% of Georgians believed that Russian nationals should not have the right to enter the country without a visa, purchase property, or open a business. As early as March 2022, 66% of Georgians supported the introduction of visa requirements between the two countries (Russian nationals can currently reside in Georgia without a visa for up to a year).

These attitudes are not, however, reflected in the Georgian government's policy or rhetoric. From the onset of the war, members of the ruling Georgian Dream party have downplayed concerns over Russian immigration as "hysterical."

The party's chairman, Irakli Kobakhidze, even threatened to toughen up anti-discriminatory legislation in response to what he described as a campaign of ethnic discrimination against Russians. In April 2023, Georgian Airways reinstated direct flights between Moscow and Tbilisi with explicit government approval and coordination with the Russian authorities, easing the way for further Russian immigration into the country. This discrepancy between public opinion and government policy regarding Russian immigration and overall relations with Russia has led to multiple protests and demonstrations. The most serious was in March 2023 against the introduction of the so-called "Russian Law." The draft law would have obligated organizations receiving funding from outside the country to register as foreign agents, mirroring controversial legislation already in

place in Russia.

The government was quick to link the dissent to party politics, attributing it to provocations by the "party of war" and accusing the protesters of having connections to the previous government, led by the United National Movement (UNM). But amid violent clashes between protesters and the police, Georgian Dream was forced to withdraw the proposed legislation, proving the potency of anti-Russian sentiment as a mobilizing force in Georgian politics. Unsurprisingly, the opposition is trying to capitalize on this sentiment and the government's unwillingness to address it ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for 2024. On Nov. 20, Mamuka Khazaradze, head of the pro-Western Lelo party, proposed a series of restrictions for Russian immigrants, including introducing visa requirements and a ban on land and real estate purchases.

Just a few days later, Mikheil Saakashvili, who was president of Georgia during the 2008 war with Russia and is now the de facto leader of UNM, the largest opposition party, promised to enact even more radical legislation that would force Russian nationals to sell their assets in Georgia and leave the country within a year.

These initiatives show that the presence of Russian immigrants has become a thorny and divisive issue that is set to gain further political significance as the election season heats up. Despite the public outcry, the Georgian Dream government has so far remained steadfast in its refusal to curb or regulate Russian immigration in any manner. Time will tell whether that policy will have a political price.

The Moscow Times

# Why a new study gives a misleading view of inequality in America

In recent years, researchers have debated the simple question of whether inequality has risen a lot or a little in the United States over the past half-century. Lots of arguments in this debate surround highly technical issues like, "Should the income of owners of 'pass-through businesses' be reported as wages or business profits?" or "Is income that is not reported on tax returns mostly earned by rich or middle-class households, and how do you know?"

But we've identified available data that sidesteps nearly all these complexities and demonstrates that inequality has indeed risen enormously: what individual Americans earn in the labor market. Take one measure of labor market earnings - the pay (including benefits) of the 80% of workers who are not managers or supervisors at work. For decades before 1980, these workers' hourly pay tracked economy-wide productivity growth tightly. Then productivity growth slowed significantly, but hourly pay growth collapsed even faster, leading to a growing gap between these typical workers' pay and overall growth. That wedge of missing pay for typical workers went either to workers at the top or to business owners.

The most important driver of this wedge between typical workers' pay and economy-wide productivity is the growing concentration of labor income at the very top of the wage distribution. Due to excess concern about confidentiality, most public data available to researchers inconveniently suppresses information about the wages of the highest earners by assigning a uniform (and too-low) "top-code." But one enormously valuable data source does not - the Social Security Administration (SSA) data on annual wage earnings. This data sorts individual workers by what

Elise Gould & Josh Bivens

In 1965, CEOs were paid 21 times as much as the typical worker. By 2022, CEOs were paid 344 times as much as the typical worker.

All of this straightforward data on earnings clearly shows a huge rise in inequality of pay in the US economy. Moreover, labor income is far more equally distributed among US households than income

derived from wealth (for example, the top 10% of US households holds about 85% of all corporate stock - including indirect ownership through 401(k)s and other retirement vehicles). Hence, if labor income is becoming so much more unequal, are we really to believe that ownership of corporate equities or other financial assets has become radically more equal to make up for this? No data suggests this is true. Arguing about whether inequality has significantly increased seems like a real step backwards in recent years. The real debate should be about why and what to do about it. The fact that so much inequality comes from the labor market is a real clue that much of the answer is that policy changes intentionally disempowered typical workers in their bargaining over wages with employers. Reversing it will require efforts to re-empower workers, through expanded unionization, keeping unemployment rates consistently low, buttressing key labor standards that have atrophied, blocking employer efforts at wages suppression and restraining wage growth at the very top.

SSA data demonstrates how vastly unequal earnings growth has been between 1979 and 2022. Over that period, inflation-adjusted annual earnings for the top 1% and top 0.1% skyrocketed by 171.7% and 344.4%, respectively, while earnings for the bottom 90% grew just 32.9%. This unequal growth has seen a rising share of total earnings in the US economy accumulate at the top of the wage ladder.

The share of earnings for the bottom 90% fell 9.7 percentage points between 1979 and 2022, while the share of earnings for the top 5% grew 8.8 percentage points. The very top - the top 0.1% of wage earners - nearly tripled its share of total earnings from 1.6% in 1979 to 4.6% in 2022. These gains at the very top are mirrored by data on CEO pay in the United States. Compustat, a financial database, tracks executive pay at all publicly owned US firms. In this data, inflation-adjusted pay for CEOs of the 350 largest publicly owned US firms grew 1,209% (not a typo) between 1978 and 2022. Further, the gap between CEOs and typical workers has grown dramatically over the last few decades.

CNN

# Taiwan's election and its potential impact on East Asian politics

Kuni Miyake

In democratic nations, there are consequential elections that alter the trajectory of politics. The December 2012 general election in Japan, which gave Shinzo Abe his second term, and the 2016 US presidential election that saw Donald Trump win are recent examples. In the presidential election held on Jan. 13, Taiwanese voters chose to continue with a pro-autonomy Democratic Progressive Party administration, which wants to continue the status quo with China while maintaining a healthy distance from Beijing. Will this election change the future course of East Asia?

Although editorials in Japan's major newspapers all praised the maturation of Taiwan's democracy, they were divided on the path that the island's new administration should take in the future. For example, conservative newspapers argued that "Lai Ching-te's greatest responsibility is to protect Taiwan's freedom and democracy from China" (Sankei) and that "The Xi Jinping administration should respect the popular will expressed in Taiwan and refrain from coercive words and actions backed by military force" (Yomiuri).

The Nikkei also asserted that China should recognize that Taiwan's society has changed since democracy took hold more than a quarter century ago. In contrast, the liberal Asahi Shimbun argued, "Now that the KMT's (Kuomintang) return to power on the path of cooperation with China is further away, it is time for Taiwan and China to ease military tensions and resume dialogue."

The new Taiwanese government may seek to resume dialogue with China, as the liberal press hopes for, although it is Beijing, rather than Taipei, that is reluctant to engage in talks. Many reports in Japan also pointed out that this is the first time in Taiwan's post-democratization history that a presidential candidate from the same political party has won three consecutive terms. There's nothing surprising about that since these were democratic elections that faced strong Chinese pressure.

China tried to interfere in the Taiwanese elections through the systematic use of "cognitive warfare," or the surreptitiously strategic manipulation of information to change perceptions and influence the decision-making and behavior of the voters there. As a result, however, it seems that China's maneuvering failed again this time.

In particular, former KMT President Ma Ying-jeou told German media just before voting day, "We should trust Xi Jinping" and that he doesn't believe "Xi is promoting the unification of Taiwan." That had only the opposite effect and was a political disaster.

For some reason, most Taiwan-related news reports in Japan tend to assume that the KMT is pro-China while the DPP is pro-US - but this is not necessarily the case. Although the gap between the KMT and the DPP is wide, no one in the KMT wants to make Taiwan a part of China. The KMT has an office in Washington to maintain its relations with the United States.

It may be better to think that Ma is more pro-China than the KMT is.

This is not the first time Beijing has made mistakes regarding elections in Taiwan: Before the first popular presidential election in 1996, China fired missiles into the Taiwan Strait and Lee Teng-hui won. In the last presidential election before the latest, measures to strengthen security in Hong Kong had the opposite effect, and President Tsai Ing-wen, who had previously been the underdog, was re-elected.

Perhaps because of this, China was extremely cautious this time around, refraining from violent moves and using fake news or other nonmilitary means to sway the Taiwanese electorate. But even so, the Taiwanese voters did not move much.

Another notable result of the election was the rise of a third party, the Taiwan People's Party. Some even claim that this may mean the end of the traditional two-party era for the KMT and DPP. That remains to be seen. In the 21st century, Taiwan's economy and society are diversifying beyond the binary argument of "pro-China" or "anti-China." The emergence of a third party should not come as a surprise.

Two days after the presidential and legislative elections in Taiwan, the Pacific Forum, a think tank in Honolulu, held a symposium titled "Operationalizing Integration in the Indo-Pacific." The event was attended by distinguished military and civilian guests and experts

from relevant countries, including the US' top officer in the Indo-Pacific, Adm. John Aquilino, and a former prime minister of Australia, Scott Morrison, who engaged in a lively discussion on the security environment in the Indo-Pacific region.

Here's the takeaway. The US Indo-Pacific command is pursuing a "new concept of operations" due to the drastically different security environment, which is the "most dangerous" in the past 20 years. To face the threat of collaboration among China, Russia, North Korea and Iran, the US military needs to "think, act and operate differently" than in the past and to employ "decision superiority" and to synchronize its posture in all domains with its allies. To that end, speakers at the symposium urged the US Congress to increase the defense budget and called on defense industries to speed up arms production. Otherwise, the international order in the Indo-Pacific risks being altered.

This is the unfortunate reality for global security. Fortunately, the DPP won the presidential election in Taiwan and the status quo is likely to be maintained for the time being.

However, it is unfortunately undeniable that the will of the people can change overnight in democracies - not only in Taiwan but also in the United States and Japan. With the US presidential election looming and Japan's political situation becoming fluid, Tokyo cannot afford to rest on its laurels after the latest election results in Taiwan.

