

Cop martyred in D I Khan  
F.P. Report

D I KHAN: A security official was martyred while two labourers were killed and two others injured in exchange of fire after terrorists attacked security check post here Monday-Tuesday night. DSP Hafiz Adnan said that terrorists stormed Abba Shaheed security check post in Dera Ismail Khan. He said that the attackers fled the scene after retaliatory action of the Quick Response Force.



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General elections 2024

# Cabinet okays deployment of Pakistan Army

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet on Tuesday approved the deployment of Pakistan army and the civil armed forces to ensure the peaceful conduct of general elections across the country. These forces will perform duties at sensitive constituencies and polling stations, and will also act as a rapid response force.

The decision came following the submission of a summary by the federal Interior Ministry in the meeting. The cabinet which met here under the chairmanship of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, also discussed in detail the recommendation with respect to the digitization and restructuring of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

After a thorough discussion of the proposals made in light of the opinions of the cabinet members regarding the restructuring and digitization of the FBR, the prime minister directed to establish of an inter-ministerial committee under the supervision of the caretaker finance minister. Other members of the committee

will include federal ministers for privatisation, foreign affairs, commerce, energy, law and justice and information technology.

The committee will present its recommendations regarding these proposals in the next meeting of the federal cabinet. The cabinet appreciated the efforts of Finance Minister Dr. Shamshad Akhtar in increasing the tax revenue and improving the tax-GDP ratio. The cabinet also admired the finance minister for presenting detailed proposals regarding the administrative structure of the FBR.

The prime minister and all members of the cabinet unanimously supported the proposals regarding the FBR reforms and reiterated that the caretaker government should play its due role in concluding the FBR reform agenda. On the recommendation of the finance ministry, the federal cabinet approved the extension of the tenure of Tahir Hussain Qureshi as the President of SME Bank for three months or till the formal closure of the institution.

The cabinet, On the recommendation of the

Ministry of National Health, appointed Principal Shifa College of Dentistry, Shifa-e-Milat University Islamabad Prof. Dr. Anwar Ali Shah as the representative of medical colleges in the registration board of Islamabad Health Regulatory Authority. Likewise, the cabinet also approved the appointment of Dr. Dur e Shehwar Faisal as the representative of the Private Healthcare Establishment Sector in the Board.

On the recommendation of the Ministry of National Health, the cabinet also approved the formation of a search committee for the appointment of the vice-chancellor of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Medical University Islamabad. The minister for national health will head the committee. The cabinet also approved the decisions taken in the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) held on January 9, 2024. Similarly, the cabinet approved the decisions taken in the meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases held on January 9 and 17, 2024.

## Baloch protesters call off sit-in

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) on Tuesday called off their over 30 day-long sit-in outside the National Press Club (NPC) in Islamabad.

Baloch protesters had been protesting in the federal capital since December 20, 2023 against "enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings". Activist Dr Mahrang Baloch, one of the protest organisers, said they are returning to Balochistan from Islamabad.

"We will hold a rally in Balochistan on January 27," she added. The development comes a day after NPC Islamabad on Monday lodged a complaint with the Kohsar Police Station requesting to remove the Baloch protesters from the open park in front of the NPC.

According to The News, the club's administration, in its complaint, felt a security threat due to certain reasons as many political and social personalities of national stature visit the NPC to attend different functions. The NPC administration said that the protesters' sit-in had been going on for over two months, causing financial loss as the people belonging to political and social sectors, avoided holding press conferences and other political and social functions at the NPC.

Last month, Islamabad police launched a crackdown on Baloch protesters and dismantled their camps set up outside the National Press Club. Most of the protesters were arrested by the police, a move that sparked anguish across the country.

The government had initially defended the crackdown, declaring it a necessary measure to avoid a "catastrophe". Following the outcry over the crackdown, all Baloch protesters were released after a week-long detention. Earlier this month, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had ordered local authorities and police to refrain from creating any hindrance or using force to remove the Baloch marchers.

## Imran gets interim relief from LHC

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Granting an interim relief, the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday restored the PTI founder Imran Khan's bail in seven cases related to the May 9 riots. A two-member bench headed by Justice Aalia Neelum announced the verdict reserved on the disqualified prime minister's plea challenging the cancellation of bail in seven cases related to the May 9 events. Moreover, the high court ordered the trial court to give a verdict on Khan's interim bail pleas.

The verdict comes after an anti-terrorism court (ATC) had rejected the petitions seeking bail extension for the politico, who was ousted from his office through a parliamentary vote in 2022, in seven cases, including the May 9 riots and the attack on Jinnah House. The trial court's judge Ijaz Ahmad Butar had given the verdict on August 11 last year, after hearing arguments from both sides.

The incarcerated politician and the top leadership of his party are facing a plethora of cases ahead of the February 8 nationwide polls. Besides, the Imran-led party has also faced a blow after losing its legal battle to get back its iconic "bat" electoral symbol and the legality of its intra-party elections. A major voter driving force was taken away following the top court's verdict followed by another setback as the party — PTI-Nazriati — with which it sought an alliance also backtracked from its commitment earlier this month. But as the embattled PTI faces uphill tasks, its major rivals — the PPP and the PML-N — have already commenced nationwide campaigns and distributed tickets for national and provincial constituencies.

# The Frontier Post

PML-N to unveil manifesto  
F.P. Report

LAHORE: PML-N has finally officially announced that its party manifesto will be unveiled on January 27. The manifesto committee, led by Senator Irfan Siddique, was established by PML-N in October to formulate the party's vision. While establishing a web portal, the PML-N has sought suggestions from professionals, experts, overseas Pakistanis and citizens for the party's election manifesto 2024.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairing a meeting of federal cabinet.

## Netanyahu under pressure over Israel troop losses, hostages

JERUSALEM (AFP): Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces a mounting crisis after Israel's worst day of troop losses in the Gaza war as well as growing protests over his failure to bring hostages back. The military's strategy in the Palestinian territory is under intense scrutiny following the death of 24 troops, Israel's biggest one-day loss since its ground offensive in Gaza started in late October.

Among those killed were 21 reservists, who died in a single incident. The incident, which saw rocket-propelled grenade fire hit a tank and two buildings the soldiers were trying to blow up, was deemed a "disaster" by Netanyahu. Emmanuel Navon, a lecturer at Tel Aviv University, told AFP the troop losses "affect everybody, because almost everybody in the country has a son or brother or a relative (fighting in Gaza)."

Israelis would now be increasingly asking "what is the strategy... Do we really keep going until we finish Hamas?", he added. At the same time, splits have emerged in Netanyahu's war cabinet following protests in Tel Aviv and outside his Jerusalem home,

where relatives of hostages staged a rally Monday chanting "everybody and now" to urge the return of captives. "The current mood in the war cabinet is very bad," said Julia Elad-Strenger, a lecturer at Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv.

Netanyahu's steadfast vow to eliminate the Palestinian militant group Hamas in response to the October 7 attack is increasingly seen within the cabinet as incompatible with returning hostages held in Gaza, experts told AFP. Two members of the five-person war cabinet, Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot, have rejected Netanyahu's stance that only military pressure on Hamas will allow the return of hostages, the experts said. "According to Netanyahu there can be no victory with Hamas left standing, according to Gantz and Eisenkot there can be no victory with hostages lost," said Reuven Hazan, a professor of political science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Eisenkot, whose son died fighting in Gaza, gave an interview last week in which he split from Netanyahu's long-held position. "It is impossible

to return the hostages alive in the near future without an agreement (with Hamas)," he told Israeli broadcaster Channel 12. Netanyahu has vowed "total victory" over Hamas in response to the unprecedented attack by its fighters on October 7 that resulted in the deaths of about 1,140 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures. The militants seized about 250 hostages and Israel says around 132 remain in besieged Gaza, including the bodies of at least 28 dead hostages, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli data.

In response to the attack, Israel has launched a relentless offensive in Gaza that has killed at least 25,490 people, around 70 percent of them women, young children and adolescents, according to the latest toll issued Tuesday by Gaza's health ministry. Netanyahu has rejected suggestions that his government should hold another round of talks with Hamas to reach a similar deal to one struck in November that led to the release of 80 Israeli hostages.



## THE MISSING PIECE IN CRACK DOWN AGAINST TAX EVADERS

1st July 2022 was the implementation deadline set by the Government of Pakistan of the comprehensive Track and Trace System for the Cigarette Industry. However, even after the passage of 18 months, FBR has been unable to implement it.

Currently more than 200 cigarette brands, which have a market share of more than 50%, are being sold openly in the market without the tax stamps causing an annual loss of Rs. 300 billion. A nationwide crackdown against these tax evaders in the cigarette industry is a need of the hour.

STOP  
TAX  
EVADERS

#AbKhasaraNahinGawara

\*The above tax stamp is a sample image only.

BEHTAREEN  
پاکستان



LANDI KOTAL: Export and import loaded trucks start crossing the border, after suspension of 10 days.

## Qasim Suri asked to submit written reply in stay order case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed PTI leader and former deputy speaker of National Assembly Qasim Suri to submit his written reply in a stay order case.

BNP's Lashkari Raisani challenged the victory of Qasim Suri, who contested

the 2018 general election. On September 27, 2019 election tribunal declared Suri's election from the National Assembly seat, NA-265 null and void, however, he moved to the Supreme Court and served his term on a stay order until the PTI government ended.

A three-member bench headed by CJP Justice Qazi

Faez Isa took up the plea against Qasim Suri. How Qasim Suri remained MNA on stay order, the CJP asked at the outset of the hearing from his counsel. Your counsel enjoyed the whole term as MNA on stay order and now you are saying the tenure of NA is completed and the case has become 'ineffective'.





# No citizen should feel like a minority on account of religion: CM Baqar

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (R) Maqbool Baqar speaking at a conference for Minority Rights said that no citizen should feel like a minority in their own country on account of religion.

The CM that he has always believed that confronting uncomfortable truths and introspection is the key to a better future. He added that conferences like these also have another crucial function: they reiterate our commitment to upholding the rights of non-Muslim citizens, particularly their right to freely profess, practice, and propagate their faith.

The conference was organized by the Department for Minorities Affairs in collaboration with the Pakistan Arts Council at its auditorium on Tuesday.

Today, fundamental rights and civil liberties are in jeopardy throughout the world as right-wing regimes attempt to further marginalize vulnerable communities, the CM said and added that the Indian Supreme Court validated the regime's decision to build a temple on the site of the Babri mosque. "At the same time, courts throughout Pakistan have done well to uphold religious liberties," he said.

Baqar said that in 2014, the Supreme Court took

Suo motu cognizance of an attack on a church in Peshawar. While laying down clear directions for the protection of religious sites, the Supreme Court held that "We are all members of one race of humans with common challenges, and we cannot confront these challenges without forging a common alliance.

This paradigm shift in the world around us can be achieved at the international and domestic levels only by discouraging sectarian, racial and ethnic biases which are violative of shared values and fundamental rights, and by the promotion of and strict compliance with these values and rights."

The CM said that in Salamat Mansha's case, the Supreme Court granted bail to a person accused of offences against religion.

Maqbool Baqar said that the Supreme Court in Salamat Mansha's case also highlighted how such allegations were often levelled to settle personal scores and the tendency of violent mobs to pronounce judgments before the courts of law have declared a person guilty. "The significance of these judgments however exceeds their jurisprudential value," he said and added that to the contrary, their significance was underscored by the Court

refusing to be swayed by the prevailing winds of extremism. Furthermore, judgments like these are also significant in assuring citizens that their rights do not rest on tenuous footings.

Baqar said that unfortunately, extremism and bigotry have seeped across large segments of our population. He said that concerted efforts and forging alliances with progressives would allow us to reverse the tide of violent extremism.

The CM said that as a signatory to international conventions such as the ICCPR, we must take concrete steps towards broadening the frontiers of religious freedom. "The journey ahead may seem arduous, but all monumental journeys begin with a single step," he said and added that we must work for a pluralistic, democratic, and progressive Pakistan - a Pakistan where none of us is a minority, a Pakistan where our religious beliefs do not inhibit the opportunities we get. "I believe without pluralism and diversity, peace and prosperity shall elude us," the CM concluded.

**'We must work to build a society where everyone has opportunity, right to learn': CM Baqar:** The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar has reaf-

firmed his commitment towards creating an environment where everyone regardless of their ability, can access quality education.

This he said while speaking at a ceremony organized to hand over 23 Toyota Vans to Govt Special Education & Rehabilitation Center operating across the province. The program was organised at Boys Scout Ground here on Tuesday.

He said that this significant moment is the manifestation of our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility of Persons with Disabilities in Sindh. "Today, we gather here for this ceremony to hand over 23 Toyota Hi-ace Vans to the Government Special Education and Rehabilitation Centers across the Province which operate under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), Sindh.

Baqar said that these vans symbolized more than just vehicles; they represented our continuous dedication and commitment to providing pick-up and drop-off facilities to differently-abled students. "As we extend our outreach to enhance accessibility," he said. The CM said that his government reaffirmed its commitment towards creating an environment where everyone regardless of their ability, could access quality education.



LAHORE: Painting & Calligraphy Exhibition organized by the The Formanite School System with the collaboration of Walled City Authority Shalamar Garden. —APP Photo

## Lahore police unveil security plan for Election Day

LAHORE (INP): Lahore police on Tuesday announced a comprehensive security plan for guarding the general elections 2024 due to be held on February 8.

Addressing a press briefing, Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana said the police force was providing complete support to the administration and Election Commission for implementation of the code of conduct. He said more than 30,000 police officers and officials will perform their duties at 4,354 polling stations in the provincial capital.

According to ECP data, 6,858,095 registered voters comprising 3,636,253 males and 3,221,842 females will use their voting right on the election day. On polling day, more than 4,000 police-women will also perform their duties.

The CCPO said during election campaign display of weapons, hooliganism, aerial firing and other illegal activities will not be tolerated. Personnel of Dolphin Force, Special Protection Unit and Elite Force will patrol around polling stations on February 8 to maintain law and order and smooth functioning of the polling process.

## OLMT's solar power conversion underway

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Transport Minister Ibrahim has said that the initiative to convert the Orange Line Metro Train to solar power is actively underway and making swift progress.

In a statement on Tuesday, he explained that following the Energy Department's recommendation, discussions with NESPAK (National Engineering Services Pakistan) are in their concluding phase. Upon finalizing the agreement with NESPAK, the study is expected to wrap up within three months, paving the way for the commencement of the solarization project.

Ibrahim Hasan Murad further stated that solar panels would be deployed at the Orange Train's depots, stabling yards, and stations. Solar grid stations are being set both the stabling yard and Orange Train depot. He emphasized that not only the Orange Train but also the associated stations would transition to solar energy. According to an estimate, this transition could result in an annual saving of over 3 billion rupees.

## Two shot dead in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): Two armed men were shot dead by unidentified armed men here in the metropolis on Tuesday, police said. According to details, the incident took place in Mobina Town of Karachi where unknown gunmen sprayed bullets at two people present on a milk shop. As a result of firing, both people were critically injured and assailants sped the scene of crime. The injured including Muhammad Ayub and Abdul Bari were shifted to local hospital where they succumbed to their wounds during treatment.

## CM inspects development projects

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi conducted thorough inspections, covering the CBD Punjab Boulevard, Walton Railway Crossing Flyover, Major Muhammad Ishaq Shaheed Flyover, and Walton Road Upgradation Projects.

Notably, 100 percent of piles on both sides of the Walton Railway Crossing Flyover project have been successfully completed. The chief minister set a deadline of February 15 for the opening of the railway crossing flyover to traffic.

During his visit, Mohsin Naqvi personally examined the CBD road connecting Gulberg to Walton Road. Additionally, he closely monitored the ongoing construction activities on the Main Boulevard and Walton Road Railway Crossing Flyover Project, emphasizing the allocation of all necessary resources for its prompt completion.