The Japan Times

# A Ukrainian call to Davos: Ban Russian fossil fuel exports to bring peace

Svitlana Romanko & Oleh Savtyskyi

As world leaders gather in Davos for the World Economic Forum this week, Ukraine is reeling from a continuing massive wave of deadly missile attacks from Russia, resulting in more and more needless death and destruction. The tragic loss of human life, including hundreds of civilians and children, is unfortunately often paid for by cash sent to Russia from Europe and the US, who are shockingly still sending Moscow billions of dollars to pay for Russia's fossil fuel exports.

Despite relentless Russian attacks, Ukrainian communities are tirelessly working to rebuild and collaborate with companies and citizens to install renewable energy technology. However, as the need for reconstruction grows exponentially due to these attacks, Ukraine and the world's path toward a green transition that will liberate it from fossil fuels is significantly delayed.

It's imperative to recognize the relationship between energy, conflict, and democracy. Amid the ongoing struggle for peace and sovereignty in Ukraine, we want to reiterate our organization's urge to democratic governments: sever Russia's oil and gas lifeline to halt President Vladimir Putin's brutal war machine and curb the sprawl of autocracy.

Russia's unrelenting aggression against Ukraine is sustained by profits from oil and gas exports. It is these very profits that enable massive missile and drone strikes on Ukrainian cities, claiming innocent lives and wreaking havoc on civilian infrastructure. The Kremlin's war economy thrives on these revenues, sustaining this devastating conflict that claims innocent lives daily. Razom We Stand's recent report underscores this distressing connection between the profits from the dirty energy trade and the cost of human suffering.

The shadow of Russia's plans looms ominously. A third of the 2024 federal budget is allocated to the military-industrial complex, a level unprecedented since Soviet times. In 2024, Russia's military budget will expand to 10.775 trillion rubles (\$110 billion), marking a 70% increase from 2023, three times higher than before the invasion. This unchecked militarization signifies a perilous path toward intensifying the conflict, threatening regional stability and the future of democracy in Europe.

Regrettably, Europe and the US are continuing to contribute to this war chest by inadequately enforcing sanctions against Russian oil and gas, leaving loopholes wide open that Russia exploits daily. We

cannot overlook how a carve-out that allows Bulgaria's largest refinery to continue guzzling Russian oil remains a massive funding source feeding Russia's aggression.

The urgency for action resonates louder than ever. Banning Russian LNG (liquid natural gas) imports in Europe by 2025 is too distant a goal. Europe has ample gas storage capacity, and projections indicate an energy surplus bolstered by record-breaking clean energy expansion and alternative LNG supplies set to come online in 2024.

While commendable, Finland's pledge to ban Russian LNG must be echoed by immediate, collective action. Europe's gas reserves, coupled with falling demand and forthcoming alternative LNG supplies, reveal a clear path to severing reliance on Russian imports. In fact, EU and U.K. storage sites are likely to end the winter almost 54% full.

Ukraine stands ready to bolster the EU's gas supply security. As the Financial Times pointed out, Ukraine can be an instrumental part of the solution, as our gas storage has already proven effective in stabilizing winter energy prices in Europe. Across the Atlantic, US LNG exports hit monthly and annual record highs in December,

with reports suggesting it became the world's largest exporter of LNG in 2023. This shows that there are alternatives to continuing to fill the Kremlin's war chest.

The crucial message from Kyiv is this call to end Russia's stranglehold on dirty energy. The dire need to end Russia's energy dominance transcends mere economic or geopolitical strategy - it is a moral imperative.

By severing Russia's lifeline of oil and gas profits, we deny the Kremlin's war machine its fuel. We at Razom We Stand are not just calling for Ukraine's sovereignty, but a world where autocratic powers can no longer leverage dirty energy as a weapon of destruction.

The time for this transformative change is now. It's a global imperative to foster energy independence, peace, climate action and democratic resilience. As Davos deliberates on the world's economic future, the call from Kyiv is resolute. If Europe and the US put an end to importing Russian oil and gas, they would not only end the war in Ukraine but also slow the spread of autocracy and speed up the global energy transition. The future of democracy, security, and human dignity hinges on this critical moment of action, and leaders at Davos must take action now to stop funding Russia's war.





## Gold rates increase by Rs. 300 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs. 300 and was sold at Rs. 215,300 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs. 215,000 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 257 to Rs.184,585 from Rs.184,328 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.169,203 from Rs. 168,976, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs. 2,600 and Rs. 2,229.08 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$5 to \$2,050 from \$2,045, the Association reported.

# Pakistan made great progress towards financial stability: Shamshad

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Finance Minister Shamshad Akhtar has said despite challenges, Pakistan has made significant progress towards macro-economic, exchange rate and financial stability.

Virtually addressing an IPO summit, she said growth is to rebound in the positive trajectory in

the range of two to two and a half percent with agriculture expected to grow by five point six percent and industry by two and a half percent during the current fiscal year.

The Finance Minister said the capital markets cannot thrive under very high interest rate regime.

She said the State Bank of Pakistan is conscious of the fact that we will

have to move to lower the interest rate subject to inflation coming down.

She said foundation has been laid for attracting foreign direct investment.

Shamshad Akhtar said economic recovery process has bolstered business confidence and market sentiments. Pakistan Stock Market Index exhibited bullish momentum over the last five months.

## ICCI, NUST discuss collaboration to improve industrial competitiveness

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari along with his delegation visited the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and discussed with its Rector Lt. Gen. Javed Mahmood Bukhari the collaboration to enhance the Industrial competitiveness and academia industry's linkages.

He also discussed collaboration for improving the competitiveness of the local industry through strong academia-industry linkages, said a press release issued here on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, Lt. Gen. Javed Mahmood Bukhari, Rector NUST briefed the ICCI delegation about the role of NUST in promoting future leaders and job creators for a positive impact on society and the economy. He said that NUST has cre-

ated an ecosystem to promote research, innovation and productivity.

He said that academia has cutting-edge research while industry faces practical challenges and problems, therefore, close cooperation between NUST and ICCI would help resolve issues of industry and produce innovative products for exports.

He said that NUST and ICCI should join hands in students' mentorship programs to give them practical skills and experience that would improve their employability. Speaking on the occasion, the President ICCI stressed for close academia-industry linkages to address industrial problems and improve the competitiveness of industry that would help enhance industrial activities and exports.

He said that universities were producing a lot of research, which was not benefiting the industry.

Therefore, close collaboration between academia-industry will help tailor such research to meet the needs of industry, he said adding that Indian IT graduates had reached the top positions in some big companies like Google, Microsoft, and IBM and stressed that Pakistani universities should produce IT professionals to lead the top-ranking companies of the world.

He said that with better focus, Pakistan can increase its IT exports from currently around US\$ 3 billion to US\$ at least 50 billion in a few years. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said the academia-industry linkages can lead to the commercialization of academic research, promote innovations, and improve the economic growth of the country.

Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that ICCI and NUST should join hands to devel-

op curricula and training programs that align with the needs of the industry.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that students prefer government jobs or migrate to foreign countries. However, universities should focus on fostering entrepreneurship in students that offers them prosperous careers.

He said that in the West, students idealize business role models like Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk and stressed that the universities in Pakistan should invite business leaders to address students that would motivate them to idealize the business role models and explore career growth in the business field to create new jobs and contribute to the economic development of the country.

## Pakistan, Turkiye business communities urged to work hard for improving trade

ISLAMABAD (PPI) Consul General of Turkiye Cemal Sangu has said although Turkiye and Pakistan have been cooperating in many fields of trade and economy but the existing trade volume was very low which requires very hard work from the business communities of both countries.

"We say we are brotherly but it doesn't reflect in our trade. Keeping in view Pakistan's and Turkiye's population of 240 million and 85 million respectively, I can confidently say we have huge potential and opportunities not only in Pakistan but also in Turkiye, hence, the private sector, being the backbone of economy, should come forward to improve trade and economic relations", he stressed while speaking at a meeting during his visit to the Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI).

President KCCI Iftikhar Ahmed Sheikh, Senior Vice President Altaf A. Ghaffar, Vice President Tanveer Ahmed Barry and KCCI Managing Committee Members were also present at the meeting.

Turkish CG, while congratulating the newly elected Office Bearers of KCCI, hoped that the during their tenure, trade relations between Turkiye and Pakistan would deepen further to the deserved level. "Although Turkiye and Pakistan have been enjoying special diplomatic relations since 1947 but if you'll take a good look at the history, our relations are thousands of years old as Turkiye's connection in this region started in 9th century", he added while terming Turkiye-Pakistan as "two countries, one nation" with same culture, religion, values, linguistic and views.

He informed that last year, Turkiye exports stood at around \$256 billion which comprised of 55 percent exports to EU countries. "Turkiye's Customs Union Agreement, which was signed 20 years ago, will be updated this year which would give Turkiye more access to those countries with whom EU has signed FTAs", he said while advising the business community to bring in semi-processed raw materials to Turkiye which can be processed in Turkiye and exported EU market with zero tax.

He pointed out that Turkish investment in Pakistan stood at around \$2.5 billion but it was nothing and needs to be improved. "Turkish companies operating Pakistan have been facing minor issues but the SIFC is working very hard to solve these issues which will certainly encourage other Turkish companies to invest in Pakistan", he added.

He further mentioned that Arçelik was the only Turkish company which has established a R&D center in Pakistan which was very crucial as although many other foreign companies were also operating in Pakistan but none of them have neither brought R&D nor transferred technology to Pakistan. "Arçelik has invested almost \$800 million in Pakistan since 2016 and has not remitted anything outside Pakistan as whatever they earn is reinvested in Pakistan, which clearly shows the real brotherhood between the two countries", he said and hinted that a Turkish Company was also interested in coming to Pakistan for setting up solar panel production unit.

Identifying the potential sectors for Turkish investment, he mentioned that there was a huge potential in the

dairy and meat sectors as Pakistan, despite producing high-quality milk, has been able to process only 3 percent of milk. This was an area where business communities of both countries can look into the possibility of undertaking joint ventures.

Underscoring the need to impart high-quality education to Pakistani youth, he said, "We are trying our best in the field of education. We have 28 Pak-Turk Model Schools all over Pakistan where 30,000 students are being provided high-quality education. We are also providing comprehensive scholarship and last year, 168 scholarships were provided to Pakistani students.

Earlier, President KCCI Iftikhar Ahmed Sheikh, while welcoming the Turkish CG, stated that Pakistan's exports to Turkiye stood at around \$323 million in FY23 which was below potential and needs to be enhanced to a reasonable level. "Given Pakistan's strategic location, having a GDP of \$339 billion, and a vibrant young population, significant investment prospects await Turkish investors in various sectors such as Islamic Finance, halal food, energy, affordable housing, agriculture, infrastructure development, telecommunications and education", he added.

He noted that although both countries were desirous to have a sustainable and long-lasting FTA but it was yet to materialize. "The potential benefits of a swift conclusion to the FTA talks are immense, which can boost the existing volume of bilateral trade", he opined, adding that under FTA negotiations, sizeable tariff concessions should be given to Pakistan's value-added export products.



MULTAN: People selecting and purchasing old warm clothes from vendor at Hussain Agahi. —APP Photo

## National Seed Policy, 5 pc agricultural growth vital for country

KARACHI (INP): Vice President and Chief Organizer of the Pakistan Business Forum (PBF), Ahmad Jawad has said that to feed the ever-growing population, Pakistan needs around five percent consistent annual growth in the agriculture sector.

He said that to meet this challenge of achieving national food security and economic prosperity, a two-prong approach is required, i.e. vertical growth – by increasing per acre yield of crops; and horizontal growth – by bringing more area under cultivation through corporate farming.

Speaking during his meeting with President, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Atif Ikram here on Saturday, Ahmad Jawad said that Pakistan has the potential to bring around 22 million acres by combining both

vertical and horizontal approaches.

He said that currently country's per acre yield was far less than the global average due to limited access of farmers to modern machinery and digital support services. In this regard PBF have a strong view that the Artificial Intelligence (AI), can revolutionise and revitalise the local agriculture sector, especially horticulture, while addressing the challenges of climate change, adapting crop patterns, attracting talent, and envisioning a positive impact on this sector, he added.

The Vice President PBF emphasized the urgency of executing AI promptly as the most significant step in the agriculture sector which needs to be inserted in Green Pakistan Initiative. "Our policy makers often spend excessive time in meetings, discussions,

and visualisations, delaying the execution of pragmatic approaches which is not suitable for agriculture".

Jawad further said both developed and developing countries are moving towards the digital revolution, recognising data as today's equivalent of gold". "AI can help analyse historical data, weather trends, and storage conditions to predict optimal harvest times and storage durations for crops.

Speaking on the occasion, Atif Ikram said we must understand Pakistan's economy cannot reach the desired level of seven to eight percent GDP growth unless its agriculture sector grows at more than four percent.

"Instead of viewing the agriculture sector as simply a provider of food for the poor, Pakistan must see it as an engine that can drive economic growth for the next few decades. But this can

only be achieved if we are able to shatter and overcome some of the most common and ill-advised perceptions about the sector".

The President FPCCI further added agricultural is also widely linked to other sectors of the Pakistani economy because when agriculture moves, transport moves, milling moves, packaging moves, motorcycle sales move, etc. The direct and indirect contribution of agriculture within the domestic economy was, in fact, estimated at around 45 percent.

Atif Ikram also appreciated the government efforts to outlined a series of initiatives to breathe new life into Pakistan's agriculture sector. These include the formulation of a national seed policy and the introduction of the Agriculture Development Authority Act to facilitate corporate farming in Pakistan.

## New gas reserve found in Sindh

KARACHI (INP): Mari Petroleum Limited has announced the discovery of a new gas deposit in Sindh, set to contribute 6.57 million standard cubic feet of gas per day.

In an official statement, the company disclosed that the breakthrough occurred during the drilling process at Gazage Formation Two, reaching a depth of 1,014 meters.

The newly identified gas reservoir is expected to yield 6.57 million standard cubic feet of gas daily, boasting a gas pressure of 306 pounds per square inch.

The entirety of the shares in this area, representing a 100% stake, belongs to Mari Petroleum Limited.

## BFC is fully operational in Sialkot: SCCI President

SIALKOT (APP): Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik has said that the Business Facilitation Centre (BFC) in Sialkot has been established and is now fully operational since its inauguration on January 13 by Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi.

In a statement, Abdul Ghafoor Malik said that the primary objective of the Business Facilitation Centre (BFC) is to provide efficient one-window services to the business community of Sialkot. "This will be achieved through 17 dedicated

counters that are equipped to handle the issuance of NOCs from various departments, including but not limited to Environment Protection, Civil Defence, Forestry Wildlife and Fisheries, Industries Commerce Investment & Skills Development, Punjab Small Industries Corporation, Local Government, TMA, Police, and Health Department. Members can also receive any NOC that is to be issued from Lahore directly from the BFC Sialkot thanks to interconnectivity of all the BFCs of Punjab," he added.

Malik said the initiative by the government signifies a revolutionary step towards streamlining business processes, and encouraged all members to visit the Business Facilitation Centre (BFC) at Anwar Club, Sialkot.

"Here, you will have the opportunity to avail a diverse range of services seamlessly consolidated under one roof. We look forward to your feedback and welcome your thoughts on your experience at the centre," he added.

He said, "Your insights will contribute significantly to the ongoing improvement and refinement of the services."

## Rwanda business delegation visits Lahore Chamber

LAHORE (APP): A business delegation from Rwanda, headed by High Commissioner of Pakistan to Rwanda Naem Khan, visited the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on Saturday to have B2B (business to business) meetings with their Pakistani counterparts, besides exchanging views on trade and investment scope in the two countries.

Naem Khan said that Africa is the land of opportunities so the LCCI members should not ignore it. He said that Rwanda is Singapore of Africa and developing with a rapid pace. He added that Rwanda is a safe, clean and green country where business atmosphere is ideal. Naem Khan said that the businessmen are being facilitated through one window operation.

The HC said that Pakistani businessmen can also have access to other countries through Rwanda. He said that Pakistan and Rwanda have the capacity to meet each other's needs. Most of the trade is going on through third countries which should be direct. He

said that all the products of Pakistan are needed in Rwanda. He said that the members of the delegation are interested in joint ventures in agriculture machinery, rice, pharmaceuticals, sports equipment and other sectors. He said that there is a lot of scope for Pakistan's IT sector in Rwanda.

He informed the members of the delegation that Lahore Chamber is 100 years old. Lahore is the cultural, commercial and industrial capital of Punjab while Punjab is 50 percent of Pakistan. Pakistan has a key position in the fields of freelancing and tourism. He said that Rwanda has one of the best gender equality index. Men and women parity is everywhere. Naem Khan said that the economy of Pakistan needs diversification. He said, "We would like to sign MoUs with LCCI."

In his welcome address, LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that Rwanda, situated in the heart of East Africa, holds significant economic importance in the region. Rwanda has made remarkable strides in recent

years, establishing itself as an emerging economic force. He said that Pakistan has a sound and diverse economy, driven by various sectors that have shown remarkable growth over the years.

Kashif Anwar encouraged the delegation from Rwanda to explore the vast opportunities that exist within the Pakistani market. "Our businesses are capable of providing high-quality products at competitive prices. Pakistan is ready to cater to import needs of Rwanda and we believe that our collaboration will be mutually beneficial," he maintained.

The LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that to further facilitate this partnership, they have to focus on the importance of developing close liaisons between the private sectors of Pakistan and Rwanda. Strong relationship built on trust and understanding is the foundation of successful business collaborations. LCCI is committed to promoting these connections and creating an environment that encourages fruitful partnerships.

He apprised the partici-

pants of meeting that the delegates from Rwanda belong to important sectors like pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, safety equipment, furniture, construction materials, engineering, packaging, auto-parts, gem & jewelry etc. He hoped that our members will fully utilize the B2B meetings after this session and explore ways to develop networking with their counterparts from Rwanda.

The LCCI President said that Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry has witnessed remarkable growth in recent years. With a solid regulatory framework and a commitment to quality, Pakistan's pharmaceutical companies have the capacity to supply high-quality medications to Rwanda at competitive prices.

He said that the dynamic automotive sector in Pakistan produces a wide range of quality components. Collaboration with Rwandan importers in this sector can lead to the provision of reliable automotive parts, contributing to the growth of Rwanda's automotive industry.



LAHORE: Vendors displaying potato sacks for bidding at vegetable Market. —APP Photo





## In brief

## PCB introduces retainers for Women Panel of Umpires

LAHORE (PPI) Pakistan Cricket Board today confirmed it has introduced retainers for its Women Panel of Umpires for the first time. All seven umpires in the panel will receive a monthly retainer of PKR32,000. Recently, the PCB organised a four-day Female Umpires induction course in Lahore, with participants including Pakistan women's team captain Nida Dar and former international cricketer Sukhan Faiz among the 13 participants. In addition to the retainers, the PCB also provides other benefits to its match officials during the cricket season, including match fees, daily allowances, hotel accommodation, air and ground travel. PCB Senior Manager - Umpires and Referees, Bilal Qureshi: "It is great to see women stepping forward in the field of umpiring. To ensure they are valued and respected, the PCB, in addition to providing accommodation and travel, has introduced monthly retainers for the women umpires. "This step will motivate more women to come forward and the PCB will continue to encourage women to adapt this profession and progress in this field." PCB Women's Panel of Umpires (7) - Afia Amin, Humairah Farah, Nazia Nazir, Riffat Mustafa, Sabahat Rasheed, Saleema Imtiaz, Shakila Rafiq.

## Mitchell rested for final T20

CHRISTCHURCH (Agencies): New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell will skip the final T20 International against Pakistan with fellow all-rounder Rachin Ravindra replacing him in the squad for Sunday's match in Christchurch, the home side said. New Zealand have already taken a 4-0 lead in the five-match series and Mitchell would be rested as part of his workload management, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said on Saturday. "Daryl is an important player for us across all three formats and ensuring he's in the best place to perform in international cricket is vital," coach Gary Stead said. "Rachin is coming off a period of rest himself and will bring a valuable skill set to the group in this final match as he continues his return to cricket." Devon Conway missed Friday's victory after testing positive for COVID-19. New Zealand will wait until Sunday morning before making a decision on whether to field him for the final T20.