Expressing the significance of the CBD Punjab Boulevard from Kalma Chowk to Walton Road, the

chief minister highlighted its role in providing convenient access to CBD Punjab, Quaid District, and CBD Punjab Bab District. He further scrutinized the remodeling and upgradation project of Walton Road and ADA Canal.

Inspecting the Major Muhammad Ishaq Shaheed Flyover Project, Mohsin Naqvi directed swift completion and remarked on its positive impact on easing traffic flow on Walton Road. The flyover project, initially planned as two protected U-turns costing Rs 1.20 billion, was optimized through collaboration between CBD Punjab, NLC, and NESPAK, resulting in a cost-saving of Rs 200 million.

The Chief Minister emphasized that the project was named after Major Muhammad Ishaq Shaheed, a valiant national hero. Continuing his inspection, Mohsin Naqvi visited the CBD Punjab Bab District/Walton Road Upgradation Project, reviewing its progress and underscoring its vital

importance.

Provincial Minister Housing Azfar Ali Nasir, Secretary Housing, Commissioner, CCPO, MD WASA, Chief Executive Officer CBD, Executive Directors (Commercial and Technical) CBD, Director Project Management CBD, Director NESPAK, Project Manager of NLC, Contractor of Habib Construction, and other concerned officials were also present.

**CM orders inquiry into boiler explosion:** Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, taking notice of an explosion in the boiler of the laboratory of Punjab Institute of Neurosciences, has sought a report from the Secretary Health and ordered an inquiry into the incident.

Mohsin Naqvi directed the hospital administration to provide best treatment facilities to the two students who were injured in the incident and to determine those responsible for the negligence and take action.

## Ombudsman Punjab takes 26 notices, resolves public issues

LAHORE (APP): In response to 126 notices taken by Ombudsman Punjab Maj (ret'd) Azam Suleman Khan in December to provide relief to the general public by resolving collective public problems at the grassroots, the administration of respective districts spent a total of Rs 257.3 million to resolve 26 problems.

However, 100 other public issues did not incur any government expenditures for the actions taken by the relevant departments.

The spokesman for the office of the Ombudsman Punjab shared the financial

breakdown of the actions taken. Rs 339,500 were spent to address three complaints related to sewerage lines repair, Rs 5,722,500 were spent to address four complaints related to cover open manholes.

A significant amount of Rs 60,000 was invested in resolving three complaints regarding waste disposal and Rs 247,769,000 was spent in resolving ten complaints regarding, repair and cleanliness of streets and roads across different districts. Additionally, Rs 3,465,180 was utilized to attend six complaints,

linked to the repair of street lights and maintenance of water filtration plants, ensuring access to clean drinking water for the public, the spokesman stated. Notably, the concerned administration and government departments also successfully addressed 26 notices for the restoration of sewerage lines, four for covering manholes, 62 for waste disposal and solid waste management and another eight for repair and maintenance of streets and roads without any government expenditures, the spokesman concluded.

## 'I.T, Business Administration schools to be built in Karachi'

KARACHI (APP): Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Tuesday said that we established the first metropolitan university in Karachi and I.T and Business Administration schools will also be built.

He said that our job is the maintenance and development of the city and, we will work together. This city is the home of the whole country, it adopts everyone, and gives peace and employment, he said. He said that work is going on hub canal to improve the water supply system where 40 MGD of water is wasted. A new canal is being laid from hub dam which will provide water to the residents and industrial areas of the central and West districts.

He said that sewerage problems also need to be solved and various institutions have to pay Rs 52 billion to the water corporation, this amount will be spent on the improvement of the sewerage system.

The Mayor Karachi said that solid waste management will be activated for cleanliness in every town of Karachi. Carpeting of Shafiq Road and Saba Chowranghi will be done in New Karachi. Sindh government gave Rs 350 mil-

lion to North Karachi Industrial Association with which roads have been built in this area, more such projects will be made for the betterment of the area in the future, he said.

Speaking on the occasion, North Karachi Association of Trade and Industry President Faisal Moiz said that North Karachi and Federal B Area Industrial Association represent two major industrial zones of Karachi, where most of the children's garment factories are located and produced better products than China and Turkey and the country gets valuable foreign exchange.

He said that there are thousands of industrial units here, but due to the increase in electricity and gas prices, 30 percent of the industry has been closed, in 2016, the former Chief Minister Sindh released funds for the construction of roads in the area, which led to the construction of roads, there are also problems of water and sewerage in the area which should be resolved soon.

## LWMC launches cleanliness awareness campaign in schools

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) has launched a comprehensive awareness campaign across all educational institutions in the city.

Under the auspices of the LWMC Community Mobilization Wing, special cleanliness awareness activities were conducted last week in Samanabad and Aziz Bhatti Town. Students were actively engaged in waste picking and waste segregation training, with over 30 female students selected as ambassadors for the cleanliness awareness campaign.

Students at Mubarak Public High School Band Road, Kashif Girls High School Band Road, and Siddique Khan High School Tajpura received training in waste management. LWMC Chief Executive Officer Babar Sahib Din appreciated the active involvement of the Community Mobilization Wing in raising awareness about cleanliness. He urged citizens to adopt cleanliness habits and actively participate in keeping Lahore clean.

## NIRC Islamabad notification

# Appointment of central office bearers and executive members



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In accordance with the recent notification issued by NIRC Islamabad, 17 Central Office bearers and 33 Executive members have been officially appointed.

The notable office bearers include Central President Anwar Gujjar, Senior Vice President Junaid Awan, Voice Persistent-I Riaz kashmiri, Chairman Raja Jameel, Vice Chairman Chaudhary Muhammad Shabbir, Chief Organizer Ghulam Nabi Brohi, Central General

Secretary Zafar Ejaz, Joint Secretary Rehman Taaj Shenwari, among others.

The consultation process involved Prof. Dr. Qadir Khan Mandukhel, Advocate, who was elected as the Central Guardian.

Additionally, the Railway Workers Union workshops have emerged victorious in the referendum, declaring CBA and surpassing Pream Union in workshop divisions by a significant margin. Railway Workers Union Open Line is now poised to proceed with the case in NIRC Islamabad, urging action in

open line elections.

Zafar Malik, Secretary General, emphasized the critical role of Railways, addressing issues such as delayed salaries, regularization, TLA staff concerns, contract staff matters, PM package, and the status of DG funds for teachers.

Malik further stated that Railway employees are advocating for a referendum in open line elections, highlighting the importance of addressing key issues within Pakistan Railways, including the regularity of staff, privatization concerns, and more.

## TDCP invites Foreign Ambassadors to Promote Cholistan Desert Rally 2024



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Tourism Development Corporation of Punjab (TDCP) in collaboration with Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation-PTDC hosted an Awareness & Outreach program at Islamabad for foreign ambassadors in Pakistan to showcase the Cholistan Desert Rally 2024, South Asia's biggest motorsports event and cultural festival. The program aimed to highlight the tourism potential of southern Punjab and attract international participants for the upcoming rally.

The Cholistan Desert Rally is an annual event organized by TDCP in the midst of the Cholistan Desert of Bahawalpur Division. The rally covers a distance of over 500 kilome-

ters and features various categories of vehicles and drivers. The rally also showcases the rich cultural heritage and natural beauty of the region, which is home to historical forts, temples, shrines, and wildlife.

The Awareness & Outreach program was attended by Commissioner Bahawalpur Dr. Ehtasham Anwar, MD-PTDC Rana Aftab-ur-Rehman, General Manager Operations TDCP Wahid Arjumand Zia and several foreign ambassadors and dignitaries. The guests were given a complete brief of the rally and its significance for the promotion of tourism and socio-economic development in southern Punjab. They were also shown the official promo and the dedicated website of the rally, as

well as the trophy that will be awarded to the winners.

Manager Operations TDCP Wahid Arjumand said, "We are delighted to have the opportunity to share our vision and passion for tourism with the foreign ambassadors. The Cholistan Desert Rally is not only a thrilling sports event, but also a platform to showcase the diversity and richness of our culture and heritage. We invite the international community to join us in celebrating this unique and spectacular event."

Commissioner Bahawalpur Mr. Ehtisham Anwar said, "The Cholistan Desert Rally has become a symbol of pride and identity for the people of Bahawalpur Division. The rally has brought positive

attention and recognition to our region, which has a lot to offer to the tourists. We welcome everyone to visit Bahawalpur and experience the glorious heritage of the Bahawalpur State."

MD-PTDC Rana Aftab-ur-Rehman said, "We are grateful to the foreign ambassadors for their interest and support in promoting Pakistan's soft image. The tourism sector of Pakistan can give a boost to the economy and create employment opportunities for the local communities. We are committed to providing sustainable and quality tourism services and facilities to our guests."

The foreign ambassadors appreciated the efforts made by TDCP and the Punjab Tourism Department to highlight the tourism glory of southern Punjab. They expressed their admiration for the Cholistan Desert Rally and its cultural and environmental aspects. They also expressed their willingness to participate and promote the event in their respective countries.

The Cholistan Desert Rally 2024 is scheduled to take place from February 20-25 February, 2024. The rally is open to all national and international drivers and enthusiasts who want to experience the thrill and adventure of the desert.



# Information Minister advocates accelerated role for KVDA

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Information, Culture, and Tourism, Barrister Firoze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, underscored the pivotal role the Board of Authority for the Kalash Valleys Development Authority (KVDA), the which can play in propelling the Kalash Valleys of Chitral towards comprehensive development.

He said this during the board meeting held at the Department of Tourism on Tuesday. The Caretaker Minister directed an expedited reinforcement of KVDA's role to ensure the dual objectives of tourism promotion and safeguarding the pristine natural environment and culture of the Kalash Valleys.

Key deliberations encompassed the examina-

tion of KVDA's financial affairs, the formulation of committees, staff availability, and field formation aspects. Director General KVDA, Minhasuddin, presented a comprehensive overview of the authority's progress, challenges, and proposed suggestions. The meeting also featured an in-depth presentation on proposed rules and regulations addressing both developmental and non-developmental issues within the Kalash Valleys. Minister Firoze Jamal Shah Kakakhel emphasized concerted efforts to harness existing resources for preserving the natural beauty and ecological equilibrium of the Kalash Valleys.

Discussions during the meeting centered on mitigating the environmental impact of tourism, waste management in accordance

with principles, fostering eco-friendly attitudes among tourists, and ensuring the protection of the area's biodiversity and architecture. The Caretaker Minister highlighted the significance of preserving the valley's natural environment, historical architecture, and unique culture. Measures were discussed to enhance KVDA's role within the framework of existing laws, including proposed improvements.

Minister Kakakhel directed authorities to optimize available resources, conduct periodic reviews of decision progress, and ensure regular meetings for transparency and effective implementation. He emphasized the activation of committees to facilitate mutual consultation, enabling the authority's initiatives to move forward seamlessly.

## ECP holds media session regarding elections reporting

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Joint Provincial Election Commissioner of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Aziz Bahadur on Tuesday highlighted the importance of media in the transparent conduct of elections in the current era. He said this in a Media Session at Peshawar Press Club regarding the Election Commission of Pakistan's code of conduct for media during electoral proceedings.

Aziz Bahadur highlighted the importance of media in the transparent conduct of elections. He said that the collaboration between the media and the Election Commission of Pakistan is crucial and important. He said that accreditation cards

are being issued to media representatives according to the prescribed procedures to cover elections properly.

Aziz Bahadur informed the journalists that preparations for the elections on February 8 are in their final stages, and arrangements for peaceful and free elections are being made in continuous coordination with administrative bodies and other relevant authorities. Responding to media queries, Joint Commissioner Bahadur mentioned that accreditation cards for reporters and observers carrying out training for polling staff and security personnel provide access to polling stations.

He also clarified that the results of postal ballots will be counted alongside the preliminary results. Asif Ali Yasin, Director Elections, presented a comprehensive overview of the ethical framework and legal framework concerning elections, ensuring fair and reliable elections.

The session saw active participation from attendees, with many engaging in insightful discussions and posing relevant questions, all of which were addressed by the speakers. Earlier, President of the Peshawar Press Club, Arshad Aziz Malik, expressed gratitude for the Session organized by the Election Commission of Pakistan, acknowledging the valuable insights gained.

## Governor visits fire affected plaza

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali here Tuesday fire affected Time Center Shopping Plaza Saddar and listened to complaints of people.

He expressed sympathies with shop owners and said that government desires restart of activities in the fire affected plaza. Assuring cooperation to shop owners, he said that provincial government would be contacted to provide financial assistance including interest free loans to owners whose shops are gutted in the fire.

On the occasion, governor was informed that 65 shops, 17 godowns in time center have been turned to ashes while 60 shops are gutted in United Market. Mobile phones and accessories worth millions of rupees have been destroyed during the blaze.

## Dense fog grips parts of KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Like other parts of the country, dense fog prevailed for the second consecutive day in the provincial capital and most parts of the province during the last 24 hours while substantially decreasing the temperatures.

Due to low visibility, the tariff remained very thin in the cities while the public transport was also affected thus causing inconvenience for the commuters of intercity. The National Highway and Motorways Authority closed the M-1 motorway from Peshawar to Islamabad and Swat expressways and diverted the traffic to GT road. The mercury dropped to 03C in the provincial capital with 86 percent humidity in the air. According to the Met Office, very cold and dry weather would prevail in most districts of the province, adding there were chances of rains and snow in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from Thursday.

Meanwhile, the Regional Meteorological Center Peshawar on Tuesday predicted that very cold and dry weather is likely to occur in most districts of the province.

It said the prevailing dense foggy condition is likely to continue over Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Karak, Bannu, Laki Marwat, Swabi, D.I. Khan and Tank districts as well as over Motorway (M1) / Highways. During the last 24 hours, very cold and dry weather prevailed over most districts of the province, while dense foggy conditions prevailed over plain areas.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar 12/04, Chitral 17/-04, Timergara 17/01, Dir 19/-03, Mirkhani 18/-03, Kalam 14/-07, Drosh 16/02, Saidu Sharif 15/-01, Pattan 22/05, Malam Jabba 10/00, Takht Bhair 12/01, Kakul 16/00, Balakot 18/00, Parachinar 11/-02, Bannu 08/03, Cherat 14/04, DI Khan City 08/05. The lowest temperatures recorded in the province was -07 in Kalam and -04°C in Chitral and -03Cin Dir and Mirkhani.

## Couple dies of asphyxia in Swat

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In Kabal tehsil of Swat district, a man and his wife were killed due to asphyxia after gas accumulated in their room, Kabal police informed on Tuesday.

Police said the couple had lit the gas heater in their room due to severe cold and went to sleep without switching it off. During night the heater went off and the leaking gas accumulated in the room, killing the both during sleep.

Police said the incident occurred in Aligaram area of Kabal tehsil adding that bodies of the couple were shifted to Kabal Hospital for medico-legal procedure.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah performing commercial launching of Bannu Economic Zone.

# 3 political heavyweights in face-off on NA-2 Swat

PESHAWAR (APP): Three political heavyweights of different parties are in face-off on National Assembly constituency( NA-2) Swat-1 where electioneering has picked up momentum despite foggy weather.

According to electoral list issued by the respective returning officer, a total of nine candidates of different political parties and independent are flexing muscle in the said constituency including PML-N KP President, Engr Amir Muqam, Pakistan Peoples Party leader and ex MNA, Dr Haider Ali Khan, former provincial minister Mohammad Ayub Khan of ANP, Naveed Iqbal of Jamat e Islami and JUI-F candidate Maulana Abdul Ghafoor besides others.

Political observers believed tough electoral contest among Engr Amir Muqam, Dr Haider Ali and Ayub Khan who started contacting large tribes to get support for election 2024. Dr Haider Ali had been elected from the constituency with 61,687 votes against Amir Maqam of PML-N who secured second position with 41,125 votes and Naveed Iqbal of

ANP clinched third position with 18,088 votes in 2018 election.