## McIlroy closes gap in Dubai

DUBAI (Agencies): Rory McIlroy shot a nine-under-par 63 to reduce Cameron Young's lead to two strokes going into the final round of the Dubai Desert Classic. McIlroy, the defending champion, was 10 shots behind Young at the halfway stage. The Northern Irishman hit seven birdies and finished his round on an eagle to finish 12 under. "I love coming back here. It would be amazing if I could get another win," said McIlroy. McIlroy was tied 24th after the second round but consecutive birdies on the seventh, eighth and ninth to finish the front nine put the 34-year-old back in contention. The four-time Major winner ended his round with a brilliant eagle putt on the eighteenth to finish on 63. Should McIlroy win the title on Sunday, he will become the first four-time winner of the Dubai Desert Classic. "It would be amazing. I'd be the first player to get my name on it four times. It would be awesome," said McIlroy.



**EAST LONDON:** Shahzaib Khan of Pakistan celebrates after reaching his century after scoring 100 runs during the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup South Africa 2024 match between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

## 13th Rashid D. Habib Memorial Golf: Ahmed Baig maintains lead

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The third round of the 13th Rashid D. Habib Memorial National Professional Golf Tournament 2024 was played on Saturday at the Karachi Golf Club (KGC). Ahmed Baig from Lahore and Muhammad Zubair from KGC both carded an impressive 67, finishing five under par. Ahmed Baig, maintaining his lead since the beginning of the tournament, boasts a gross of 204, standing at 12 under par, securing his top position on the leaderboard. Muhammad Zubair trails by two strokes, recording a total of 206 at 10 under par. Dilshad Ali of KGC

holds the third spot with a score of 212, four under par. Muhammad Alam and Muhammad Munir share a similar gross of 213, three under par. Defending Champion Waheed Baloch from KGC is in the sixth position with a score of 215, one under par.

Pakistan's prominent golfer, Muhammad Shabbir Iqbal, is making steady progress, reaching the 7th position with a gross of 216, at par. Shabbir has one more day left to come up with a surprise and impress his fans. Matloob from LGG carded a 72 on the third day, securing a gross of 216, at par.

On Saturday, the KGC greens also hosted the first round of the Senior and

Junior Professionals. In the Senior Professional category, Nisar Hussain and Abdul Hameed jointly lead the first day with a score of 69, three under par. Following closely are Muhammad Siddique and Aurangzaib Khan with a score of 71, one under par. Zulfiqar Ali, Muhammad Akram, and Muhammad Javed all carded a par score of 72 in the same category. Moving to the Junior Professionals category, Muhammad Sahil, Rehan Babar, and Umar Shahzad recorded scores of 75 (3 over par), 78 (6 over par), and 79 (7 over par) respectively.

The tournament's final round is scheduled for Sunday, January 21.

## 9 matches decided in National Netball C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): A total of nine matches were decided on the opening day of the National Inter-School Girls Netball Championship here at the Liaquat Gymnasium of the Pakistan sports Complex on Saturday.

In Girls U19, Karachi Grammar school beat Hadaf Girls College, Peshawar, by 22-2 scores; Danish School, Vehari, beat Habib Girls School, Karachi, by 15-7 scores; and TCS PAF Chapter Karachi beat Garrison Girls College, Lahore, by 19-12 scores.

In Girls U17, City School PAF Chapter, Karachi defeated DPS Rawalpindi by 13-8 scores; Karachi Grammar School beat Govt. Shah Latif Girls College, Hyderabad, by 13-2 goals; and APS Girls College Rawalpindi beat GGH Secondary School, Peshawar, by 13-1.

In Girls U15, Habib Girls School, Karachi, beat GGH School, Hyderabad, by 13-4 scores; Karachi Grammar School beat APS Girls School Rawalpindi by 10-7 scores; GGH School, Hyderabad beat Fauji Foundation Girls School Rawalpindi by 14-2 scores; and Karachi Grammar School beat GG Secondary School Bagh Sardarian Rawalpindi by 12-4 scores.

A total of 20 teams from all over the country participated in the championship.

The Deputy DG of the Pakistan Sports board, Shahid Islam, inaugurated the championship, while the President of the Pakistan Netball Federation, Mudassar Arain, the Acting Secretary General, Muhammad Riaz, and a large number of other people were also present on the occasion.

## Pakistan start their World Cup campaign on winning note

EAST LONDON (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan U19 beat Afghanistan U19 by a whopping margin of 181 runs in their opening contest of the ICC Men's U19 World Cup. Pakistan showcased an all-round performance, as opening batter Shahzaib Khan scored a brilliant ton to help the team post a decent total of 284-9 before the bowlers ran riot to bundle out Afghanistan 103 in 26.2 overs. Ubaid Shah and Zeeshan shared seven wickets among them.

Pakistan skipper Saad Baig won the toss and elected to bat first. The opening batters saw off the first power-play before Shamyul Hussain (17, 32b, 2x4s) nicked one to the keeper bringing an end to the 36-run partnership in the 11th over. Ten balls later, Azan Awaiz (5, 5b, 1x4) too departed after being caught down the leg side off Khalil Ahmed.

Saad (55, 52b, 3x4s, 4x6s) and Shahzaib (106, 126b, 10x4s, 3x6s) came together to stitch a 92-run partnership for the third wicket. Saad hit a flurry of boundaries to up the ante before falling to Allah Mohammad Ghazanfar.

Ahmed Hussain (8, 11b, 1x4) was dismissed by Naseer Khan Maroofkhil

with the scorecard reading 151-4 in 30.1 overs. Riazullah (46, 49b, 5x4s, 2x6s), batting at number six, made sure Pakistan kept accelerating but missed out on his half-century.

Arafat Minhas (8, 6b, 1x6) tonked a six soon after walking to the crease but had to return within a space of six balls after being caught behind. Ubaid Shah (22, 12b, 3x6s) chipped in with a valuable cameo and helped Pakistan reach 284-9 in the allotted 50 overs.

Khalil was the pick of Afghan bowlers as he took four wickets for 51 runs while Bashir Ahmad picked up two wickets. Ghazanfar and Naseer bagged one wicket each.

Afghanistan's reply was jolted by two early blows courtesy of opening bowlers Amir Hassan and Ubaid who struck in their first overs respectively. Hassan Eisakhil (19, 29b, 4x4s) and Sohail Khan Zurmati (20, 26b, 2x4s) hung around for eight overs before the former chopped on a ball from Ubaid. All-rounder Ahmad Hussain pitched one up and managed to breach the defence of Sohail as the ball crashed into stumps.

Afghanistan kept losing wickets at regular intervals as tall fast bowler

Mohammad Zeeshan struck twice in his first spell to remove wicketkeeper-batter Numan Shah (26, 31b, 2x4s, 1x6) and skipper Naseer for a seven-ball duck. Ubaid returned to dismiss Arab Gul (2, 11b). Zeeshan bagged his third wicket in the game as he took out Rahimullah Zurmati (20, 32b, 3x4s).

Afghanistan lost their last five wickets for a mere 12 runs as they were bundled out for a paltry total of 103 runs. Ubaid claimed four wickets while Amir and Ahmed returned with one wicket each. Shahzaib was declared player of the match for his fine century. Pakistan will face Nepal U19 in their next game on 24 January at the same venue.

Scores in brief: Pakistan U19 beat Afghanistan U19 by 181 runs (Shahzaib Khan 106, Saad Baig 55, Muhammad Riazullah 46, Ubaid Shah 22; Khalil Ahmed 4-51, Bashir Ahmad 2-52).

Afghanistan U19 103 all out, 26.2 overs (Numan Shah 26, Sohail Khan Zurmati 20, Rahimullah Zurmati 20; Ubaid Shah 4-26, Mohammad Zeeshan 3-17).

Player of the match - Shahzaib Khan (Pakistan U19)

## Shock Iraq defeat exposes Japan frailties at Asian Cup



DOHA (AFP): Japan were tipped as favourites to win the Asian Cup but a shock defeat to Iraq has exposed the cracks in coach Hajime Moriyasu's previously well-oiled machine.

The 2-1 loss leaves them facing a potential last-16 match with South Korea, assuming Japan still qualify from their final group game against Indonesia.

Even a draw on Wednesday would guarantee Japan progress, but after Friday's reality check against a side ranked 46 places below them, they will be desperate for a morale-boosting win.

Moriyasu's men went into the Iraq game off the back of a run of 10 straight wins where they scored 43 goals, including a 4-1 away victory over Germany.

Under Moriyasu, who has been in charge since 2018, they defeated Spain and Germany on the way to the last 16 at the Qatar World Cup just over a year ago.

But back in Doha again,

they were outfought by a hungry Iraq side who gave them no time to settle.

Liverpool's Watari Endo scored in injury time at the end, but Japan did not deserve anything more. Reaction was unsparring back home, with commentator Sergio Echigo ripping into Japan's flat performance.

"Iraq came at them with everything, playing like it was the final," he wrote in the Nikkan Sports daily. "Maybe Japan thought they were the better team because of their results, or maybe they thought they could take it easy, but they started the game very slowly."

Goalkeeping issues Of the mounting problems suddenly facing Moriyasu, the biggest is his goalkeeper. Iraq took the lead in the fifth minute when the inexperienced Zion Suzuki parried a cross straight into the path of striker Aymen Hussein, who headed home.

The 21-year-old Suzuki

was also at fault in Japan's opening game against Vietnam, letting in two first-half goals before they turned it around to win 4-2.

Suzuki was winning only his sixth cap and Moriyasu said he expects him to bounce back from the "painful memory" of his latest shaky outing between the sticks. Even if Moriyasu wanted to drop Suzuki, he has left himself with two other goalkeepers with even less international experience.

Daiya Maekawa has only one cap and third-choice Taishi Brandon Nozawa has yet to play for his country, exposing a dearth of reliable Japanese goalkeepers. "When you don't have much experience you make mistakes, and that's the case whether you're a goalkeeper or in any other walk of life," said Moriyasu. He left 2022 World Cup goalkeeper Shuichi Gonda, 34, at home.

Mitoma return? Japan captain Endo acknowledged that Iraq had dominated in midfield, consistently beating Japan to loose balls. Endo urged his teammates to "be on it right from the first whistle" against Indonesia.

"We can talk all we want about tactics but we have to go back to basics for the next game," he said. Moriyasu needs Kaoru Mitoma to return after the Brighton winger missed the first two matches with an ankle injury.

## Sensational competition continues in Peshawar Premier Football League

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Premier Football League Season-I's sensational competition continues with more matches decided when the teams of Spartax FC Swat, PoPo FC Islamabad, Dara 90 and DFA Chitral won their respective matches here at Tehmas Khan Football Stadium Peshawar on Saturday.

According to the results of the matches played, the first match was played between Spartax FC Swat and Dara Adam Khel Stori, in which the players of Swat showed a good game and won 2-1. Sajid Khan and Bilal Khan scored one goal each while Dara Adam Khel Stori reduced the margin through a field attempt

when Akbar Ali scored a field goal.

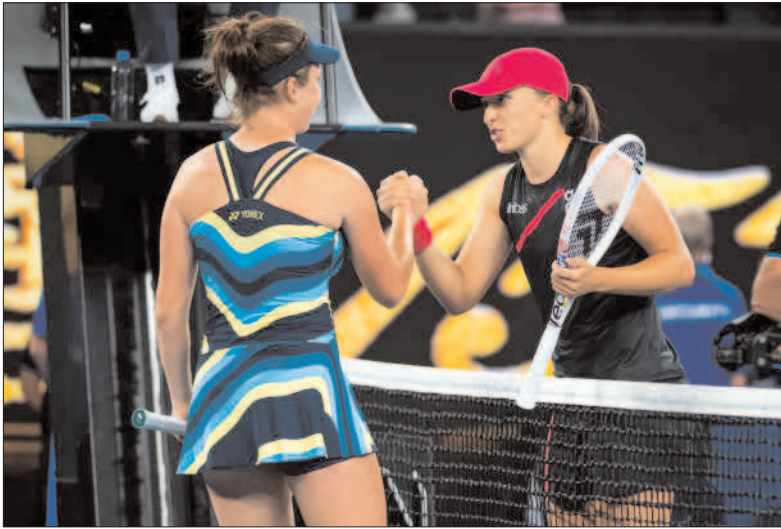
Similarly, in the second match, Popo FC Club Islamabad defeated Khyber Green by 2-0. For Popo FC Club Tahir and Afzal scored one goal each through field goals. Polo FC Club Islamabad played well and did not give much chance to Khyber Green to strike back.

In the third match played, the Dara 90 team defeated Boner Red by 2-0. Dara 90 club mid fielder Javed and deep defender Tajamal scored one goal each through field attempts. Javed took a free kick while Tajamal played well and scored a field goal by dodging three defenders.

Similarly, DFA Chitral

won by defeating the team of Manari Swabi by 4-2. For Chitral Shun, Tuseef Khan, Sabeeh and Tariq scored one goal each for DFA Chitral. Surprisingly, Manari Swabi took the lead in the fifth and 10th minute of the match through field attempts when Iqbal and Zeeshan scored one goal each.

It should be noted that 15 of the best teams of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Islamabad, and national and international players, are participating in the Peshawar Premier Football League Season-I. This is the reason why football fans are offered the best game and the spectators are enjoying these matches.



**Linda Noskova (L) of the Czech Republic shakes hands with Iga Swiatek (R) of Poland after victory in their round three singles match**

MELBOURNE (AFP): World number one Iga Swiatek joined the rapid exit of top-10 women's seeds from the Australian Open on Saturday as Carlos Alcaraz sent a chilling warning to his rivals.

Poland's Swiatek came into the third-round match against Czech teenager Linda Noskova on an 18-match unbeaten run, targeting a first title at Melbourne Park. But the tournament is turning into a graveyard for the stars and the 22-year-old four-time major winner lost her way after winning the

first set, going down 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

A crestfallen Swiatek said she felt the match was under control until she was broken in the second set. "I feel like I did really everything I could in pre-season to improve some stuff that I wanted to," she said. "Then I came here and I wasn't playing kind of natural anymore." Noskova, playing in her first Australian Open, said she was "speechless".

"I knew it was going to be an amazing match, but I didn't really think it would end up like this," said the 50th-ranked

player, who faces Ukraine's Elina Svitolina next. Just three of the top 10 women's seeds remain in the draw at the end of the first week -- defending champion and hot favourite Aryna Sabalenka, Coco Gauff and Barbora Krejickova.

Alcaraz stars A day after defending champion Novak Djokovic returned to top form, men's world number two Alcaraz laid down a marker in a lopsided contest against Chinese teenager Shang Juncheng lasting just 66 minutes.

The 20-year-old, playing a tour-level match against a player younger than himself for the first time in his career, was leading 6-1, 6-1, 1-0 when his 18-year-old opponent had to retire.

Shang entered the clash on Rod Laver Arena with his upper right thigh strapped and received treatment on the injury during the second set.

Dominant Alcaraz did not face a single break point to set up a last-16 meeting with Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic, who saved two match points to beat last year's semi-finalist Tommy Paul 6-4, 3-6, 2-6, 7-6 (9/7), 6-0. The Spanish second seed is vying with Djokovic for the number one ranking and if they both reach the final it will double as a straight shootout for the top spot.

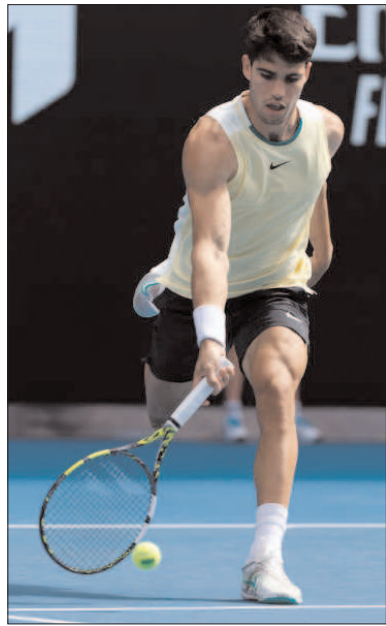
Alcaraz, who missed last year's Australian Open with an injury, said it was "not the way anybody wants to move on" after the injury to Shang.

But he added: "This is the first time I

have moved to the second week in Australia. It feels special."

Third seed Daniil Medvedev brushed off the after-effects of his 3:40 am finish in his second-round match on Friday to beat Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime in straight sets.

Medvedev, who faces Portugal's world number 69 Nuno Borges next,



**Carlos Alcaraz is in action during his third-round singles match**

admitted the early-hours finish had taken its toll. "It was not easy, I'm not feeling fresh, I'm not feeling 100 percent," said the Russian, who lost to Djokovic in the 2021 Melbourne Park final and Rafael Nadal a year later.

"It was tough, especially after the last match I had."

Borges, who beat 13th seed Grigor Dimitrov, is the first Portuguese player in the Open Era to reach the round of 16 at the Australian Open. There were also wins for ninth seed Hubert Hurkacz and 19th seed Cameron Norrie, who put out 11th seed Casper Ruud.

Britain's Norrie will play sixth-ranked Alexander Zverev, who brushed aside unseeded American Alex Michelsen in straight sets.

In the women's draw, two-time champion Victoria Azarenka rallied past fellow Grand Slam winner Jelena Ostapenko 6-1, 7-5, winning the last five games. "I think I'm just ready to give whatever it takes," said Azarenka, who won back-to-back Australian Opens in 2012 and 2013.

"I love a challenge, I love the challenge whenever something is difficult. I love to do that, that makes me excited. I think that brings out the best in me." She will meet Ukrainian qualifier Dayana Yastremska for a place in the quarter-finals. Chinese 12th seed Zheng Qinwen said she was inspired by Chinese great Li Na's win in the 2014 final after she beat compatriot Wang Yafan 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (10/8).





## In brief

### SIFC installs 1MW solar plant

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in partnership with NPAK Energy on Saturday has installed one megawatt solar power plant in Hunza district of Gilgit-Baltistan. According to Radio Pakistan sources, this solar plant will meet the energy deficit in the region and ensure uninterrupted power supply to the people living in these valleys. Located 2,800 meters above sea level, the plant's more than 2,300 solar panels will generate 1,600 MW of electricity annually for local households and industries.

### Child killed in mortar shell explosion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mortar shell explosion claimed the life of one child and left two women injured on Saturday in the Amangarh area of Nowshera. According to the private news channel, as soon as the incident was reported, the rescue teams reached the spot and the injured including the dead body were shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. According to police officials, an investigation was initiated to determine the cause of the incident.

### Two suspects injured in alleged encounter

ISLAMABAD (APP): Two suspects were injured on Saturday in an alleged police encounter on the Karachi Super Highway. According to the private news channel, during the alleged police encounter on Shahrah-e-Qaideen, two suspects were injured and arrested by the police. According to the rescue officials, the passerby was injured by the firing of the accused. The rescue team reached the spot immediately after the incident was reported, and both the accused and the injured passerby were shifted to the Civil Hospital. The police recovered the weapons from the arrested and injured accused, registered a case, and started further investigation.

### Qul Khawani of deceased Zafar Baig

ISLAMABAD (APP): Qul Khawani of deceased Zafar Baig, elder brother of Chairman Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) Muhammad Salim Baig will be held on Sunday (tomorrow). According to a press release, Qul Khawani of the deceased brother of PEMRA chairman will be held at 559 C near Madni Masjid Faisal Town, Lahore.

### Motorcycle theft nabbed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested a two-member gang involved in motorcycle theft and recovered 05 stolen motorcycles from their possession here on Saturday. According to a police spokesman, Westridge police held a two-member bike lifter gang who were identified as Hamid and Abdul Rehman. Police have registered separate cases against both of them and started an investigation. SP Pothohar commended police team and said that the arrested accused will be brought to justice with solid evidence, the accused who deprived the citizens of their valuable assets cannot escape from the grip of the law. The crackdown against organized and dynamic gangs will be continued, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Norway to Pakistan, Per Albert Ilsaas call on Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Gulbar Khan at GB House. —APP Photo

## Bilawal to snatch subsidies from rich, return it to poor: Hina

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader, Hina Rabbani Khar has said that her party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari would snatch the subsidies from affluent people and will return it to poor segments of the society.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, she said that PPP was the only political party which stands with masses and enjoy their complete support.

Hina Rabbani Khar said that Bilawal Bhutto as foreign minister recognized Pakistan's viewpoint at

international level.

She further said that Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) was a vision of PPP leadership.

Hina said that the pattern of BISP to support the marginalized segments was being followed at global level.

## Mushaal saddened over Yasin's uncle demise

ISLAMABAD (INP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick expressed her deep grief and sorrow over the sad demise of the maternal uncle of illegally incarcerated Chairman of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) Muhammad Yasin Malik.