Former MNA Salimur Rehman who contested election on PTI ticket won it after securing 49,887 votes while Amir Maqam of PML-N got second position with 32,853 votes and JUI-F's Hafeezur Rehman clinched third position with 16,639 votes respectively in 2013 general election. Similarly in 2008 elections, Syed Alauddin won the constituency with 24,063 votes against Shujaat Ali Khan of PML-Q with 16,337 votes and independent candidate Advocate Sher Bahadur Khan secured third position with 7,894 votes.

Mutahidda Majlis-i-Amal's Dr Fazal Subhan won this constituency with 67,085 votes while PML-Q's Shujaat Ali Khan clinched second position with 15,680 votes and Salimur Rahman of PPP got 3rd position with 10,867 votes in 2002 election respectively. As many as 485,400 registered voters including 265,578 men and 219,822 women for whom 341 polling stations includes 60 for men and 50 for women were setup to decide fate of

these candidates on February 8, 2024.

Former Provincial Minister, Wajid Ali Khan told APP that the constituency was mostly comprised of upper areas of Swat including Kalam, Bahrain, Madyan, Fatehpur, Khawaza Khela, Charbagh, Malam Jabba, Sangota, Kokari and Jambail where people are mostly associated with transport, tourism and hotel industry. He said that political candidates would have to make an extra effort to bring voters to political stations in case of snowfall and rains in these mountainous areas.

Wajid said that 2022 floods had badly affected communication infrastructure and hotels industry in these areas and its rehabilitation would be a big challenge for the new government. Meanwhile, election campaign in the constituency was in full swing where candidates were addressing public and corner meetings besides rallies to persuade voters. Political observers said that young voters will play an important role in deciding fate of these candidates on February 8, 2024.

# NCSW holds workshop on child marriages, calls for joint efforts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: National Commission on Status of Women with support of UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, UK Aid organized a provincial level consultation workshop on the prevention of child marriage here at local hotel Peshawar. Caretaker Provincial minister for social welfare and women's empowerment Justice retired Irshad Qaiser participated as a special guest.

Speaking on this occasion, the Caretaker Provincial minister for social welfare and women's Empowerment retired Justice Irshad Qaiser, said that the problem of child marriages has been going on for a long time and the current caretaker government is working to prevent child marriages and will provide better roadmap on Legislating on minimum age to next elected government to legally curb the trend of child marriage. She said that various projects for the welfare of children are going on in the province under which the Child Protection Units are being extended to more districts.

Chairperson National Commission on Status of Women Nelofar Bakhtiar thanked the participants and said that there is a discrepancy in the age of marriage in the country. The minimum age for marriage is not being determined. The National Commission on Status of Women is trying to amend the laws for which the Islamic Ideological Council has been taken into confidence. She further said that the early marriage of girls is affecting their education and health which is a tragedy. The female population in our country is 49% and due to various problems including poverty early marriages are increasing. we are spreading awareness about this bill. On this occasion, Chairperson National Commission on Status of Women presented the draft of the proposed bill to the caretaker provincial minister for social welfare and women's empowerment Justice retired Irshad Qaiser.

Addressing the consultation workshop, Ejaz Khan, Chief Child Protection Unit, said that the Child Protection Unit in the province is

working under the patronage of the Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Women empowerment, Justice Retired Irshad Qaiser. We are looking at early marriages from different angles. The Child Protection Unit takes timely action from wherever the complaint is received. The minimum age limit for marriage has been set in more than twenty Islamic countries. Due to poverty, early marriages are increasing. Steps are being taken to make National identity card mandatory at the time of marriage. In the light of the instructions of the Chief Minister, the campaign against Baggers is also going on under the Khushal Pakhtunkhwa program.

Secretary National Commission on Status of Women Imran and other speakers also addressed the consultation workshop and informed the forum about the problems and disadvantages of early marriage. A detailed discussion took place among the participants and final proposals were formulated. Shields and certificates were also distributed among the participants at the end of the workshop.



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

# Imran a hypocrite and untrusted person: Khattak

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf-Parliamentarian Party Pervaz Khattak here on Tuesday blamed that the PTI chairman Imran Khan was a hypocrite and untrusted person. The ex-chief minister

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pervaz Khan Khattak was addressing his party workers and residents hailing from different parts of the district.

He said that Imran Khan had deceived masses on the slogan of Naya-Pakistan. He alleged that the PTI chairman had made him (Pervaz Khattak) himself as fool person. He challenged and asked Imran Khan to commit suicide now. He reminded that Imran Khan had promised voters during his

pre-election campaign in 2018 that he would commit suicide if his government took loan from IMF after coming into power.

Pervaz Khan Khattak said that he had been doing politics for the last 40-years. He deplored that political parties were not serving and caring interests of poor people, adding children of poor public would become nominal government servant while children of rich person would become Commissioners and other high government officers.

Khattak claimed that he had upgraded and better condition and performance of government educational institutions and hospitals when he came into power as chief minister of KPK. "I made police department free of political interference as

well during my tenure of power. I got, residents of KPK province, red of corrupt system of patwar, he added. He urged people to vote those leaders and candidates who had the ability to serve people.

He blamed that IMF and America had been making and finalising policies of the country as Pakistan was a slavery country of US and IMF. He lamented that prices of electricity and gas were fixed by IMF so that to get back its loan along with interest from countrymen. He alleged that his opponents were getting votes from masses on the name of religion and Pakhtun nationalism. He also blamed that Pakistan and Afghanistan were silent on killing of Pakhtuns. He also criticised policies of JUI-F party.

# Kundi promises people for resolving their issues

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Central Information Secretary and Candidate for NA-44, DI Khan-I constituency, Faisal Karim Kundi vowed to address all the major issues being faced by the people of

his constituency.

He stated this while addressing a public meeting organized here at the residence of renowned businessman Haji Ghulam Subhani in Mohallah Dabba Tabakhi. Kundi said the worst electricity load-shedding was being carried

out in Dera Ismail Khan, adding, most of the areas here were facing up to 16-18 hours and some areas up to 22 hours of power outages. Besides, the Gas facility was also not available for the people of this area during winter, he added.

# ANP activist along with relatives join JI

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Awami National Party local leader in Maidan Umar Zaman along with his family and relatives on Tuesday announced to part ways with his party after serving it for 34 years and join the Jamaat-i-Islami. The ANP activist made the announcement during a function held at Manial

Maidan with the JI chief Sirajul Haq in the chair. The JI chief is contesting election for NA 6. The function was also addressed by the JI nominated candidate for PK 18 Saeed Gul, JI Maidan chief Haji Fazal Wahab, JI youth wing district president Ateequr Rehman and others. Speaking on the occasion, Umar Zaman said that he was joining the JI along

with his family members and relatives on their own free will. He said that during the current political scenario he realized that it was the JI only that could steer the country out of crises. The JI chief Sirajul Haq and party candidate for PK 18 Saeed Gul welcomed the ANP activist and said that he had made a wise decision.

# Bilawal's election rally on 27th

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is scheduled to address an election rally here at Purdah Bagh (Shahi Bagh) on January 27th (Saturday).

Addressing a news conference here at Peshawar Press Club (PPC) Vice President PPP KP, Ayub Shah said that arrangements for the scheduled public meeting of the party chairman are in full swing. Other local PPP leaders including District President Razaullah Chagharmati, City President, Zulfikar Afghani, Tahir Abbas, Shah Zulfqarnain, Yawar Naseer, Dr Zaman Khattak were also present.

He said that PPP workers of PPP from all districts of Peshawar Division including Districts Nowshera, Khyber, Mohmand and Peshawar will attend the public meeting. He said that party candidates from National Assembly and Provincial Assembly constituencies will lead the processions of party workers from their constituencies. He said that being a representative political party of the poor and middle classes of the society PPP is receiving a very good response from the general public and hundreds of the activists of different political parties are joining it on a daily basis.



PESHAWAR: KP IGP Akhtar Hayat Khan inaugurating newly constructed apartments at Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines.





## In brief

### Driver crushed to death

FAISALABAD (INP): Driver of a trailer was crushed to death under sugarcane due to breakage of tie rope at Landa Pul Jhang Road Bypass on Tuesday. According to details, due to breakage of tie rope, the sugarcane laden on trailer fell over the driver. As a result, 32-year-old driver Abdul Rehman s/o Sher Muhammad was crushed to death. The rescue teams pulled out the body and handed it over to heirs. Meanwhile, the police on Tuesday claimed to have arrested four robbers and recovered items. A police report said a team of officials, during a raid, held four dacoits wanted to police in more than 18 dacoity, theft and robberies cases. The accused were identified as Jamil of Chak No 246-RB, Yasin, Zafar Iqbal and Ejaz. Police also recovered six motorcycles, cell phones, weapons and other items.

### Crackdown launched

SARGODHA (INP): District police on Tuesday launched a massive crackdown against law violators across the district and claimed to have busted 10 criminals. Police said that the teams raided at different localities and nabbed 10 law breakers including Sami-Ullah, Atta-Ullah, Faheem, Shahzad, Nouman, Tahir, Tariq, Bashir, Iqbal and Jahangir besides recovering 117 liters of liquor, 2 kg of Hashish, 1.3 kg of heroin, 09 pistols, 03 Guns, 99 bullets and valuables worth in millions of rupees from them. Further investigation was under way.

### Youth commits suicide

FAISALABAD (INP): A youth committed suicide by shooting him over domestic disputes while body of another person was found from canal, police said on Tuesday. According to details, annoyed over the repeated domestic quarrels, 35-year-old Nadeem committed suicide by shooting him in his head in 527 GB Tarkhani police station jurisdiction in Faisalabad. Body of another unidentified man was found from a canal at Samundri Road near Dijkot. Bodies of both were shifted to different hospitals and police started search for heirs of the unidentified body.

### Tortured body found

BAHAWALNAGAR (INP): Gunny bag packed tortured body of a man was found here on Tuesday, police said. According to details, unknown culprits brutally tortured a man over unknown dispute which resulted in his death. The accused packed the body in gunny, threw it near Haroonabad railway crossing in Bahawalnagar and fled the scene. After being spotted by the passers-by, the police took the body into custody and shifted it to hospital. The police said that severe torture marks have been found on body. A case has been registered into the incident and investigations were underway. Meanwhile, under the auspices of Islamia University Bahawalpur (IUB), the 10th International Seerat Conference has started at the Baghdad-Ul-Jadid Campus of the varsity here on Tuesday. Federal Minister for Religious Affairs, Aneeqe Ahmed is likely to address the 10th International Seerat Conference being held at Khawaja Fareed Auditorium of Islamia University Bahawalpur here.

# JI is in politics to change existing system: Siraj

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami Chief Siraj-ul-Haq has said that his party is contesting the Feb 8 general elections to change the existing system of injustice in the country. Addressing different party gatherings at Manial, Andheri and Rehanpur in NA 6 as chief guest here on Tuesday, the JI chief alleged that all major political parties were running for their leadership's interest. The JI chief is contesting election on Na 6 Lower Dir-1.

The JI candidate for PK 14 former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, PK 18 Saeed Gul, Balambat tehsil chief Imranud Din advocate, village council chairman Shah Hassan and others also spoke while scores of the PTI workers from the Beyari area on the occasion announced to join the JI.

Siraj said that due to wrong policies of previous rulers the country's external debt had surged to \$125 billion by June last year. The JI chief said the leaders of PPP, PML-N and JUI-F wanted to make their relatives ministers. He termed the Feb 8 as the day of accountability and asked the voters to defeat the money launderers and looters with the force of their ballot.

The JI chief announced that they would arrange a national dialogue among political parties soon after the general elections in

order to fill the gap among them and end the politics of hatred and disharmony. He said that the country was rich in natural resources, but the incompetent and corrupt rulers had sunk the country's fleet, increased inflation, unemployment, load shedding and taxes to overburden the masses. He said the JI did not want to promote the culture of nepotism, caste and tribe but wanted to serve the masses irrespective of their political, religious, social and ethnic background.

He said the JI wanted to end the interest-based economy in the country and rid the nation from the slavery of the IMF and World Bank. "We want to provide justice in the courts and to end the co education system in the country and to establish separate educational institutions for women in the country", Siraj said, adding that it was not impossible but it needed a will. He said that currently 28 million children are out of school. "The elites have sucked the blood of the poor people to fill their own pockets", he alleged and added the voters would now defeat those political actors and dual-faced seasonal politicians on Feb 8. About his planning, he said the JI had prepared a plan for 40 years to strengthen the country's economy and it had presented its manifesto to the

nation in that regard.

**Candidates' withdrawal:** The Markazi Muslim League nominated candidate for PK 18 Muhammad Yasin on Tuesday announced to withdraw from the run in favour of an independent candidate Malik Abdullah Shah. He made the announcement while speaking at a news conference at the Timergara press club. He said that his voters would also support Malik Abdullah Shah, a PTI dissident who is contesting elections on PK 18.

He said that Maidan was always ignored in development by past MPAs while Malik Abdullah Shah was a committed worker. The independent candidate Malik Abdullah Shah, PTI former district general secretary Khan Sherin advocate, Mahboob Zada and other supporters were also in attendance.

Meanwhile another independent candidate for PK 14 Ibrar Khan announced his withdrawal in favour of the PTI nominee and former MPA Muhammad Azam Khan. He made the announcement during a function held at his hujra which was also addressed by the PTI nominee Azam Khan. The PTI tehsil president Hujaj Khan, general secretary Jamshid Khan, Qazi Lateefullah, Tariq Nawaz Mayar and other party activists were also present.

# Admn prepared for electoral arrangements

## F.P. Report

DI KHAN: Commissioner Dera Zafarul Islam Khattak has said the divisional administration has completed all its preparation for arrangements in connection with upcoming general elections in all its four districts. While talking to a group of journalists here at his office, he said that all preparations has been made in four districts of the division including Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, South Waziristan Upper and South Waziristan Lower.

"Keeping in view of the security situation in the area, we have demanded extra police strength from the caretaker provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," he mentioned. Moreover, he added that the services of Pakistan Army if needed could also

be obtained for security purpose during upcoming general elections scheduled to be held on February 08. Replying to a question about postponement of anti-polio campaign in the area, the commissioner said the anti-polio campaign was postponed in Dera Ismail Khan and Tank due to continuous foggy weather in the area and the busy schedule of the administrative officers regarding the upcoming elections.

After the elections, the anti-polio campaign would be launched, he assured. About poor cleanliness condition in the area, he said a comprehensive cleanliness campaign would also be started at tehsil level. Replying to a question regarding theft of irrigation water, he said the fines have been imposed over the landlords involved

in irrigation water theft from the Chashma Right Bank Canal (CRBC) while legal proceedings have also been initiated against them.

He said the administration was also making efforts to resolve different disputes between different tribes in the area including the land related disputes. About a dispute between Mehsood and Wazir tribes in Gomal area of Waziristan, he informed that a Jirga consisting of representatives from both tribes and the respective assistant commissioners of that area held two meetings for resolving the issue. The negotiations of the Jirga have progressed in a positive manner, he said and hoped that the issue would be resolved after mutual discussions. He said the next sitting of the Jirga would be held at Commissioner office.



BAHAWALPUR: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs, Aneeqe Ahmed addressing the 10th International Seerat Conference at Khawaja Fareed Auditorium of Islamia University Bahawalpur.

# Japanese delegation visits Moen Jo Daro

## F.P. Report

LARKANA: A 13-member foreign delegation from Japan visited the archeological site of Moen Jo Daro, where the Japanese delegation visited different parts of the Daro, DK area, HR, Stupa, Great Bath, Museum and various other parts of the Daro. Visited the archaeological parts and enjoyed a lot. On this occasion, Guider Irshad Ali Solangi, posted at Moen Jo Daro, gave a briefing to the delegation of foreign tourists about the ancient history of Moen Jo Daro.