Mushaal, who is also a wife of Yasin Malik, in her condolence message on Saturday, said that Muhammad Shafi, maternal uncle of JKLF Chairman, breathed his last due to cardiac arrest.

She extended heartfelt condolences to the grieving family, praying that may Allah Almighty grant highest place to the departed soul in Jannah.

The SAPM for Human Rights and Women Empowerment offered prayers to give the bereaved family especially to the mother of Yasin Malik the courage to bear the irreparable loss with equanimity.

## Five killed in armed attack

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least five persons were killed in an armed men's attack on a village in Ghotki district, citing police on Saturday.

According to a private news channel, the police said that unidentified armed men attacked Jam Bajar village leaving at least five persons dead and two injured in the shooting incident.

The deadly incident is the result of an ongoing feud between two clans, according to police. The accused had attacked a Bethak (meeting place) of the village, he reported. The bodies were shifted to a nearby hospital and further investigation was under process.

## Jamuluddin Aali remembered

ISLAMABAD (INP): Renowned poet, lyricist, columnist, creator of several popular national songs including "Jeevay Jeevay Pakistan" Nawabzada Mirza Jamiluddin Ahmed Khan commonly known as Jamiluddin Aali was remembered on Saturday on his birth anniversary.

Birth anniversary of eminent poet, lyricist, columnist, creator of several popular national songs including "Jeevay Jeevay Pakistan" Nawabzada Mirza Jamiluddin Ahmed Khan commonly known as Jamiluddin Aali was observed on Saturday.

The eminent poet called as "Aali Ji" by many of his compatriots, was a banker by profession and owing to his literary pursuits also remained associated with Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu Pakistan for 50 long years, since 1962 to 2012.

His contribution towards promotion of Urdu and establishment of Urdu University in the country, a dream and mission of Baba-e-Urdu (Maulana Abdul Haq), is also duly acknowledged by many.

One of the longest poems in Urdu literature, "Insaan," comprising 4000 verses also goes to Aali's credit and this is besides several, Nazms and Ghazals contributed by him to the Urdu poetry.

# Pakistan, China stood together to safeguard common interests: Sun Weidong

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong Saturday said Pakistan and China stood together to safeguard their common interests and would continue to support each other on issues of significance.

He was speaking at the inauguration of a photo exhibition and CPEC library at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here. He said China would continue its support to Pakistan against any threat of terrorism. He thanked Pakistan for its support for the One China principle, adding friendship of the two countries was time-tested and had across-the-board support among their people.

He said he brought books from China for the CPEC library including books written by President Xi Jinping on governance and the ancient Chinese culture. Sharing memories of his stay in Pakistan as ambassador in the last decade, he said the library was a reminder of the strength of the strategic partnership which was manifested through the CPEC projects.

The CPEC project was inaugurated by the Chinese President along with the leadership of Pakistan in 2015, he recalled, adding the leadership launched projects across Pakistan by signing more than 50 agreements.

The minister expressed his happiness over the completion of various projects under CPEC including highways, power plants and industrial parks, saying it was all made possible due to the strategic guidance of the leadership. He said the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by China was undertaken to bring shared prosperity to the humanity. "Through BRI, China envisioned to bring the countries together to face the current economic challenges and to turn challenges into opportunities," he stressed.

The deputy foreign minister had arrived in Islamabad to attend CPEC Joint Working Group meeting on Sunday. In his remarks, Foreign Secretary Syrus Sajjad Qazi said CPEC remained foremost in the all weather strategic cooperative relationship of Pakistan and China. He

said the China Pakistan relationship was exemplified by commonality of interests. He invited other countries to invest in the industry, agriculture, science and technology projects under the CPEC.

The CPEC project was a tribute to the wisdom of leaders of different generations who contributed to strengthening of bilateral ties between Pakistan and China, he remarked. The shared vision of CPEC was meant to bring economic prosperity, regional connectivity and industrial growth, the Secretary added.

Later, the Chinese Vice Foreign Minister and Foreign Secretary inaugurated the CPEC library and exhibition. Photos of various CPEC projects including Friendship Hospital, Vocational School and International Airport in Gwadar and East Bay expressway were put on display.

The East Bay expressway in the Gwadar region was an important infrastructure project connecting the port and free industrial zone with the national highway network.

## ECP monitoring teams enforce code of conduct with notices, fines

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) monitoring teams continue to issue notices and fines to candidates breaching the election code of conduct in different areas of the country.

Monitoring teams of the Election Commission in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts swiftly responded to code of conduct violations by candidates.

Chairman Tehsil Council Pooran Abdul Mouli has been fined Rs. 30,000 for breaching the code of conduct. He is required to submit the fine by January 23.

Abdul Mouli failed to appear before the District Monitoring Officer, Shangla on January 18, and neither did his representative. Similarly, Chairman Tehsil Council Bisham, Saeedur Rehman, received

an Rs. 20,000 fine for breaching the code of conduct. He is instructed to collect and submit the challan by January 23.

He appeared in the office of District Monitoring Officer Shangla on January 18. Likewise, Election Commission monitoring teams are actively overseeing the election campaign in Punjab. Provincial Election Commissioner Ejaz Anwar Chauhan emphasizes the strict enforcement of the code of conduct.

District Monitoring Officers in Punjab are enforcing stringent measures against code of conduct violations. In NA-153 Multan, candidate Hamid Ali Bhatti has received a notice for breaching the code of conduct. Candidate Ahmed Chatta

of NA-66 Wazirabad has been served with a notice, and in PP-133, Naushir Mann received a notice for wall chalking in Nankana Sahib.

Similarly, candidate Daniyal Aziz of NA-75 Narowal received a notice for wall posters, and election candidates in Nankana Sahib were warned about displaying banners and billboards.

Panaflex and promotional materials were cleared from Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Sargodha, and Bhakkar. Panaflex hoardings were erected in Chiniot, Faisalabad, Nankana, Kasur, Lahore, and Multan. District Monitoring Officers received strict instructions from the Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab.

## PML-N to unveil election manifesto on Jan 27

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Senator Irfan Siddiqui said on Saturday that his party will unveil its election manifesto on January 27.

Talking to a private news channel, he said the manifesto was not just a showcase of slogans but a roadmap for delivering promises for the good of the people.

Senator said that preparing this document was a hectic exercise and that it took two months to articu-

late the proposals.

The manifesto was formulated by 36 separate expert committees, with a primary focus on people's well-being and development. The delay in presenting the manifesto was due to the extensive work done by experts to refine and compile it, he added.

The primary objective behind these subcommittees was to encourage a broad spectrum of party leaders to contribute their insights and recommendations.

Senator Irfan Siddiqui stressed that their approach

was not to provide a nominal manifesto but to commit to a substantive and actionable document.

He said that there will be commitments to ending poverty, bringing down prices of essential commodities, and improving living standards, along with a vague road map regarding solutions to economic challenges.

The priority remains centered on addressing the issues faced by the people, reflecting the party's commitment to effective governance.

## Common headaches tied to work stress: Dr Suhail Yaseen

ISLAMABAD (APP): Consultant Neurologist Dr Rao Suhail Yaseen Khan said on Saturday that the most common primary headaches were tension-type headaches, and migraines were often linked to work-related stress.

Talking to Pakistan Television News, he said that recognizing the various types of headaches, their triggers, and their distinguishing characteristics is crucial for treatment.

While some headaches may have secondary causes like infections, fever, or migraines with specific triggers, chronic daily headaches exceeding a certain frequency were a concern, he added.

Understanding the complexities of

headaches, their potential triggers, and associated symptoms is vital for both diagnosis and effective management, he said.

Dr Rao said that headaches have secondary causes, such as infections, fever, or specific triggers. Recognizing these factors contributing to headaches was crucial for developing appropriate treatment plans, he added.

He said that headaches come in various forms, including full-head pain, half-head pain, or pain localized to specific areas. Distinguishing these types was important, and some may be classified as chronic when occurring frequently.

Chronic headaches are defined by their frequen-

cy, with more than 6 out of 15 days or lasting more than 3 months out of 6 months considered chronic, he added.

Answering a query, he said that headaches in children can be alarming, requiring an early diagnosis. While not always accompanied by fever, he said that symptoms such as vomiting, light sensitivity, and neck pain should prompt immediate medical attention.

Answering the question of tumour diagnosis, apparent symptoms like headache, eye pain, blurred vision, vomiting, and loss of balance are common indicators. Recognizing these signs early is crucial for timely medical intervention and appropriate treatment, he added.



More than 1,400kg of narcotics set alight in Helmand

LASHKARGAH (Pajhwok): The counter-narcotic personnel in Bahramcha and Nawmesh districts of southern Helmand province have set alight hundreds of kilograms of drugs, police official said on Saturday. Police spokesman Mullah Ezatullah Haqqani told Pajhwok Afghan News these narcotics included 683 kilograms of F powder, 650 kilograms of ephedra and 75 kilograms of gypsum.

Chinese businessmen plan to invest \$500 million in solar energy

KABUL (Ariana News): A group of Chinese investors presented a plan to invest \$500 million in Afghanistan's solar energy sector as they met with Afghan chargé d'affaires in Islamabad on Friday. The investors expressed significant interest in Afghanistan's present economic prospects, Afghanistan Embassy in Islamabad said in a statement.

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

More than 300 Afghan refugees transferred to Canada



KABUL (Khamma Press): The Canadian Immigration and Citizenship Department has announced that they have transferred 319 Afghan refugees from Pakistan to the city of Vancouver in Canada. The department stated on Friday, January 19, on its social media platform X that these refugees have arrived in Vancouver on a charter flight. According to the Canadian Immigration and Citizenship Department, these refugees will be set-

led in 26 different locations across Canada. Based on the statistics from the department, Canada has relocated and resettled 45,820 Afghan refugees in the country from 2021 to the end of December 2023. Previously, Canada had also announced the resettlement of 295 Afghan refugees from Pakistan to the city of Toronto in Canada. Furthermore, the Canadian government had committed to resettling nearly 40,000 Afghan

refugees by the end of the year 2023 in one of the world's largest resettlement programs. It should be noted that after the rise of the Taliban administration, over 120,000 Afghan citizens sought refuge in various countries in Europe, America, and some other countries. Prior to this, Afghan migrants had arrived in Canada from countries like Pakistan, Tajikistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Albania through charter flights.