The residents were fully informed, on this occasion, the foreign tourists said that Moen, which is a masterpiece of an ancient civilization of the world, the people here have been civilized for thousands of years, which can be felt. He further said that the people who lived here thousands of years ago are used to building spacious houses and the intellect has

been stunned to see the archeology while the residents of Sindh are the most hospitable and well-mannered. It is felt that on this occasion, the security arrangements of 13 members of foreign tourists who came from Japan were completely tightened.

**Protest against unrest and inflation:** On the instructions of Shadab Raza Naqshbandi, head of Pakistan Sunni Tehreek (PST), a protest rally was held in Larkana against rising inflation and unrest. In their hands, there were placards with the slogans of 'control inflation and let humanity live'.

Addressing the protesters on this occasion, senior provincial Maulana Ali Nawaz Qasmi of Pakistan Sunni Tehreek, leader of Larkana division Shamsuddin Brohi, Mufti Abdul Rahman Qasmi addressed the protesters. And other leaders said that Larkana district has been abandoned

for a long time, every district officer is appointed to do corruption in all the departments of the district, while at this time, the unrest and looting in the whole district is increasing. Even businessmen are not safe from robberies. Robberies are taking place in every street, road, neighborhood of the city, but unfortunately, the administration remains a silent spectator.

Drugs are being used in the city, which destroys the youth generation. He further said that the prices of food and daily household items are increasing in the district, but the administration is silent and all the poor are forced to eat bread once a day. He has demanded from the caretaker chief minister of Sindh and the DIG police Larkana division to take steps to control the rising inflation and unrest in Larkana district so that the troubled people can get peace.



LOWER DIR: Chief of Jamat-e-Islami, Sirajul Haq addressing during workers' convention at Manial Maidan.

## Protest against load shedding held

### F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: People belongs to different areas of Sukheki Mandi staged protest against prolonged load shedding of Sui Gas to block Lahore-Sargodha Road. Women also participated in protest demonstration.

Protesters were raising slogans against unjustified closure of Sui Gas supply in Mohallah Ali Abad, Hassan Town and other areas of the city Sukheki Mandi.

Citizen particularly housewives said that due to unscheduled loadshedding of Sui Gas they unable to bake meal and compelled to buy breakfast, lunch and dinner from bazaar on inflated prices.

They demanded the government to ensure uninterrupted supply of Sui Gas in their areas so that they get rid of difficulties and purchase of substandard food items from bazaar on arbitrary prices. On the intervention of local police, protesters dispersed peacefully.

**DC visits Special Rikshaw Registration Centre:** Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad visited Special Rikshaw Registration Centre and reviewed arrangement and facilities being provided by the Transport Department. ADCR Intiaz Ali Baig was accompanied by her while Secretary District Road Transport Authority Muhammad Adil Sohail gave briefing regarding process of registration of Rikshaw registration.

DC said on the occasion that on the directions of the Punjab government passenger and loader rickshaws were being registered at special registration centre setup in district complex.

SRTA Muhammad Sohail Adil informed that 27 rickshaws have been registered according to rules and regulation of the Transport Department Punjab and unregistered passenger and loader rickshaws would not be allowed to run on the roads at all.

Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner (HR & Coordination) Hafizabad Ishfaq Rzul has said that our religion give lesson to promote peace, brotherhood, unity, tolerance and Interfaith harmony while it is need of the hour that we should work together for exaltation of Islam, exaltation progress, prosperity and integrity of Pakistan to shun our all differences.

# Admn directs clean-up drive and price checks

## Anees Takar

MARDAN: Commissioner Shokat Ali Yusufzai of the Mardan Division has issued directives to administrative officers in Mardan and Swabi, emphasizing the need to ensure a clean environment by putting an end to the use of plastic bags in their districts. He also instructed them to take action against businesses engaged in malpractices.

Addressing the monthly performance and revenue meeting at his office, Commissioner Shaukat Ali Yusufzai highlighted the importance of tackling environmental issues and conducting crackdowns against those violating regulations. Additional Commissioner Naem Akhtar, Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, DC Swabi Dr. Tariqullah, Additional DC Mardan Saeedullah Jan, ADC Swabi Engineer

Shahzeb, and other relevant officials attended the session.

The meeting revealed that extensive efforts had been made to reclaim hundreds of acres of land in both districts as part of the campaign against unauthorized encroachments. Under the Clean and Green KP program, 7423 tons of waste were lifted by WSSC and TMA Swabi, with the installation of CCTV cameras in service delivery centers and petrol stations. Similarly, administrative officers in Mardan and Swabi conducted inspections of fuel prices, checked petrol pumps, and examined violations. Legal actions were taken against shopkeepers found guilty of offenses, resulting in the closure of over two hundred shops. Commissioner Shokat Ali Yusufzai stressed the need to expedite the process of bringing agriculture land into owner-

ship and taking strict actions against those involved in food adulteration, including the sale of adulterated milk.

He further urged for swift measures to improve the traffic system in Mardan and Swabi. Commissioner Yusufzai specifically directed the Mardan Sheer Bus Transport Stations' relocation to enhance the transportation system. He emphasized the full implementation of the decision regarding the transfer of the transport terminals.

Commissioner Shokat Ali Yusufzai emphasized that a comprehensive strategy should be adopted to address environmental challenges and malpractices in the region. He directed the administrative officers to take proactive measures for the betterment of traffic systems and to ensure the success of ongoing initiatives.

# Art work, calligraphy exhibition at jail organized

## F.P. Report

BATTAGRAM: An exhibition of artwork, calligraphy, handicrafts and products made by the prisoners, LED bulbs will be made in the prison factory, clothes made by the prisoners in the tailoring shop was organized in District Jail Mansehra. In this regard, the students of Government Post Graduate College Mansehra displayed their masterpieces of calligraphy on the walls as an exhibition.

Wall chalking and artwork in the children's premises were completed. Strict security arrangements were made on the occasion and officers of all Lines Departments of District Mansehra along with Assistant Commissioner Mansehra Ali Intiaz and DEO Female Mansehra Rehana Yasmin were present at the exhibition. On this occasion, Deputy Superintendent Jail Hafiz Rashid Ahmed along with Assistant Superintendent Jail Usman Ali, Chief Head Warden Shaukat Khan and the whole team of Mansehra Jail warmly welcomed the distinguished guests.

On this occasion, the team of Rescue 1122 Mansehra was also present in Mansehra Jail, who indicated that with the excellent efforts of Jail Superintendent Mr. Najam Hussain Abbasi, they established a sub-station and also allocated an ambulance for the jail. Where an

ambulance along with rescue staff will be present 24/7 in the jail to deal with any emergency. Earlier, the prison staff was also given special training by Rescue 1122 in a two-day workshop. Today, on this occasion, the prison administration specially thanked Rescue Officer Fahad Masood and other team and awarded the rescue team with certificates of appreciation.

A mock exercise was conducted with the staff to put out the fire and transfer the sick prisoners to the prison hospital during emergency. Apart from this, the students of Government Post Graduate College, Mansehra also appreciated their valuable art by presenting certificates of appreciation. Assured the participants of continued cooperation to work together for the welfare of prisoners and expressed special thanks to Mr. Faisal Assistant Director of NCHD for his valuable services.

On this occasion, Assistant Commissioner Mansehra appreciated the tireless efforts of the jail authorities for organizing the exhibition and assured to contribute fully in the marketing of the LED bulbs and clothing produced in the jail. In the end, all the dignitaries paid tribute to all the initiatives taken under the rehabilitation and reformation agenda of the Superintendent Jail Mansehra. The actions taken in the agenda are a

reflection of the leadership insight of the IG-Jails and the personal efforts of the Superintendent of Jail. Team District Jail Mansehra expressed its determination to continue the reform and rehabilitation agenda in the future.

## 4 women killed in accident

SHIKARPURA (INP): In a horrific incident, four women were killed and two were injured in a road accident in Shikarpur.

As per details, the deadly collision took place in Madeji between a passenger van and a rickshaw due to dense fog. As a result, four women were killed, while two other people sustained injuries. The bodies and injured were moved to the hospital.

In a separate incident, last week, three people died after a passenger bus plunged into the river in Bahawalpur. According to the rescue officials, the accident took place near Nowshera Jadeed, Bahawalpur, where an over-speeding passenger bus overturned and plunged into the river leaving three killed and 17 others injured. Meanwhile, the rescue personnel shifted the injured individuals to the Bahawal Victoria Hospital for immediate medical assistance.



MULTAN: Worker is busy cleaning the Canal with the help of Machinery at old Shujaabad road.





## Flash floods inundate homes in San Diego

SAN DIEGO (AP): Flash floods inundated homes and overturned cars in San Diego as torrential rain swept through a large swath of the US, toppling trees and overflowing streets across California. Early morning flooding hit the town of Guernville, north of San Francisco, where a creek overflowed after more than 4 inches (10 cm) of rain fell in 24 hours. The local school district canceled classes for the day.

Later, the weather system unleashed a severe punch on the south end of the state in the second major rain event of the winter. Floodwaters swept away vehicles and caused cars to pile on top of each other in parts of San Diego. Several feet of water inundated the Mountain View, Shelltown and Southeast neighborhoods, and multiple highways including Interstate 15. Eddie Ochoa, a resident of San Diego, said it was just sprinkling when he and his sister went out for breakfast. When they returned to their family-owned auto body shop, the entire block was flooded and his sister's parked car had been washed away. "All that happened within an hour," Ochoa said, guessing that the sewers had backed up. They later found his sister's car about three miles (4.8 kilometers) down the street. "It's never been that bad, ever. It's crazy," he said. Over a three-hour period, a whopping 3 inches (7.6 cm) of rain fell at nearby National City, while 2 inches (5 cm) fell at San Diego International Airport, The San Diego Union-Tribune reported. During the winter, the region typically averages around 2 inches of rain per month.

Deputies pulled people to safety after water rushed into homes in the Spring Valley and Casa de Oro

neighborhoods, said San Diego County Sheriff's Lt. Zee Sanchez. Other residents escaped by wading through waist-high water carrying their cats and dogs. "Flooding is pretty widespread out there," Sanchez said. The department aided in a swift-water rescue near Santee, he said. No injuries were reported. The San Diego River was flooding, the National Weather Service said, warning that crossing roads would be unsafe. The city fire department said it had rescued at least 24 people from the rushing San Diego and Tijuana rivers. San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria declared a state of emergency and the city set up shelters to house displaced residents. The Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management issued an evacuation warning near Topanga Canyon effective through Tuesday morning due to possible mud or debris flow. Up north, there's an avalanche warning through Tuesday morning for the backcountry in the mountains around the Lake Tahoe area, which might see more than a foot (30 centimeters) of snow, according to The Sierra Avalanche Center in Truckee, California. The storm is expected to bring up to 8 inches (20 cm) of snow to the lake's shores and up to 14 inches (35 cm) with winds gusting up to 60 mph (95 kph) in the highest elevations beginning. In San Antonio, Texas, firefighters investigated whether five homeless people might have been swept away by rushing waters, according to fire department spokesperson Woody Woodward. They were camping in drainage tunnels next to a highway north of downtown, officials said. Firefighters searched multiple locations, including drainage tunnels with

the help of a boat, but did not find anyone. "No individuals were found, so I cannot confirm if there were in fact five people swept away," Woodward said, adding that the fire department had conducted 25 water rescue missions or investigation calls from through 8 a.m. with no injuries being reported. Some parts of the San Antonio area had received up to 5 inches (12.7 centimeters) of rain since, according to the National Weather Service. Rainfall was also soaking Houston, Dallas, as well as various parts of north and east Texas.

In other parts of the country, as in Arkansas, there's freezing rain. Forecasters warned that up to a half-inch (1.27 centimeters) of ice could coat parts of the state. That prompted an ice storm warning that includes much of the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas and the cities of Fayetteville and Fort Smith. A small part of northeastern Oklahoma was also under an ice storm warning, the National Weather Service said. The ice - combined with winds of up to 20 mph (32 kph) - could lead to power outages, the agency said. Days of subfreezing temperatures have caused water problems in multiple Arkansas cities and in Memphis, Tennessee, due to broken pipes and equipment. Missouri State Highway Patrol troopers responded to more than 400 crashes and at least 600 stranded motorists by 3:30 p.m., Capt. John Hotz of the patrol said. Three of the accidents were fatal, including one involving a vehicle that struck a Missouri Department of Transportation truck in rural northern Missouri. A transportation department spokeswoman said the truck driver was not hurt.

## UN migration agency seeks \$7.9b for migrant support

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The United Nations migration agency aims to raise \$7.9 billion this year through a new funding push to bolster efforts to protect migrants, reduce displacement and expand avenues to migrate legally, it said. The Geneva-based International Organization for Migration (IOM) is seeking funds from governments, private sector companies and individual donors, according to the announcement.

"The evidence is overwhelming that migration, when well-managed, is a major contributor to global prosperity and progress," IOM Director General Amy Pope said in a written statement. "We can and must do better." The funding effort comes as the number of people forced to move reached 117 million by the end of 2022, including a record 71 million forcibly displaced within their own countries, IOM said in a report accompanying the appeal. Illegal immigration and asylum have become contentious political issues in Europe, the United States and other nations in the past decade as more migrants have taken dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean and to the US-Mexico border. Pope, a former senior White House official, took the helm at IOM in October 2022 pledging to partner with the private sector to address migration issues. As part of its fundraising goal, IOM is seeking \$2.7 billion to prevent forced displacement, including in cases where people move due to climate change.

## China, in comic strip

BEIJING (Reuters): China's chief intelligence agency posted on social media a comic strip featuring foreign-looking characters secretly extracting rare earths, in a story portraying the country's strategic metals under threat from covetous "overseas organisations".

The comic strip, published on the State Security Ministry's official WeChat account, showed security officers uncovering "suspicious" exploration and mapping activities by a group of people supposedly doing survey work for real estate development. No foreign government or agencies were named in the comic strip, and the ministry did not specify any measures to counter foreign "interest" in China's rare earths.

The ministry could not be reached for further comment. China, the world's largest producer of rare earths accounting for nearly 90% of global refined output, last year introduced restrictions on exports of the elements germanium and gallium, used widely in the chip-making sector, citing the need to protect national security and interests. It also banned the export of technology to make rare earth magnets, in addition a ban on technology to extract and separate rare earths. The restrictions have fanned fears that the supply of rare earths might ignite tensions with the West, particularly the United States, which accuses China of using economic coercion to influence other countries. Beijing denies the claim. The United States has previously imposed restrictions on China's access to advanced chips and chip-making tools that could fuel breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and sophisticated computers for its military. Rare earths, used widely in lasers, military equipment and consumer electronics, have grown in demand along with the rapid development of new energy vehicles, wind power and inverters air conditioners. "As technology grows in leaps and bounds, some primary minerals have become rare strategic resources," a police character in the comic said. "China boasts rich resources of these minerals. Overseas organisations have already had their eyes on them." Set in fictional Xishan Mining Area - described as an area rich in critical and scarce mineral deposits that could bring breakthroughs in super-semiconductor technology - the comic depicts two officers that were sent to the area undercover as lost hikers to gather information.



BEIJING: Chinese military personnel search for missing people following a landslide in Liangshui village, in China's Yunnan province.

## Saudi Arabia hears dozens of countries critique its HRs record

GENEVA (AP): Saudi Arabia had its record on human rights including freedoms for women, prosecutions for freedom of speech, use of the death penalty and alleged killing of migrants at its border with Yemen critiqued at the United Nations. In the kingdom's first formal review at the UN Human Rights Council since November 2018, the Saudi Arabia delegation said more than 50 reforms had since then been passed in favor of women.

Delegates were told Saudi Arabia has abolished flogging as a punishment, that minors can no longer be executed, judges are independent and migrant workers are now better protected by law. "These developments and progress have been relentless," said Hala Al Tuwaijri, president of the Saudi national human rights commission, in translated comments. She cited an "unprecedented period of development especially when it comes to human rights" during the Vision 2030 plan to modernize Saudi society and a post-oil economy driven by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Still, urging to do more came from a swath of countries during a 3 1/2-hour session. Germany's delegate Kristina Huck said it commended Saudi Arabia for "extensive efforts to improve women's rights" yet noted "serious restrictions" on the right to freedom of expression, assembly and

freedom of the press.

Saudi Arabia was asked repeatedly to redefine terrorism in relation to cybercrime laws that allow criticism of the state to be prosecuted. The United States was a rare critic to point to a specific allegation about the border killings, highlighted last year by Human Rights Watch. Saudi Arabia was asked to "undertake a comprehensive, transparent investigation of all allegations that Saudi security forces are killing and abusing migrants crossing the Yemeni border, cease any abuses, ensure accountability for any abuses or violations and issue a public investigation report," US ambassador to the Human Rights Council, Michèle Taylor, said. Austria backed up American concerns about migrant killings and also recommended abolishing "remaining privileges of male guardianship that still impeded progress, empowerment and equality of women." In a later response, Al Tuwaijri said Saudi authorities worked with the UN's Geneva-based International Organization for Migration "to ensure proper monitoring of our borders and to ensure that the human rights of those crossing our borders are upheld." Australia stated its concerns with "exploitation of migrant and foreign workers and lack of transparency in judicial proceedings" and Iceland recommended

changing laws in order to criminalize marital rape and decriminalize "same sex conduct between consenting adults." A broad range of countries raised concerns with lack of protection for domestic workers, gender-based violence and a fear of reprisals against civil society activists and media workers. Saudi Arabia had its supporters, including Morocco, Bahrain and Qatar. China's delegate Li Yujie commended "efforts and achievements for promotion and protection of human rights," and Yemen praised the kingdom's "fight against corruption which undermines the protection of human rights." Saudi Arabia's heavy investment in sports creating the LIV Golf project, luring stars like Cristiano Ronaldo to its domestic soccer league and preparing to host soccer's Asian Cup in 2027 and the men's World Cup in 2034 has led to accusations of "sportswashing" to deflect attention from its record on human rights. There was no mention of sportswashing, though neighboring Jordan suggested sports events hosted by the kingdom could "promote the culture of human rights." The Human Rights Council prepared for the meeting taking detailed reports from the Saudi state, UN agencies and NGOs including Human Rights Watch. It set a Feb. 9 target to send a report summarizing debate.

## Haiti's police force shrinks amid gang crisis

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Reuters): Haiti's national police has lost nearly 3,300 officers in three years, according to data from the force's main trade union, as under-gunned security officials battle powerful gangs estimated to control most of the capital. Nearly nine in 10 of those were sacked for abandoning their posts, according to a report which SYNAPHOA trade union's general coordinator Lionel Lazarre shared with Reuters, while 123 more resigned.

Lazarre estimated some 80 police officers were killed in action, died in accidents or disappeared last year. Police need sig-

nificantly higher incentives to justify the dangers, the report said, amid a shrinking force and lack of equipment, training and infrastructure. It highlighted needs for armored vehicles, helicopters, guns and drones. "The government should assume responsibility. It's not just about purchasing equipment, the police need to be supplied with the financial means to plan operations, for cops working day in, day out in areas controlled by bandits," Lazarre said. Lazarre said the situation was difficult but police had made progress, recovering control of six neighborhoods

and coming close to recovering another. Around 200,000 people have been displaced as alliances of violent gangs expand their control beyond the capital to rural areas, bringing indiscriminate killings, sexual violence and threatening already precarious food supplies.

Last November, the United Nations estimated some 3,960 had been killed through the year and 2,951 kidnapped. Haiti's government called for international reinforcements in October 2022 and the United Nations ratified sending a force composed of voluntary contributions

late last year. Kenya, the only country which has offered to lead the force, has sent officials to meet with Haitian security forces ahead of a court hearing this Friday set to decide whether it is legal for it to deploy to the Caribbean state. Despite worsening humanitarian conditions, countries are wary of backing Prime Minister Ariel Henry's unelected government and repeating abuses committed by past interventions. Haiti's armed forces were disbanded in 1995 and reinstated in 2017, but the national police remains the main security force.

## China vows judicial disclosure after outcry over plan to curb access to rulings

BEIJING (Reuters): China's top court has pledged to "deepen judicial disclosure" after its plan to curtail access to court decisions faced unusual public criticism from lawyers and legal experts. The Supreme People's Court (SPC) announced in December it would create a new database of over 2,000 cases accessible to scholars, lawyers and experts. Academics believe the new database will eventually replace an existing, open database of 143 million court documents that remains online for now.

That decade-old archive, known as China Judgments Online, has been used by lawyers and activists in China and abroad, as well as by citizens involved in property and business disputes. It has also been used by human rights organisations. After the clampdown plan was criticised on social media and through blog posts by lawyers and others, the SPC issued a statement on Jan. 15 saying more court rulings should be made available under its proposed new system. The SPC said more documents from higher-level courts, and "all documents that serve

legal guidance, education and warning purposes" should be put online. "It is necessary to balance the relationship between the disclosure of documents and the legal rights and privacy protection of the parties involved," the statement said. It was not immediately clear how the SPC decree would be implemented. The SPC did not reply to a request for comment. Thomas Kellogg, executive director of the Georgetown Center for Asian Law, said while the new language was "welcome", it "probably doesn't herald much of a change from the current policy". But he added the backlash to the court's move to limit disclosure, including from top legal academics in China, suggests there are "at least some reformist voices" looking to "put reform ideas back into public discourse". China's economy has already become more opaque. Since 2022, Chinese authorities have restricted overseas access to Chinese academic journals and corporate databases and stopped publishing key economic indicators. Legal experts said while the SPC's latest announcement appeared to be a par-

tial concession to criticism that China's court system was also headed that way, concerns about its dwindling transparency remained. Donald Clarke, a law professor at George Washington University, said the December announcement caused "considerable concern in the Chinese law community inside and outside of China" which SPC's statement did not alleviate. "Only documents deemed suitably edifying by the authorities will be placed online," he said. "This is exactly what we all feared." Lawyers and scholars said China's court records would remain incomplete without fuller access to trial court rulings needed to study precedent and case law. "The SPC seems to have made some concessions, but still insists on delisting a large number of judgments below the intermediate court," Yale Law School professor Taisu Zhang wrote on Weibo. Ryan Mitchell, a law professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said it was positive that the top court had affirmed "the importance of publicising cases."

But he said the SPC could still move toward

"selective transparency" where politically sensitive cases could still be "subject to arbitrary non-reporting." David Zhang, a human rights lawyer in Beijing, said he hoped the SPC would fully implement its recent pledge. "I believe that court judgments should be made available to the public," he said. The number of court judgments published online dropped to 10.4 million in 2022 from 19.2 million in 2020, according to official data. The number fell further last year to 5.11 million through late December, the SPC has said. Since 2021, rulings have been removed from China Judgments Online relating to the death penalty, national security and "picking quarrels and provoking troubles", a criminal charge frequently brought against critics of government policies. Columbia Law Review researchers found human trafficking-related verdicts were removed from the database after a public outcry over a January 2022 video of a rural woman chained to a shed. Six people including her husband were later jailed for crimes including human trafficking.

## Canada to cap int'l student permits

OTTAWA (Reuters): Canada announced an immediate, two-year cap on international student permits and said it would also stop giving work permits to some postgraduate students as it seeks to rein in record numbers of newcomers seen aggravating a housing crisis. The cap is expected to result in approximately 360,000 approved study permits in 2024, a decrease of 35% from 2023, according to a statement from the immigration ministry.

Immigration Minister Marc Miller said the federal government would work with the provinces, which oversee the educational system, to apply the cap. He said the main reason for the cap is to protect students who attend colleges, which are often private-public partnerships, that provide inadequate services at high costs, but also to ease pressure on housing and services. "Some private

institutions have taken advantage of international students by operating under-resourced campuses, lacking supports for students and charging high tuition fees, all the while significantly increasing their intake of international students," Miller told reporters. "This increase is also putting pressure on housing, healthcare and other services," he said, adding that fewer numbers would primarily help lower prices for rent.

Rapid population growth fueled by immigration has put pressure on services, like healthcare and education, and has helped drive up housing costs. These issues have weighed on Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's support, with polls showing he would lose an election if one were held now. In the third quarter of last year, the population grew at its fastest pace in more

than six decades, with non-permanent residents - mostly students - increasing by 312,758, the most in more than five decades. The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), a student advocacy group, criticized the cap. "The biggest problem is that ... there's been announced a cap that is a reaction to the housing crisis," said CASA Director of Advocacy, Mateusz Salmassi, adding that what is needed is more support and housing for international students. The University of Toronto welcomed the announcement and said it would work with all levels of government on the allocation of study permits. The changes are "focused on addressing abuses in the system by particular actors and are not intended to adversely impact universities such as ours," the university said in a statement.



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## The CPEC and Pak-China teamwork

**C**ARETAKER Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has observed that Pakistan was fully committed to the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and stressed the need for both sides to continue to work closely to ensure timely completion of the ongoing projects. During a meeting with the Chinese Vice Foreign Minister in Islamabad, the Prime Minister told the visiting dignitaries that Pakistan deeply valued its all-weather, strategic, cooperative partnership with China and endeavours hard to boost and strengthen time-tested bilateral ties with every passing day.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is a magnificent example of China-Pakistan all-weather strategic friendship and an important pillar of Chinese President Xi Jinping's vision for global peace, friendship, and economic partnership that manifests in the form of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) across Asia, Africa, and Eurasia. Initiated in late 2013, the CPEC has completed a decade of successes, and achievements by creating a network of ground and sea lines of communication, energy projects, Special Economic Zones, industrial and trade revival, skill development, healthcare, education, and cultural exchanges through people to people contacts between the two nations. Historically, it was a game-changer initiative that was aimed at bringing a pivotal change in geopolitical and socioeconomic dynamics in the region, however, this grand endeavour fell victim to the global conspiracy and regional rivalry at its early stage. The United States of America, its Western allies, and Pakistan's staunch enemy India allied to fail CPEC which they perceived as a part of Beijing's broader strategy for global supremacy in the world.

The CPEC has entered its second phase and multiple road infrastructure and energy projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have been completed and started yielding their benefits, however, a bulk of work is still left for its completion and realization of 100% potential. The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the government of Pakistan are very optimistic regarding the outcome of this magnificent bilateral initiative which has now become a brand symbol of Pak-China friendship, while several other countries including Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asian Republics intend to join this lucrative regional connectivity project because of huge economic, and monetary prospects attached to this initiative. Pakistan is hopeful of a big economic activity and a boom in trade and tourism between the two countries, which would surely bring an improvement to the social and economic lives of its people. In fact, the CPEC offers a win-win situation for both China and Pakistan because this mechanism not only uplifts the Chinese western region of Urumqi but also provides the shortest possible routes for Chinese exports meant for the Middle East and Europe.

Currently, the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is underway with full potential, and several road and energy projects and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are nearly completion, while Pakistan and China also working on a series of endeavours to enhance the capacity of the Gwadar port through the construction of additional births, an increase in cargo tunnels and ceilings along with multiple other initiatives that will bring a positive change in the trade and economic activities in the country. The government and people of Pakistan perceive the CPEC and Pak-China teamwork as a recipe for their economic integration and prosperity, regional connectivity, and multilateral cooperation in the region and beyond. However, there is a long way to go to realize this dream and Pakistani leadership must continue concerted efforts for the completion of the ongoing projects, operationalization of under-construction SEZs along with exploring new avenues of cooperation with Chinese and multinational foreign firms to boost trade and investment opportunities, regional connectivity and people-to-people contacts between Pakistan, China and other states in the region and beyond. At the same time, the two countries must keep constant vigilance regarding foreign conspiracy and domestic treason-driven terrorism aimed at derailing the ongoing progress on CPEC projects and damaging the Pak-China teamwork. So, the dream for regional connectivity and cooperation could lead unhindered to greater economic and social integration in broader South and Central Asia. With regional partnership and teamwork, Pakistan will emerge as a regional connectivity hub for transit trade that will lead to greater economic activities in the future.

## Self-acclamation of public servant

**T**HE Director of Cyber Crime, FIA has recently told the media that the FIA Cyber Crime Wing is working round-the-clock to apprehend the culprits behind spreading hate material on social media and bring them into the ambit of the law. According to him, no one would be allowed to create anarchy or malign a state and its institutions through malicious campaigns on social media. The FIA cyber-crime wing has identified more than five hundred accounts and monitoring many others for subsequent action and accountability.

The unprecedented revolution in modern technologies and the latest digital innovations have brought unimaginable comforts and luxuries in human life while at the same time, misuse of those blessings by anti-social elements and criminals causes significant challenges for society, the state, and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) across the world. There has been a sharp rise in cybercrimes and misuse of social media including online bullying and harassment, blackmail, banking fraud, unregulated online microloan websites, and applications that are massively used by hackers and criminals resulting in significant financial losses to the public as well as the national exchequer. Meanwhile, political, ethnic, religious, and terrorist groups are using social media platforms, and online resources to propagate their narratives and launch defamation and propaganda campaigns against their adversaries including the state and national institutions LEAs, Security Institutions, etc.

Historically, the misuse of social media by certain groups has sharply grabbed the attention of the government and state agencies including the FIA cybercrimes wing, whose high-ups reach the media to highlight their performance and alert anti-state elements to pause their activities to avoid legal action. At the same, the LEAs including the FIA and its cybercrime wing failed to stall misuse of the internet, online fraud, and use of social media by criminal gangs for harassment, blackmail/ransom from innocent citizens in the current day digital environment. According to credible sources, the FIA Cybercrimes wings often failed to take proper action on the complaints lodged by the common citizens regarding online fraud through loan apps and blackmailing of girls/women by criminals on social media. There is a dire need for the top leadership in government institutions to open a direct window for public contact/complaints other than traditional helpdesk/complaint boxes etc those often dealt with by the lower staff. So, they could be aware of the true picture of the rise of online crimes, poor performances of their departments, and corruption of the workers/colleagues. Otherwise, such self-praise and acclamation might appease the government and politicians but neither reduce the suffering of the public nor succeed in curbing flourishing crimes in the country.



## Gaza onslaught gives Ben-Gvir chance to incite religious war

Ramzy Baroud

**I**F what is currently happening in the West Bank had taken place before Oct. 7, our attention would have been completely fixated on it. The ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza, however, has devalued the important, if not earth-shattering, events underway in the West Bank, which is now a stage for the most violent Israeli military campaign since the Second Intifada of 2000 to 2005.

At the time of writing, nearly 360 Palestinians had been killed in the West Bank since Oct. 7, with thousands more wounded and thousands of others arrested. This exceeds, by far, the total number of Palestinians killed in 2022, which was designated by the UN as the most violent year since 2005.

But how are we to understand the logic behind the Israeli violence in the West Bank, considering that it is already under Israeli military occupation and the joint security control of the Israeli army and the Palestinian Authority?

Moreover, if the Israelis are honest in their claim that their war in Gaza is not genocide against the Palestinian people but a war on Hamas, why are they also attacking the West Bank with such ferocity, killing people of all political and ideological backgrounds and many civilians, including children? The answer lies in the growing political power of the Jewish settlers. Historically, there have been two types of Israeli violence routinely meted out against Palestinians: by the Israeli army and by illegal Jewish settlers. Palestinians fully understand that the two phenomena are intrinsically linked. The settlers often attack Palestinians under the protection of the Israeli army and the latter often launches violent raids on Palestinians for the sake of the illegal settlers.