IE: It is not responsibility of nations to decide govt

KABUL (Tolo News): The spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, Zabihullah Mujahid, in response to the recent remarks of the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, said that the nature of the government, and the inclusion and non-inclusion of individuals in the government does not belong to any country. Mujahid added that the world countries should interact positively and independently with the Islamic Emirate and not interfere in internal affairs of Afghanistan. "What is important is that no country should interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs. It is not the responsibility of other nations to decide how the government should be, or who should and should not be included," the spokesman said. Previously, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, expressed hope for the formation of a government in Afghanistan that would feature "political inclusivity." Speaking at his annual news conference devoted to reviewing Moscow's main foreign policy achievements in 2023, Lavrov said "there is a de facto government in Afghanistan, and it has the situation in control."

"True, some hotbeds of tensions, protest do remain there, but the Taliban have real power. And our embassy never stopped operations in Kabul," Lavrov told the reporters. "And we maintain regular communication with the Taliban, including on issues that need to be solved for them to become a fully recognized government." Some political analysts said that the Islamic Emirate and the world should comply with each other's wishes in some issues. "Russia is a significant country in the region that also has an international



role, it is a permanent member of the Security Council with the right of veto, and it can be beneficial in relations with Afghanistan," said Moeen Gul Samkanai, a political analyst. "We hope that a real government will be established based on the beliefs and ideals of the Afghan people and that the interim government becomes official and gets rid of being interim," said Sediq Mansour Ansari, another political analyst. The establishment of an inclusive government and the Islamic Emirate's commitments to women's rights are considered conditions for Afghanistan's reintegration into the international community in the independent assessment of UN Special Coordinator for Afghanistan Feridun Sinirlioglu.

Bosnia arrests four Afghans over alleged kidnapping case

KABUL (Khaama Press): Four Afghan nationals have been arrested in Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital, for kidnapping three foreigners and demanding a ransom. The victims, who hailed from Iran and Switzerland, were subjected to a demand for 18,000 euros (US\$19,556) in ransom by their captors, as reported by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). Officials from the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA) have not disclosed the identities, gender, or immigration status of the victims or the suspects involved in the case. The alleged kidnappers are suspected of being part of an organized crime group or association involved in criminal activities related to migrant smuggling, human trafficking, and kidnapping, according to SIPA. "This organized group of kidnappers subjected the abducted individuals to torture and physical abuse, resulting in severe injuries. One person required hospi-



tal treatment as a result of the ordeal," SIPA said in a statement. The abducted individuals were eventually released after the ransom was paid, at an undisclosed location outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina, report said. Additionally, one of the detained suspects is under investigation for potentially having connections to the murder of a migrant who was fatally stabbed in a temporary reception center for migrants in the country's west on December 31 of the previous year, according to SIPA. Law enforcement agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina collaborated with police forces from Serbia and Switzerland, as well as with the country's intelligence agencies, and units of Europol and Interpol. In 2023, nearly 35,000 migrants entered the Balkan country through the Balkan route, a significant migratory pathway into Europe, as reported by the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR.

\$70M in construction of electricity substations begins: MoEW



KABUL (Tolo News): The Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW) said that the reconstruction of electricity substations has been started from Dasht Alwan to Chowk Arghandi and to Tarakhail of Kabul with a total cost of almost \$70 million. The acting minister of MoEW, Abdul Latif Mansoor, told TOLONews

that these substations will be built in two months, and upon their completion, a way to import 1000 megawatts of electricity from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan will be provided. "This 500kv line is supposed to be extended to Turkmenistan, we have already talked to them and then we can import 1,000 megawatts of electricity to

Afghanistan and the electricity blackouts will be solved," he added. According to him, he has also received an order from the leader of the Islamic Emirate to produce 250 megawatts of electricity based on domestic energy. "We have received a decree for the production of 250 megawatts of elec-

tricity from Amirul Momineen (Islamic Emirate's leader), to provide the facilities and build substations in different provinces and provide people with electricity," said Abdul Latif Mansoor. Several residents of Kabul who have faced several challenges due to the electricity blackouts, asked the Islamic Emirate to address the electricity issues. "All the facilities are provided by electricity, electricity blackouts are increased both during the day and night, the problems are increased in the city and the electricity blackouts should be decreased," said Mohammad Omer, a resident of Kabul. "We want the Islamic Emirate to provide electricity for at least 8 or 9 hours in 24 hours," said Ahmad, another resident of Kabul. Officials in the Ministry of Energy and Water say that they have been in contact with a lot of investors to produce more electricity from different sources and they will start their investments in the near future.

3 killed, 6 wounded as explosives go off inside Kunar house

ASADABAD (Pajhwok): Three people were killed and six others wounded when explosives used in mining went off inside a house in the Chapa Dara district of eastern Kunar province on Saturday. Police spokesman Farid Dehqan told Pajhwok Afghan News the incident took place

inside a house at 11:00am. "Our initial information suggests that three people were martyred and six others were wounded in the blast," he informed. He said security forces had reached the scene and the nature of the blast was yet to be ascertained. Sayed Rahim, administrative chief of Chapa

Dara district, said the explosion happened at the house of Saleh in Tirink village and it also caused a blaze. He said two people were killed and seven others wounded. He added the injured were first taken to the district health center and then to the provincial

hospital of Asadabad, with some in critical condition. He said the explosives used in mining went off after being heated. "There are precious stone mines in our area, the explosive materials were lying in this house, which got heated and exploded."

Four-fold rise in number of businesswomen in 3 years: AWCCI

KABUL (Pajhwok): There has been a four-fold increase in the number of businessmen in the country over the past three years, says the Afghanistan Women's Chambers of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI). The AWCCI urged the government to provide the women with all facilities and support them in running businesses. Speaking to Pajhwok Afghan News, Salma Yousafzai, director of AWCCI, said women's involvement in business and investment had significantly risen in the last two years. Referring to the state of women and girls, she said: "Currently they are not in a good situation in general, but their involvement in businesses has increased which is a good achievement."

According to her, in 2020, about 2,421 businesswomen had official licences and membership of the chamber. But this number has now surged to 9,162. She added 120,000 women were presently doing businesses without licences, but three years ago, this number was 52,000. These women are mostly associated with handicrafts, agriculture, health, food, industry, mines and jewelry. Yousafzai recalled



besides national and international exhibitions, educational programs and capacity-building and vocational training programmes had been launched by the government and AWCCI throughout the country in the past two years. "We have capacity building and training programmes in the banking sector, like small loan schemes. For the protection of their property, we have more than 25 programmes this year." According to Yousafzai, businesswomen like their male counterparts, are facing challenges in areas of obtaining business visas, high taxes and falling sales. She said the cost of licence for small and medium businesses was high and a number of women interested in the sector could not invest in them due to lack of enough capital. She said measures had been taken to address the problems of women in this area and efforts were underway to remove irregularities. In order to solve these problems, including reducing taxes, increasing the export of women's handicrafts and obtaining business visas, they are in contact with the officials

concerned at home and abroad. About the collection of taxes by various institutions, she said under the existing law, traders and investors had to pay huge taxes to municipalities and the Ministry of Finance. She called the role of women effective in improving the country's economy and said their trade activities should be expanded and they should be supported. She urged the Islamic Emirate to support businesswomen and take effective steps in area of issuing them with licences and reduce taxes.

MAIMANA (Pajhwok): The construction project of 33 kilometers roads inside Maimana city, the capital of northwestern Faryab province, has remained incomplete after five years since the project had launched, according to local officials on Saturday. They said the below the standard and incomplete work of the construction company there had been more traffic accidents, the ditched were filled with garbage which added to pollution. The construction company, however, linked delay in

5-year on, Maimana roads project still incomplete



the work with recent changes in the country and said demanded over 225 million afis from the government. The company said the remaining roads construction work will be completed in a few months after the fund is released. Syed Arif, the resident of Balochkhana locality, told Pajhwok Afghan News the ditches on both sides of the roads have turned into garbage pits and they are tired of the stench, and the government should summon a contract company and complete the remaining

work on it. Gul Agha, another resident of Maimana City, said that the contract company spent millions of dollars for the construction of roads and canals from the state treasury to solve the problems of the people and municipalities, but on the contrary, it made the situation worst. He said: "Gutters have been turned into waste reservoir; traffic accidents occur every day, children, women and old people fall and get injured, we request the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to compel the

construction company to complete the project." Mohammad Arif, an employee of the municipality, said due to incomplete construction work people put garbage in gutters and it made things difficult for the municipality employees to clean the area. He said: "Before the construction work, we cleaned gutters on one hour and currently in two days we cannot clean gutters." Niamatullah, another employee of the municipality, said: "Some people have been very insensitive and unfair, they throw the dirt and filth of their houses, which is mostly sewage from toilets and children's diapers, into the streams." Mohammad Ismael Ayubi, head of the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), confirmed the complaint of the residents of Maimana city and said that the ditches were constructed below the standard, the water does not flow properly and at the same time people throw garbage and this has caused the environment to be polluted and the streams have turned into nests of insects.





KOT ADDU: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a public gathering.

# Israel drops leaflets seeking intel on captives, as Gaza attacks continue

GAZA: Israeli forces have dropped leaflets in the southern Gaza Strip, asking residents to provide information about the captives taken by Hamas on October 7, as bombardment of the besieged enclave continues. The leaflets dropped on Saturday, showed the photos of dozens of captives still in Gaza, together with a message suggesting there would be benefits for anyone providing information to Israel.

"You want to return home? Please report if you identified one of them," read the message, which also listed a phone number and a link to a website containing images and names of the captives in Arabic. "They are asking people's help because they are unable to get to their hostages because of the resistance," said Abu Ali, one north Gaza resident. "End the war, Netanyahu, and get your people back," he told the Reuters news agency.

The captives were taken during Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel in which more than 1,100 people were killed. Israel has since relentlessly bombarded Gaza, killing more than 24,900 Palestinians, mostly women and children. More than 100 of the captives were freed during a short-lived November truce between Israel and Hamas. Israel says 132 remain in Gaza and 27 have died in captivity.

On Saturday in the Israeli capital, dozens of relatives of the captives rallied outside the private residence of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, demanding he reach a deal with Hamas to ensure their release. The protesters plan to spend the night in tents outside Netanyahu's house in the coastal town of Caesarea – some 60km (37 miles) north of Tel Aviv – to protest against his lack of progress.

"The protesters said that they wanted Netanyahu to step out and speak to them," said Al Jazeera's Laura Khan, reporting from occupied East Jerusalem. "One person, whose brother is in captivity and whose mother was released in the last deal, said Netanyahu looked her in the eyes and said the captives matter. She believes he's lying. She said there was blood on his hands," she added. People standing outside Netanyahu's home held up posters reading, "We want a deal now", Khan noted.

Israeli war cabinet minister and former military chief Gadi Eizenkot said a deal will be needed to ensure captives still held in the Gaza Strip are released alive, adding that a light-

ning raid would be extremely unlikely to succeed. However, Netanyahu has said he will push for "complete victory" against Hamas but has not outlined how he would achieve it.

Meanwhile, in Israel's third-largest city, Haifa, an anti-war protest took place on Saturday with Israeli Jews and Palestinian citizens of Israel coming together to call for an end to the fighting in Gaza. "The message here is to end the war and that [the Israelis] can only live peacefully, side by side, with a political solution for the Palestinians," said Al Jazeera's Stefanie Dekker, reporting from the protest, which Israeli officials only allowed to take place for two hours.

In Gaza, attacks showed no signs of stopping as the health ministry said Israeli attacks killed 165 people and wounded 280 others in the past 24 hours. "There hasn't been any let-up in the intense bombing across the Gaza Strip and it looks like it's all started again in the north where more residential buildings have been targeted," said Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Rafah.

"There appears to be a surge in the intensity and scale of the bombings, with the remaining buildings in the vicinity of al-Shifa Hospital and the western part of Gaza City and Jabalia and Beit Lahiya being hit." The vicinity of Nasser hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis also came under heavy bombardment, Mahmoud noted. The facility is one of the few partially functioning hospitals in Gaza.

In more than 100 days of war, Israel's air, land and sea offensive has devastated much of Gaza, displacing most of the 2.3 million population, many forced to move repeatedly and seek refuge in tents that do little to protect them from the elements and disease, according to the United Nations.

**UN women's agency says 2 mothers killed every hour in Gaza:** About 70 per cent of the people killed during the war in Gaza were women and children, and on average two mothers have lost their lives every hour since the conflict began, UN Women said. The agency called for an immediate ceasefire and no effort to be spared to ensure women and girls receive proper protection and have safe access to fast, unrestricted and "gender-responsive" humanitarian assistance.

"At least 24,620 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, about 16,000 of whom were women or children," said

Sima Bahous, the executive director of UN Women. This is three times the number of people killed in the territory in the previous 15 years combined, she added.

"It is now more than 100 days since the horrors of the Hamas attacks on Israel of Oct. 7 and the horrors that have followed, especially in Gaza," and evidence continues to emerge that women and children are the "first victims of conflict," she said. "We are failing them. That failure, and the generational trauma inflicted on the Palestinian people over these 100 days and counting, will haunt all of us for generations to come. Without change, these last 100 days, (which) have seen unparalleled destruction rained on the people of Gaza, will be mere prelude to the next 100.

"However much we mourn the situation of the women and girls of Gaza today, we will mourn further tomorrow, without unrestricted humanitarian assistance and an end to the destruction and killing," Bahous said. Women and girls in Gaza are being deprived of safety, medicine, healthcare and shelter, they face imminent starvation and famine and, most of all, they are deprived of hope and justice.

A "gender alert" issued by UN Women on the effects of the crisis in Gaza on women and girls said that the majority of those killed, wounded or displaced in the territory are female. It found that of the 1.9 million people who have been displaced, nearly 1 million are women and girls. They are forced to seek refuge in precarious shelters at a time when "nowhere and no one is safe in Gaza." It added: "The impossible decisions regarding whether to evacuate, how and when to do so, and where to go, are entrenched with gender-differentiated fears and experiences, as gendered risks, including attacks and harassment, emerge along displacement routes." UN Women estimates that at least 3,000 women have become widows and the heads of their households during the conflict and are in urgent need of protection and food assistance, and at least 10,000 children have lost their fathers. There are fears that many such families will need to resort to desperate coping mechanisms, including early marriage.

The agency also reiterated its "deep concern at the accounts of unconscionable sexual violence and other gender-based violence during the Oct. 7 attacks."

## 13 students killed in China school fire

BEIJING: A fire has ripped through a dormitory in a boarding school in central China, killing 13 students, state media reported. One student was injured in the blaze at Yingcai School in Henan province's Yanshanpu village, the Xinhua news agency reported on Saturday.

The victims were identified as third-grade elementary school students. A teacher told the state-run Hebei Daily that all of them were from the same class of nine and 10 year olds. Firefighters managed to swiftly extinguish the blaze, which was reported at 11pm (15:00 GMT) on Friday and the head of the school was taken into custody while the authorities were investigating the cause.

The injured survivor was

being treated in hospital and reported to be "in stable condition", according to Xinhua. China National Radio reported that some windows on the school's dormitory building were smashed and published photos showing police cordoning off a nearby area. Yanshanpu village lies on the outskirts of Nanyang, a city of nearly 10 million.

Little information about the boarding school is publicly available, though social media videos published earlier showed young children including kindergartners wearing smocks with the school's logo as well as older children learning calligraphy. The private boarding institution with a kindergarten and an elementary school gives students a

break every two weeks, but not this weekend, reported The Paper, a news outlet supported by the Shanghai government. Many of Yingcai's students are from rural areas, it said. On Saturday, Chinese social media users expressed outrage about the fire and called for any safety lapses to be punished. "It's too scary, 13 children from 13 families, all gone in an instant ... if there is no severe punishment their souls will not rest in peace," one commenter on the Weibo social media site wrote.

China frequently experiences fires and other fatal accidents, largely attributed to lenient safety standards and inadequate enforcement.

## Five bodies found in N Waziristan

F.P. Report

MIR ALI: Five people were killed in two incidents of firing in North Waziristan, reported on Saturday. According to police, four dead bodies were found from Mir Ali Bazar in North Waziristan, while a bullet-riddled body was also found near the market.

Officials said that the bodies were taken into custody and shifted to the hospital for identification. The police said that according to preliminary investigation, all the five persons were shot by unknown persons and nothing was found with the bodies to identify them. The police further said that a pick-up van loaded with vegetables and a Mazda vehicle were found parked near the dead bodies.

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- Physics
- Economics
- Islamic studies
- Education
- English
- Social Work
- Sociology
- Environmental Sciences
- Zoology

##### Course Based MS/MPhil/MBA

- Management Sciences
- Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- English
- Islamic Studies
- Economics
- Education
- Social Work
- Sociology

#### ELIGIBILITY

##### Eligibility

- Merit for admissions to BS-5<sup>th</sup> Bridging Semester shall be established on the basis of relevant Academic record of BA/BSc or Equivalent Degree with at least 45% marks in aggregate.
- Merit for admission to BS programs in 1<sup>st</sup> Semester shall be established on the basis of complete results of SSC and HSSC or Equivalent. Uploading / Submitting of class 12<sup>th</sup> result is mandatory.
- Merit for admission to MS/M.Phil/MBA shall be established on the basis of relevant Academic record of BS Hons/ BBA Hons/ M.A/M.Sc with 1<sup>st</sup> division or CGPA 2.50/4.00 or 3.00 / 5.00 from HEC recognized University/ degree awarding Institutions (DAIs) and valid score 50% in the GAT/GRE General / ETEA / HEC HAT/ KUST Departmental Test & Interview Marks
- Merit for admission to Ph.D shall be established on the basis of relevant academic record of MS/M.Phil with CGPA 3.00/4.00 or 3.75 / 5.00 and valid score 60% in the GAT/GRE (subject) / ETEA / HEC HAT / KUST Departmental Test & Interview marks.

#### Admission Schedule for Graduate Programmes (MS/M.Phil & Ph.D)

Last date of online Form Submission:  
**01<sup>st</sup> March, 2024 (Friday)**

Scrutiny of Admission forms:  
**02<sup>nd</sup> to 04<sup>th</sup> March, 2024**

Display of General List for Queries, (if any): before Interviews  
**05<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 (Tuesday)**

Interviews at Concerned Departments & Interview Marks Uploading on (KCMS):  
**06<sup>th</sup> to 08<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 (Wednesday to Friday)**

Display of Provisional merit list with Interviews Marks Added (For Queries, if any, in person)  
**11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 (Monday & Tuesday)**

Display of Merit List.  
**13<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 (Wednesday)**

Fee Deposits  
**13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 (Wednesday to Friday)**

Commencement of Classes:  
**18<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 (Monday)**

#### Admission Schedule for Undergraduate (BS-5<sup>th</sup> Bridging & BS-1<sup>st</sup> Semesters)

Last date of online Form Submission:  
**01<sup>st</sup> March, 2024 (Friday)**

Scrutiny of Admission forms:  
**04<sup>th</sup> to 06<sup>th</sup> March, 2024**

Display of General List for Queries, (if any):  
**07<sup>th</sup> to 08<sup>th</sup> March, 2024**

Display of Provisional merit list:  
**11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2024**

Display of merit list:  
**13<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 (Wednesday)**

Fee Deposits :  
**13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2024**

Commencement of Classes:  
**18<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 (Monday)**

#### Last Date To APPLY FOR ONLINE ADMISSIONS

### March 01, 2024

For Online Apply & Information, please visit  
<http://admissions.kohat.edu.pk>

#### Schedule of Departmental Tests to be held at KUST

(For Admission in MS/M.Phil/ MBA & Ph.D)

Last date of Registration: **06<sup>th</sup> February, 2024 (Tuesday)**

Tests Date & Time: **13<sup>th</sup> February, 2024 (Tuesday) 10:30am**

Tests Hall: **Iftikhar Auditorium KUST**

Note: Challan form for Test Registration is available on KUST Website ([www.kust.edu.pk](http://www.kust.edu.pk))  
No test is required for admission in the undergraduate (BS) Programmes

Please contact Admission Office: 0922-52914418 , 0922-52914791  
Email: [admissions@kust.edu.pk](mailto:admissions@kust.edu.pk) [www.kust.edu.pk](http://www.kust.edu.pk)

Designed by: **Yasir Habib**

For Queries

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