In recent years, however, the relationship between these two violent entities has changed thanks to the rise of the Israeli far right, which is situated mostly within the illegal settlements, and its supporters inside Israel. Therefore, it should not be a surprise that the two far-right ministers in the extremist government of Benjamin Netanyahu, Itamar Ben-

Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, are themselves settlers. As soon as Ben-Gvir claimed the role of national security minister, he began promoting the idea of establishing a national guard. After Oct. 7, he managed, with the direct support of Netanyahu's government, to establish so-called civilian security teams. Even Israeli officials like Yair

**One of the prerequisites is unhinged violence, where people are killed based on the mere suspicion of being terrorists. For example, Ben-Gvir last week told Israeli border police officers during a visit to a base in the West Bank: "You have complete backing from me." He urged them to shoot at every "terrorist," even if they do not pose a threat. Of course, Ben-Gvir perceives all Palestinians in the West Bank as potential terrorists, the same way that Israel's "moderate" President Isaac Herzog perceives all Gazans as "responsible" for Hamas' actions. This essentially means that the Israeli army in the West Bank is expected to kill Palestinians with the same impunity as those being killed in Gaza. Even though security and intelligence officials in Israel have warned Netanyahu against opening another war front in the West Bank, the Israeli army has no other option but to fight that supposed war anyway. Why?**

Lapid have described Ben-Gvir's army as a "private militia." And they are right. Though Ben-Gvir is insisting that the war on Gaza must continue, his actual aim - aside from the ethnic cleansing of the Strip's population - is to use this rare opportunity to fulfill all the wishes of Israel's political extremists at the same time. Let us remember that Ben-Gvir came to power based on the lofty promises of annexing the West Bank, expanding settlements and seizing control of Palestinian holy sites in East Jerusalem, among other extremist ideas. Al-Aqsa Mosque was a major target for Ben-Gvir and his followers, who believe that only by building a "Third Temple" on the ruins of Islam's third-holiest shrine will Israel be able to reclaim total control of the Holy Land.

Ben-Gvir's bizarre political language could have been dismissed as the extremism of a fringe

politician. Far from it. Ben-Gvir is now arguably the most powerful politician in Israel due to his ability - using just six seats in the Knesset - to make or break Netanyahu's coalition. While Netanyahu is behaving largely out of desperation, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant is fighting to redeem the tattered reputation of Israel's army.

Others, like war Cabinet minister Benny Gantz, are walking a fine political line so as not to be perceived as the ones who broke Israel's fragile political unity during this most decisive of wars. None of this applies to Ben-Gvir. This man, who sees himself as a political descendant of the likes of the notorious Meir Kahane, is a fervent advocate of a religious war. And since religious wars can only be the outcome of chaotic social and political circumstances, he is keen to instigate the events that could ultimately lead to this coveted war. One of the prerequisites is unhinged violence, where people are killed based on the mere suspicion of being terrorists. For example, Ben-Gvir last week told Israeli border police officers during a visit to a base in the West Bank: "You have complete backing from me." He urged them to shoot at

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The Israeli army is already seen by a large constituency in Israel as a failure for its inability to prevent or successfully respond to the Oct. 7 attacks, even after more than 100 days of war in Gaza. To redeem its tarnished honor, the army is happy to fight a less challenging "war" against isolated and under-equipped Palestinian fighters in small parts of the West Bank. Ben-Gvir is, of course, ready to manipulate all these elements in his favor. And he is getting precisely what he wants: expanding the war to the West Bank, ethnically cleansing Palestinians, torturing prisoners, demolishing homes, torching properties and all the rest.

Perhaps Ben-Gvir's greatest achievement, so far, is his ability to create a perfect amalgamation between the political interests of the settlers, the government and its security apparatus. His aim, however, is not merely stealing yet more Palestinian land or expanding a few settlements. He wants a religious war; one that will ultimately lead to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, not just from Gaza but from the West Bank as well. The war in Gaza is a perfect opportunity for these sinister goals to be achieved. For now, this genocidal war continues to create opportunities for the ideology of religious Zionism to acquire new followers and to lay deeper roots within Israel's political establishment. A sudden end to the war, however, could lead to the marginalization of religious Zionism for years to come.

## Meaningful template

Muhammad Habib & Muhammad Haikal

**F**OR the global economy, uncertainty will still be prominent in 2024. The Russia-Ukraine crisis, the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the Houthi-led attacks in the Red Sea, and the United States' strategic competition with China have all taken a toll on global supply chains. Countries can no longer easily trade with and invest in each other as they used to do. Security has resurfaced as the primary consideration, above efficiency and the spirit to cooperate. Countries now filter interactions based on like-mindedness, potentially leading to a decoupling of the global economy. While there is nothing wrong with diversification per se, unhealthy suspicions should never drive the agenda in the very first place.

The trading partners diversification index of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development dropped from 102 in 2022 to 95 in 2023, showing a more concentrated approach to trade. Foreign direct investment patterns have also changed, with investments based on shorter geopolitical distance increasing from 38 percent in 2010 to around 50 percent in 2021, implying a new trend in trade and investment that defied the conventional gravitational model focused more on economic size and geographical distance, showing increased weight is being given to geopolitical factors.

As a home for emerging economies and leading manufacturers of global products, the Asia-Pacific region is not immune to these trends. On the one hand, the short-term impacts may benefit some regional countries as they welcome more investment from the supply chain relocation of multinational companies. On the other hand, the long-term consequences do not look promising. The misuse of entity of concern provisions and environmental standards to deny market access could worsen as major powers diverge. Moreover, there is no sign that the fragmented globalization and inward-looking policies will reverse considering the possible election outcomes in major democracies.

It is undeniable that China's rise as a global economic powerhouse has provided members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations with modalities to navigate the geopolitical currents. China has introduced technology to process raw materials into intermediary products and expanded access to finance major strategic projects. Thanks to China, ASEAN members have more experience to elevate their participation in the global value chain. Unfortunately, these modalities are not sufficient if ASEAN countries continue to be weak in backward linkage with much reliance on assembly and natural resources. Even more so if compliance with international labor and environmental standards is lacking and domestic economic reforms are sluggish. In short, China and ASEAN can do more to upgrade their value chains.

Leveraging the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is one way to

do it. The RCEP offers a safe space for ASEAN, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand to resist the geopolitical pressures and deepen their economic integration. The RCEP principles of openness and inclusiveness are anchored in the ASEAN approach to regionalism, enabling state parties to benefit from the removal of trade barriers and potential technical assistance. Indonesia has implemented zero tariff on 65.1 percent of products originating in China, and China also has implemented zero tariffs on 67.9 percent of products originating in Indonesia. Affirmative provisions and a package of support have been made available under the RCEP to the least developed parties, enabling them to be equally capable for offsetting geopolitical impacts using the region's inner strength.

Needless to say, the RCEP must never be taken for granted. Its state parties must continuously promote the partnership to other parts of the Global South, showcasing that open-and-inclusive regionalism as embodied by the RCEP still presents practical benefits in this age of a fragmenting world. The RCEP also symbolizes that the Global North and the Global South can achieve greater prosperity as long as the rules of the game are jointly crafted with good faith and frank conversations. Indeed, promotion to external parties alone will not guarantee the partnership thrives. It requires all state parties to honor the commitments that have been made.

For Indonesia, the homework is even more taxing. The RCEP should not only offer a moment of truth that ASEAN-led regionalism delivers, but also serve as a litmus test of whether ASEAN countries can seize this moment to meaningfully participate in the global value chain. Indonesia has a chance to exercise an enabling role here. First, Indonesia could coordinate all RCEP parties to expedite the operationalization of RCEP Support Unit. Second, Indonesia, along with other ASEAN members, could try to ensure that substance under different RCEP Joint Committees are aligned and responsive toward emerging issues. Third, Indonesia could contribute to the provision of technical assistance to the least developed RCEP parties. However, success hinges on Indonesia's completion of domestic reforms.

To conclude, it is pressing to emphasize that any geopolitical moves to completely exclude emerging economies from the conversation will likely be counterproductive. Open and inclusive ASEAN-led platforms, including the RCEP, have demonstrated that working with everyone could explore every untapped potential and offset the cost of extraregional circumstances. As it is open and inclusive in nature, the ASEAN-led platforms also demonstrate that distributing the pie to everyone matters. The supply chain should not and cannot be dependent only on certain countries. We should give full play to ASEAN-led regionalism to shine a light in this dark hour.

The China Daily

## Gaza and Germany's departure from reason

**A** month ago, more than 300 scholars and thinkers - among them Arturo Escobar, Gloria Wekker, Helen Verran, Erik Swyngeouw, Zoe Todd, Rashid Khalidi, Catherine Walsh - signed an open letter denouncing German complicity in Israel's genocide against the Palestinians and German censorship of its critics.

Since then, each word of this letter has been brutally confirmed, as the dreadful horrors committed by the Israeli army in Gaza and the West Bank have only increased. On January 11, South Africa's legal team presented detailed evidence of genocidal intent and actions by Israel, as it requested from the International Court of Justice to impose provisional measures to stop Israeli aggression.

Yet, the stance of the German state has not altered a micron. Conversely, mili-

tary and diplomatic backing for the extermination of the Palestinians persists. And now, the German state has decided to attack the South African request before the court, in an eloquent example of its commitment to supporting an ongoing genocide. Meanwhile, within the country, censorship and suppression have intensified and instances of institutional harassment have piled up.

As a group of Global South scholars and artists based in Berlin, we share the alarm of colleagues and friends regarding the persecution of critical voices and want to echo what Ilan Pappé recently posed as a question to students during one of our lectures in Berlin: "Should we, therefore, treat Germany as a dictatorship of knowledge when it comes to Palestine?"

We, the [decoco] decolonial research group, in favour of defending freedom of speech and in memory of the effort of our colleagues,

asked Al Jazeera to reproduce the open letter 30 days belatedly, yet timelier than ever.

The recent censorship, persecution, and threats faced by both German and non-German academics in Germany due to their critiques of Israel's state policies towards Palestinians are entirely unacceptable.

The public statements from Israel's state representatives and its military and political leaders unequivocally indicate their will to dispossess Palestinians of their land, colonise it, and engage in ethnic cleansing. In essence, the State of Israel is pursuing a genocidal policy against Palestinians, aiming to strip them of their homeland.

The indiscriminate attacks on civilians, hospitals, and health centres, which amount to war crimes under international law, clearly demonstrate Israel's willingness to operate beyond any legal or ethical boundaries. Instead of

denouncing these actions or joining calls for a ceasefire alongside other nations, the German State has chosen to provide unwavering support to the State of Israel, dismissing any criticism of these policies as absurd.

What is apparent and evident to the international community seems unrecognised by the German State. Censorship efforts, cancellations of academic events, and threats of job loss or funding withdrawal against academics who speak out against these issues have become commonplace in German universities, cultural bodies, and governmental institutions.

German government and media platforms misuse Holocaust memories, conflating all criticism of Israel's state with anti-Semitism. Simultaneously, they propagate the baseless notion that Germany's immigrant population, particularly Muslims, are inherently anti-Semitic. This represents a manipula-

tion of German historical memory to silence dissent while fostering xenophobia and Islamophobia.

These developments coincide with the rise of new anti-immigration policies and an increase in supremacist, racist, and far-right political movements across Europe. As international academics frequently interacting with our counterparts facing these challenges, we ponder the direction in which the German State and German universities are headed. Both seem to be forsaking pluralistic and democratic principles, opting for a singular narrative, persecuting those who challenge its policies, and censoring and stifling any discourse not aligned

with the state agenda, thereby enabling the rise of xenophobia and genuine hate speech within its institutions.

We urgently call for an end to these censorship, persecution, and stigmatisation trends and advocate for the restoration of respect for free academic, cultural, and intellectual expression. Furthermore, we urge the German State to join the global demand for a comprehensive ceasefire and an end to the occupation, to adhere to international law, and to cease all political and discursive support for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against the Palestinian people.

Decolonial research group

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# Why would any nation sign up to UK’s cash-for-humans scheme?

**A**CROSS Europe, the bashing of “illegal immigrants” is at the heart of nearly every election campaign. Those fleeing conflicts and persecution may not realize it but, if they arrive on this continent, through regular or irregular means, they will be punch bags for politicians, the media and commentators and scapegoats for all the ills of European states, from crime rates to economic strife.

The debate is toxic, often bordering on racist. An obsession with the issue of immigration still dominates the internal politics of Europe. Genuine refugees are deliberately lumped together with economic migrants. The whole debate pits the rights of refugees versus the rights of citizens, as if the two were wholly incompatible.

Yes, the issue of the absorptive capacity of these host societies for migrants is there. But some of the measures being taken threaten to obliterate the whole international legal system in regard to refugee law.

Nowhere has gone further than this in Europe than the UK. The British government has practically been at war with the judiciary to allow it to take actions that would breach its international legal obligations. Why is the UK taking such a drastic stance? There will be an election at some point in the next 12 months and the government is trying to make this the standout campaigning issue. “Stop the boats” is the slogan, referring to those making the dangerous crossing of the English Channel from France to claim asylum in the UK. In part, this scary debate has succeeded: 20 percent of British voters in December said that immigration was the single biggest issue facing the country. A key plank in the “Stop the boats” agenda is the Rwanda program. This had its origins in the crazy last days of Boris Johnson’s premiership. It was a stunt that has since become policy.

Back in April 2022, then-Home Secretary Priti Patel established the program based on a five-year partnership with the African state. Asylum seekers would be

processed having been removed to Rwanda and their claims would be assessed under Rwandan law. Should they be determined to be refugees under Rwandan law, they would remain there. Kigali would get cash for this. It has already received £240 million (\$305 million) from the UK as part of the deal, with a further £50 million expected later this year.

The first flight was meant to leave in June 2022, but the European Court of Human Rights issued a Rule 39 order, meaning it had concluded that an individual faced an imminent risk of irreparable harm if sent to Rwanda before

Chris Doyle

How has the government reacted? It has pursued a legally binding treaty with Rwanda and is pushing through Parliament what it terms “emergency legislation” that deems Rwanda to be safe. The Safety of Rwanda Bill aims to force UK judges to treat the African nation as a safe country and give ministers the power to disregard sections of the Human Rights Act. However, hard-line opponents argue that it still maintains parts of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Former Home Secretary Suella Braverman is the epitome of the hard-line, far-right group that is

***A key plank in the “Stop the boats” agenda is the Rwanda program. This had its origins in the crazy last days of Boris Johnson's premiership. It was a stunt that has since become policy. Back in April 2022, then-Home Secretary Priti Patel established the program based on a five-year partnership with the African state. Asylum seekers would be processed having been removed to Rwanda and their claims would be assessed under Rwandan law.***

the case could be heard in full. To give an idea how chaotic the whole situation is, the UK has had three prime ministers and five home secretaries since that interim order was issued.

The Illegal Migration Act was passed last July. Under this draconian legislation, there is now a legal duty on the home secretary to remove irregular migrants to a third country, provided it is safe to do so. On Nov. 15 last year, the UK Supreme Court ruled that the policy was unlawful because Rwanda was unsafe owing to its authoritarian nature and use of torture. The court did not stipulate that it was illegal to remove people in principle. The court ruling was clear that Britain cannot abandon those who are persecuted for domestic political reasons.

opposing Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in Parliament. She sees international law itself as the problem, saying: “We have to totally exclude international law - the Refugee Convention, other broader avenues of legal challenge.” Even Cabinet ministers have refused to commit to the UK remaining as a signatory to the Refugee Convention.

Many push for the UK to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights. This would not solve the issues raised by the Supreme Court, but it would undermine the Northern Irish peace agreement and lead to a massive dispute with the Biden administration in the US. The EU has also made it clear that it would undermine Brussels-London relations, not least because it would no

longer be safe to extradite someone from the EU to the UK as there would not be adequate legal safeguards. It would bring into question whether Britain believes in the rules-based international system.

But will this Rwanda plan even actually work? The aim is to serve as a deterrent and shatter the pull factor of Britain, making migrants and refugees think twice before taking on the perilous journey across the Channel. As yet, there is zero evidence that this will be the case. Will this change once asylum seekers are shipped out of the country, which might happen from the spring if the government gets its way? The government is also in talks with at least five other countries to take in asylum seekers, but as it stands it only has an agreement with Rwanda.

Other obstacles remain. The bill still has to get through the House of Lords. Is there an airline that would take those being deported to Rwanda? And does it represent good value for money? It is still not clear how much this will all cost. One estimate is that it would be in the region of £169,000 per person. It may be more. The political opposition in Britain has rejected it. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer termed it a “gimmick.” Many voters will be examining what Labour says, as it enjoys a handsome lead in the polls. But is it clear what Labour would do in government? The answer is no.

Is Rwanda the new Brexit? The 2019 edition was very much about Brexit and Rwanda is what the Conservatives want the next election to be fought over. Other European states are watching closely. Right-wing forces are hoping that Britain sets a precedent that they can follow. Yet it beggars belief that other countries, not least in the developing world, would sign up to become a dumping ground so that Europe can resolve its anti-immigration crisis. In the end, there is a human element to all of this that cannot be ignored. This plan is a cash-for-humans scheme. There should not be a large queue of countries willing to sign up to that.

Arab News

# DPP’s trade barriers will hinder Taiwan’s growth

Wang Ziqi

**E**CONOMIC collaboration plays a pivotal role in relations between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan. It contributes to the well-being of both sides and fosters integration. However, persistent restrictions imposed by the Taiwan authorities on trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges with the mainland have created challenges in the backdrop of Sino-US disputes.

The overall development of cross-Strait economic ties faces short-term fluctuations and long-term adjustments, with increasing instability and uncertainty. It is therefore crucial for both sides to prevent external interference and eliminate obstacles to steer cross-Strait economic relations back to a healthy and stable trajectory.

First, Taiwan's trade barriers hinder the entry of mainland products to the island's market, disrupting normal trade. Due to the Taiwan authorities' restrictions, cross-Strait trade in certain sectors remains indirect and one-sided. While the mainland has been further opening up its market to Taiwan goods, Taiwan imposes numerous restrictions on goods from the mainland. For example, the island's “regulations on the importation of goods from the mainland” categorize mainland-imported goods into three types: “not permitted”, “conditionally permitted” and “permitted”.

Shockingly, the category of “not permitted” includes a staggering 2,509 items, constituting 20.03 percent of all goods in the World Customs Organization's “Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System”. In stark contrast, Taiwan restricts the import of only 98 items from other economies.

This blatant violation of the World Trade Organization's principles, such as non-discrimination and the general elimination of quantitative restrictions, is particularly concerning. The Taiwan authorities have restricted the entry of an increasing number of products from the mainland - of the 2,509 items Taiwan has imposed restrictions on since its accession to the WTO, 1,423 items are from the mainland. This has harmed normal cross-Strait trade, impeding cooperation between cross-Strait industrial and supply chains. Second, the Taiwan authorities, driven by political considerations, continue to tightly control and restrict two-way investments, hampering collaboration in high-tech industries. Despite opening direct investments from Taiwan to the mainland in 2002 and allowing mainland investment on the island in 2009, the Taiwan authorities are still skeptically about the mainland market and enterprises. Their concerns revolve around technology leakage, potential impact on local employment, and the formation of “pro-mainland” interest groups.

In the backdrop of the intensifying Sino-US rivalry, the Taiwan authorities have taken a distinctly pro-US and anti-mainland stance, leading to escalation in political interference that could derail cross-Strait investments. The Taiwan authorities have repeatedly intervened in normal cross-Strait industrial cooperation projects, citing “threats to Taiwan's security”. They have changed laws to restrict investments from the mainland, strengthen the scrutiny of investments and impose fines of up to NTS\$25 million (\$796,192) for “unauthorized investments” by mainland entities.

The island's authorities have also imposed strict controls on the development of Taiwan's high-tech industries on the mainland, by making it mandatory for them to get prior approval for direct or third-party technical cooperation between Taiwan entities and their mainland counterparts. Moreover, Taiwan's high-tech enterprises, such as semiconductor and panel manufacturers, selling shares or conducting transactions with mainland enterprises have to get prior approval instead of reporting after sales for any transaction with mainland companies. And a new regulation on “economic espionage” imposes severe penalties, including up to 12 years' imprisonment and a fine of up to NTS\$1 billion, for “leaking” core critical technologies to the mainland. Washington and Taiwan, under the framework of the “economic prosperity partnership dialogue”, have formed a working group to review investment, with the aim of controlling cross-Strait high-tech industry cooperation. Additionally, the Taiwan authorities have implemented the “three major programs for investing in Taiwan” and are promoting the “new south-bound policy” so as to attract Taiwan businesses operating on the mainland to relocate their production units to the island or third-party destinations in Southeast Asia.

And third, the Democratic Progressive Party took office in May 2016, and in 2019, disregarding public opinion, it created the “democratic protection network” to restrict cross-Strait interactions. The “democratic protection network” consists of the “five amendments to the national security laws” and the “anti-infiltration act”, and expands the scope of applicability of the regulations on “mainland spies” while restricting retired security department personnel from visiting the mainland, raising the threshold for signing political agreements between the two sides and extending the exit control period for personnel involved in sensitive matters. The intent of the Taiwan authorities is to discourage and disrupt cross-Strait exchanges, and exacerbate tensions between the two sides of the Strait. Additionally, citing COVID-19 prevention as a pretext, the Taiwan authorities limited cross-Strait personnel exchanges, which are yet to return to the pre-pandemic level.

The normalization of economic and trade relations across the Strait is a shared aspiration, and in the common interest, of both sides of the Strait. However, since 2016, the Taiwan authorities have not taken concrete measures to lift the discriminatory trade and investment restrictions. Instead, the Taiwan authorities have erected taller barriers, obstructing cross-Strait economic cooperation and people-to-people exchanges at the cost of constraining Taiwan's economic development space and hurting the interests of Taiwan residents. In the recent Taiwan leadership election, the DPP's pro-independence candidate Lai Ching-te was elected the island's leader despite receiving only 40 percent of the votes, indicating that a majority of the island's residents want cross-Strait peace. The fact that Lai has refused to accept the 1992 Consensus that there is only one China will further weaken the political mutual trust across the Strait, and make Taiwan's economic recovery even more difficult.

Given the mutual benefits of enhancing cross-Strait exchanges and cooperation, the Taiwan authorities should lift the trade restrictions instead of engaging in political manipulations and maligning the mainland. We hope the two sides of the Strait will work together to return cross-Strait relations back to the path of peaceful development.

# Tony Blair is still ruining Britain

Miriam Cates

**T**ONY Blair and Gordon Brown's failures are still writ large on the public imagination - the Iraq War for example, or the racking up of astonishing national debt. But what is less well recognised is the last Labour government's extraordinary success in using seemingly mundane pieces of legislation to profoundly - and, for conservatives, detrimentally - transform the culture of the United Kingdom.

In its 2005 manifesto, the Labour Party pledged to bring forward a new Equality Bill, to “modernise and simplify” equality laws. A bland aim perhaps, but the resulting Equality Act 2010 became a flagship piece of New Labour legislation that would embed leftist identity politics into our public institutions, paving the way for the ideological capture of our schools, civil service and NHS. Like all good grenades, these Blairite laws did not explode until the thrower was safely out of range. In 2010, few conservatives understood the perniciousness of a Bill that established in statute nine “protected characteristics” including race, sex, religion and gender reassignment, laying the foundations for a culture that sees people not as equal individuals but as members of competing groups.

Neither was it foreseen that the Act's Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) would give rise to such strident critical social justice activism within our public bodies. This paper has exposed some of the most excessive examples of this, such as hard-pressed NHS staff attending a three day diversity training course at a time of record hospital

waiting lists. It is welcome news that Government ministers wish to tackle divisive and wasteful civil service activism. But in promoting woke causes, public bodies genuinely believe they are fulfilling legal duties under the PSED, which compels public organisations to “eliminate discrimination” and “advance equality”.

It is no longer enough for public sector bosses to ensure they do not discriminate against someone because of their sex or skin colour; they must actively pursue policies to eliminate all potential inequalities, giving rise to the kinds of ridiculous re-education programmes that frequently make the news. In seeking to subvert a British understanding of fairness, these programmes actually introduce discrimination, for example gender neutral policies that discriminate against women. I am often asked, how has this happened under a Conservative government? It's a fair question. But while some now argue that the incoming 2010 Cameron government should have repealed the Equality Act, this was a political impossibility in coalition with the Lib Dems.

And by the time of Conservative's outright victory in 2015, Blairite equalities legislation had changed our culture so effectively that anyone who questioned the new creed of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion feared becoming a pariah. Even if Cameron had wanted to push back against these “advances”, he would not have had a majority in parliament to do so. The architects of Blair's revolution knew that politi-

cians would not want to be seen to oppose his “progressive” agenda. But if we want to end this ideological capture - and the division, waste, confusion and cultural destruction it has caused - then either this Government or a future Conservative government must be prepared to undertake wholesale reform of our equalities and human rights legislation, including withdrawing from the ECHR. It will take time to make the case for this but we must. And the case for reform is this: Britain was built not on diversity, but on an understanding that every person is equal under the law, having an inherent value as an individual and not as a member of a particular identity group competing with other identity groups for power. A determination not to discriminate - to show no favouritism - is a key part of this understanding. But assuming someone needs special treatment or holds particular views purely on the basis of their race, sexuality, or age is itself a form of prejudice and undermines the social cohesion that is so vital in building a nation that shares a common purpose.

We cannot end this destructive madness by playing whack-a-mole with each and every public sector activist group; we need to reform our legal framework. Even if this cannot be achieved in this Parliament, Conservatives need to start rolling the pitch now. Our next manifesto must contain a clear commitment to a new British Bill of Rights that establishes fundamental rights and freedoms that apply equally to all individual British citizens.

# Cambodia, France boost relations in Hun Manet’s first western visit

Sun Narin & Colin Meyn

**F**RANCE and Cambodia have signed a \$235 million aid agreement for drinking water and energy infrastructure development, as well as vocational training. The deal is part of a move to boost bilateral relations between the two countries, which have maintained a postcolonial dialogue since Cambodia became independent in 1953.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet met with French President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee Palace and announced the pact last week. It was the West Point graduate's first official visit to a Western power since succeeding his father, Hun Sen, in August. “Cambodia will always remember France's role in contributing to national economic recovery and development through the French Development Agency,” Hun Manet said at a press conference alongside Macron. “I hope that my visit to France, especially with the president, will enable us to discuss the work that needs to further strengthen Cambodia-France relations.” Hun Manet said Thursday. The meeting with Macron came just months after France joined other European Union countries in

expressing concern about July's election, in which Cambodia's main opposition party was barred from participating.

After July's elections, in which the ruling Cambodian People's Party won all but five seats in parliament, France called for the release of jailed opposition politicians and respect for Cambodia's democratic obligations under international pacts and domestic law. Former Prime Minister Hun Sen was the ruling party's prime minister candidate in the election but quickly stepped down to make way for his son in a long-planned succession. Hun Sen remains the president of the ruling party and is expected to be the president of the Senate after elections in late February. Hun Manet's first trip after succeeding his father in August was to Beijing, where he met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Great Hall of the People. Cambodia has long supported China in return for receiving significant investments, loans and grants to build infrastructure, according to analysts.

Cambodia's democratic donors

have largely set aside differences over political freedom and human rights to focus on areas of cooperation with the new government in Phnom Penh. During the visit, Macron reiterated France's appreciation of Cambodia's position at the United Nations regarding Russia's war against Ukraine, according to the joint statement. Cambodia has repeatedly voted with Ukraine's supporters in condemning Russia's invasion, in a rare break with China on the world stage. Cambodian opposition leader Sam Rainsy, who is in exile in France, criticized Macron in a post on Facebook and an opinion article in The Geopolitics for legitimizing Hun Manet's rule.

“Macron has clearly made the calculation that it is better to engage with dictators rather than deny them legitimacy,” he wrote. “There is no sign that Macron, along with some other Western leaders, fully understands the unseen impacts of affording high-profile acceptance and credibility to dictators such as Hun Manet,” Sam Rainsy added.

“An official visit to a venue such

as the Elysee is a major propaganda coup for any such regime. It gives an unequivocal message to the Cambodian regime and the Cambodian people that arrests of and violence against opposition supporters can continue.” Sok Eysan, a spokesman for the ruling Cambodian People's Party, told VOA Khmer on Friday that the visit showed that the Cambodian government and its new prime minister were recognized by the world's leaders and other officials. Before traveling to France, Manet also attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. While there, he met with Samantha Power, head of the US Agency for International Development.

In a post on X, Power said they discussed “opportunities to build a more productive relationship.” Phil Robertson, deputy director of Human Rights Watch in Asia, criticized Power's approach: “How about talking about human rights, Samantha? #Cambodia has descended into a single party dictatorship under the Hun family and you want a 'more productive' relationship? Ayia! How about some sanctions instead?”

VOA

# High-tech can help boost food security

Ke Bingsheng

**T**HE central authorities emphasizing the paramount importance of food security has become a sort of tradition for China. The importance of food security for China can be gauged from the fact that the top leader has reiterated that solving the problem of food has always been a top priority for governance.

However, the focus on food security has changed over the years. While in the past, the primary concern of the government was to ensure adequate quantity of food, today, after achieving success in addressing hunger, the country focuses more on providing high-quality food for the people. In the past, China struggled to meet the basic needs of the people for enough food. In 1978, per capita grain production was 317 kilograms, with rice and wheat accounting for 198 kg. However, direct per capita consumption of grains was 248 kg, indicating a reliance on coarse grains and other staples like corn, sorghum and potatoes due to inadequate rice and wheat production. Meat consumption was limited, primarily reserved for special occasions due to unavailability.

In 2023, the total grain output nationwide reached 695 million tons, an increase of 1.3 percent over the previous year, with the output remaining above 650 million tons for nine consecutive years. The per capita grain possession exceeds 490 kg, which is higher than the internationally recognized safety standard of 400 kg. China's rice and wheat production has for many years exceeded the direct consumption needs of the people. The surplus production is

used for food processing, animal feed, and national reserves.

Consumer demand for better-quality food has become increasingly evident in recent years, consumption of meat and other highly valued products like fruits keeps rising. China has significantly increased imports of rice, wheat and fruits, too. This, incidentally, doesn't suggest domestic production shortage but rather reflects the need to import higher-quality products to meet consumers' growing demand for them.

The changing nature of food security in China can be mainly attributed to a significant increase in people's income levels. From 1978 to 2023, the average annual growth rate of per capita disposable income, adjusted for inflation, was about 7 percent. With people earning more, the focus has shifted from merely having enough to eat to aspiring to eat well and eat better. The essence of food security lies in bolstering production to meet the evolving consumer demands. Chinese consumers today demand higher-quality products. To meet one of these evolving demands, China has to produce more animal products (which requires increasing fodder production and better livestock feed conversion efficiency), improve the quality of agricultural products (especially those that are produced in excess and yet have to be imported, such as rice, wheat and fruits), and adopt more efficient methods to reduce resource and labor inputs, in order to reduce costs, raise producers' income and protect the ecological environment.

To improve food quality and

better safeguard food security, China needs to make concerted efforts on multiple fronts, with the primary focus being on agricultural technology and more dynamic agricultural policy innovations. The development of the agricultural sector hinges on the continuous innovations in technology. Without advancements in agricultural technology, it's impossible to increase production, improve product quality and reduce production costs. Agricultural technology here includes biotechnology, facility and equipment technology, information technology, and storage and processing technology.

The government's recent emphasis on seed technology, including genetically modified seed varieties, demonstrates its commitment to ensure food security. The recent approval for the commercial production of 51 genetically modified corn and soybean varieties is aimed at reducing production costs, minimizing losses due to pest attacks, and boosting yield.

Agricultural scientists have, accordingly, shifted their focus from finding ways to increase yield to research and development in high-quality varieties, which has yielded good results. Another crucial area of technology innovation is agricultural facilities and equipment, which play a pivotal role in reducing labor input and increasing land-use efficiency.

Besides, promoting innovation in production organization is essential to fully harnessing the benefits of advancements in technology, and the essence of innovation in production lies in expand-

ing the operational scale. In this regard, it is to be noted that traditional small-scale farming hinders the application of advanced technologies in agriculture. For livestock farming, two prominent innovation models in production are large-scale enterprise-based animal breeding and the more prevalent company-plus-farmer model. As for crop production, especially in the plains, various models such as new production cooperatives, larger-scale family farms, and commercialized production services by special organizations are emerging.

Furthermore, two key factors stand out when it comes to safeguarding food security. The first is increasing investment in public research institutions to promote innovations in agricultural technology, as private agribusiness sector in China is very weak in agricultural technology research compared with that in the United States and European Union countries. And second, promoting the construction of high-standard farmlands will not only meet the soil fertility needs but also align with the necessity to expand operational scales and promote mechanization in agriculture. Developing higher-standard farmlands requires, among other things, substantial government investment and coordination to join scattered plots and turn them into bigger plots in order to increase yield. In essence, innovations in technology, production and agricultural policy form the linchpin of China's agricultural transformation, ensuring a future where not just quantity but also food quality meets the evolving expectations and demands of its people.



To view the full ICON 2024 program flow: [ICON 2024 | Game Changing Solutions in Healthcare - \(indushospital.org.pk\)](https://icon2024.org.pk)  
To register for upcoming scientific sessions and workshops in Karachi and Muzaffargarh: [Login | Indus Event Management System \(tih.org.pk\)](https://indus-event-management-system.com)





In brief

Sindh Premier League to begin from Jan 25

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Minister for Sports and Culture Syed Junaid Ali Shah and Minister for Information, Minority Affairs and Social Protection Ahmed Shah announced that the Sindh Premier League (SPL) 2024 would be commenced on January 25. Addressing a press conference at the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi, the ministers said that the SPL would continue till February 05 at National Bank Stadium Karachi. SPL President Arif Malik, and renowned cricketers Abdul Razzaq and Chaudhry Shehzad were also present on the occasion. All six franchise teams of Sindh province would take part in the inaugural season of SPL. The ministers announced that the first day of SPL would be free for all. Sports Minister Syed Junaid Ali Shah said that SPL was providing a platform to the young talent of Sindh. Renowned cricketer Abdul Razzaq expressed his gratitude to the Sindh government for organizing SPL and commended the ministers for their support. SPL President Arif Malik said that the original song of Sindh Premier League would be released on January 25.

Babar Azam shines in BPL

MIRPUR (Agencies): Pakistan's ace batter Babar Azam made his mark in his first appearance in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) 2024 with a match-winning half-century. Representing Rangpur Riders in the ongoing BPL, Babar scored a crucial half-century in the run chase and powered the side to a hard-fought victory against Sylhet Superstars. Opening the innings for the Riders, Babar carried his bat all the way through and steered his side over the line after finding much-needed support at the other end in the form of Azmatullah Omarzai. The Riders after a shaky start, lost wickets at an alarming rate and had eventually slipped to 39/6 in the pursuit of a modest 121-run target. But Babar Azam stood his ground firm and kept the scoreboard ticking. He put together an unbeaten 86-run partnership with Omarzai, who scored a brisk 47 off 35 deliveries. On the tricky surface of the Shere Bangla National Stadium here, where most of the Riders' batters found it difficult to score freely, Babar battled with relative ease and registered a well-crafted half-century. He smashed six boundaries on his way to top score for the Riders with a 49-ball 56. Dushan Hemantha was the pick of the bowlers for the Superstars with 3/20 in his four overs while Richard Ngarva, Tanzim Hasan Sakib and Nazmul Islam bagged one wicket apiece. It is worth mentioning here that Babar Azam reached Bangladesh from New Zealand on Monday to represent Rangpur Riders in the ongoing BPL 2024. The right-handed batter featured in the five-match away series against New Zealand, won by the home side 4-1. Despite ending up on the losing side, Babar had a remarkable series with the bat as he accumulated 213 runs at an average of 42.6 in five innings. He was the second leading run-scorer of the bilateral series, behind New Zealand's Finn Allen, who scored 275 runs in as many innings.

## Australian Open Djokovic beats Fritz to reach semi-finals



Djokovic reacts during their quarterfinals singles match against Fritz

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Novak Djokovic continued his bid for a record-extending 11th Australian Open title with a confident win over American 12th seed Taylor Fritz. The Serb, seeking a 25th Grand Slam to move past Margaret Court's record of 24, won 7-6 (7-3) 4-6 6-2 6-3 in hot conditions to reach the semi-finals. He will play fourth seed Jannik Sinner on Friday after the Italian defeated Russian fifth seed Andrey Rublev. "I suffered a lot in the first couple of sets," top seed Djokovic, 36, said. "I said [to my team] that this match was not an enjoyable match for me at all. "It was really difficult to find the right timing. It was really hot while the sun was still out. "We all know Taylor has got one of the best serves in the world. I knew the kind of a threat he poses when he serves on such a high quality." Djokovic has won his past 33 singles matches at Melbourne Park and is a clear favourite to defend his title. Sinner beat Rublev 6-4 7-6 (7-5) 6-3 in a match that finished at close to 01:30 local time on Wednesday morning after the start of the night

session was pushed back to 21:00. The singles matches on Rod Laver Arena did not start until 13:00. Coco Gauff's win against Marta Kostyuk in the women's quarter-finals took more than three hours before Djokovic needed almost four to beat Fritz, though Aryna Sabalenka made quick work of her 6-2 6-3 win over Barbora Krejickova.

### Sabalenka sets up semi-final against Coco Gauff

MELBOURNE :Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka set up a tantalising Australian Open semi-final against American teenager Coco Gauff after overpowering Barbora Krejickova in a straight-set victory. Sabalenka's 6-2 6-3 win confirmed a repeat of September's thrilling US Open final, in which Gauff came back from a set down to win a first major title. Gauff, 19, scraped past Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk in three sets in Melbourne. The American made 51 unforced errors but won 7-6 (8-6) 6-7 (4-7) 6-2. Belarusian Sabalenka, who claimed her maiden singles Slam tri-

umph on Rod Laver Arena 12 months ago, hit 20 winners and broke Czech 2021 French Open champion Krejickova's serve six times in a devastating quarter-final display. That was in sharp contrast to last-four opponent Gauff's victory, with the fourth seed saying she hopes to have "got the bad match out of the way" as she aims to become the first women's player since Naomi Osaka three years ago to win back-to-back majors. The other two quarter-finals in a women's singles draw blown open by a string of high-profile early exits take place on Wednesday. One of China's Zheng Qinwen, Russia's Anna Kalinskaya, Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska and Czech Republic's Linda Noskova - none of who have ever played in a Grand Slam semi-final - will meet Gauff or Sabalenka in Saturday's showpiece.



Aryna Sabalenka (L) embraces Barbora Krejickova of Czech Republic after winning their quarterfinals singles match.

## Syria beat India to reach Asian Cup knockouts



DOHA (AFP): Syria reached the Asian Cup knockout rounds for the first time in their history on Tuesday with a 1-0 win over India, sending their opponents home. Hector Cuper's side finished Group B with four points and go through to the last 16 as one of the best four third-placed teams. Omar Khribin was Syria's hero, his 76th-minute goal the winner. Igor Stimac's India head home from Qatar with three defeats and no goals. "We are very happy with the qualification, very proud of my players, they made huge sacrifices to get this result," the Argentine coach Cuper said. "We played the game with one aim in our mind -- to win, and we managed to do that. "We don't want to stop here." Syria did most of the attacking in the opening exchanges in Doha but

were restricted to speculative shots, as they sought their first goal and win at this Asian Cup. They were lucky not to be reduced to 10 men after 25 minutes when Mahmood Al-Aswad violently chest-barged Mahesh Singh Naorem to the ground, having been dragged back in possession. Referee Sivakorn Pudum booked both players, in a generally lenient performance. Moments later, the Thai official declined fierce penalty appeals from the Syrians for a trip in the box on Ammar Ramadan. By half-time, with Uzbekistan trailing Australia 1-0 in the other match in the group, a win would have seen Syria tie the Uzbeks on four points. But they trailed their rivals on goal difference and would need to score a few to take second place and an automatic place in

the knockouts. With 20 minutes left and goals needed, Cuper sent on forward Alaa Al-Dali, replacing Ramadan. As Indian legs tired, Syria finally mustered a moment of slick football 14 minutes from time, Ibrahim Hesar delivering a cutback from the left for Khribin to drill into the net. "Congratulations to Syria, they deserved their win," said former Croatian international defender Stimac. "They were stronger than us and more calm." Despite falling once more at the first hurdle -- in what was a hard group -- Stimac said India would take home "good lessons". "It was a learning experience for the boys," he said, having seen his team beaten 2-0 by Australia and 3-0 by Uzbekistan. "My satisfaction is that we managed to create chances against Australia, Uzbekistan and Syria."

## Pakistan men's hockey team climbs FIH rankings after Paris Olympics qualifiers

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan men's hockey team has seen an improvement in its ranking following its participation in the Paris Olympics qualifiers held in Muscat, Oman. The Green Shirts have moved up one place to 15th in the latest rankings released by the International Hockey Federation (FIH). The Netherlands claims the top spot, with Belgium and India securing the second and third positions, respectively. Germany, England, and Australia follow closely in the rankings at fourth, fifth, and sixth positions. In a surprising revelation, Pakistan Hockey Team Captain Imad Butt disclosed on Monday that the players have not received salaries from the Pakistan Hockey

Federation (PHF) for the past six months. Taking to Instagram, Imad Butt expressed gratitude to the fans for their support and highlighted the challenges faced by the players in the absence of facilities while passionately pursuing the game. In his post, Imad Butt stated, "Boys are giving their blood and sweat wholeheartedly for Pakistan but the way we are being treated is totally unfair. Hockey is our national game, so please treat us like national heroes." He urged for support, emphasizing that despite facing these issues for the past ten years, the players remain motivated to contribute positively to the country. Despite their efforts, the men in green failed to secure a spot in the Paris

2024 Olympics, losing 3-2 to New Zealand in the third/fourth place match of the qualifiers on Sunday. It marks the third consecutive time Pakistan has missed out on Olympic qualification, having previously failed to secure a place in Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020. In the qualifiers, Germany defeated Pakistan 4-0 in the semi-finals, earning a crucial point to advance to the final four. After losing the first match against Great Britain 6-1, Pakistan secured their first win in the competition by beating China 2-0. From the pool matches, Pakistan finished second in Pool A behind Great Britain, with four points, while China and Malaysia secured three and one point, respectively.



SKARDU: Youngsters in action during the practice day of Ice Winter Festival in connection to promote winter tourism in the area. —APP Photo

## Lahore, Karachi and Multan emerge victorious in sixth round of National Women's T20 Tournament

RAWALPINDI (APP): The sixth round of matches of National Women's T20 Tournament saw wins for Lahore, Karachi and Multan as all six teams participated in matches played across three venues in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. At Shoaib Akhtar Cricket Stadium, fighting efforts by Natalia Parvaiz and Waheeda Akhtar proved insufficient as Rawalpindi lost by 20 runs against Lahore. Peshawar suffered a nine-wicket defeat against Karachi as they comfortably chased the target in the 14th over at Ayub Park Ground. At Diamond Cricket Ground in Islamabad, Multan inflicted a nine-wicket defeat over Quetta on the back of an unbeaten half-century by Aleena Masood. Rawalpindi v Lahore at Shoaib Akhtar Cricket Stadium In the match that was live-streamed on PCB's YouTube channel, Lahore posted 147-8 in 20 overs after Rawalpindi invited them to bat first. Lahore had a horror start to the innings as they lost four wickets inside the powerplay. Opening batter Sadaf Shams was run out for a duck by Humna Bilal while Bismah Maroof, Iram Javed and Ayesha Zafar all fell to Waheeda Akhtar cheaply. Sidra Amin and Sidra Nawaz built a 65 runs fifth-wicket stand to bring momentum to the innings, until left-arm spinner Tania Saeed ran out the latter for 22 on 20, with one boundary. Sidra went on to get her second half-century (50, 39b, 8x4s) of the tournament before skipper Aliya Riaz caught her on Tania's bowling. Noreen Yaqoob (18, 16b, 3x4s) was the next batter to walk back after wicket-keeper Farzana Farooq stumped her to award Tania her second wicket of the innings. Captain Nida Dar produced a fiery

15-ball 26 on the back of two fours and as many sixes before the opposition's captain Aliya dismissed her. Fatima Khan also contributed 16 from seven, including three boundaries, to help Lahore to a fighting total after the stuttering start to their innings. Waheeda picked up a three-wicket haul, Tania grabbed two wickets while Aliya had one to her name. Rawalpindi also lost four early wickets while chasing 148. Opening batters Aima Saleem and Farzana fell to Nida and Fatima respectively. Fajar Naved was dismissed on a duck by Noreen. Left-arm spinner Nashra Sandhu disturbed Aliya Riaz's (18, 10b, 3x6s) stumps to reduce Rawalpindi to 31-4 in seven overs. A stunning 75-run fifth-wicket stand between Natalia Parvaiz and Waheeda allowed Rawalpindi to claw themselves back into the game. Nashra struck again to dismiss Waheeda for 13 on 22, including one four. Natalia's fine half-century (62, 45b, 8x4s, 3x6s) went in vain as Rawalpindi could only manage 127-8 in 20 overs. Nida, Nashra and Ghulam Fatima grabbed two wickets each. Noreen and Fatima returned with one scalp each as well. Sidra Amin and Natalia were jointly awarded players of the match. Peshawar v Karachi at Ayub Park Ground Peshawar won the toss and opted to bat first. Momina Riasat scored 11 from 18, including a four, before she was removed by off-spinner Rameen Shamim in the fifth over. Skipper Aleena Shah (9, 22b, 1x4) was caught by Fatima Sana off Syeda Aroob Shah's bowling. Then, Nayab Ishaq was pinned leg-before for a three-ball duck in the same over. Raahima Syed and Tehzeeb Shah added 59 runs from the fourth-wicket partnership, bringing a semblance of stability to their innings.

In the last over, Muneeba Ali ran out Raahima for a well-fought 27 off 35 with four boundaries. Fatima, Karachi's captain, removed Tehzeeb (33, 40b, 4x4s) in the same over as Peshawar ended up with just 96-5 in 20 overs. Aroob accounted for two wickets while Fatima and Rameen had one each. In reply, Karachi cruised to the target in just 13.5 overs with nine wickets in hand. The opening stand between Yusra Amir and Javeria Khan yielded 85 runs, which secured the game for Karachi. Sumbal Liaqat picked up the solitary wicket for Peshawar, when she trapped Yusra leg-before. Yusra had to walk back after a 37 off 36, including three fours and a six. The next batter in, Esha Rahupoto, only contributed an unbeaten one run. Javeria managed an undefeated 49 from 44, with five fours, as she took Karachi to 98-1. Javeria was awarded player of the match for her match-winning contribution with the bat. Quetta v Multan at Diamond Cricket Ground After being put to bat first, Quetta scored 104-9 in 20 overs. Multan bowling attack ran riot with the new ball as Quetta lost four early wickets. Left-arm pacer Tasnia Rubab landed the first blow to take out Fareeha Mehmoood (5, 8b, 1x4). Jannat Rashid (7, 6b, 1x4) was stumped off Noor-ul-Iman's bowling and Gull-e-Uswa rattled Khadija Chishti's (4, 5b) stumps on the last ball of the powerplay. In the next over, Quetta's key batter Tuba Hassan copped a golden duck courtesy of Noor as the side was reduced to 21-4 in 6.2 overs. Saima Malik and opening batter Dua Majid batted together to add 31 runs on the board before the latter fell to Rehmat Noreen. Dua walked back for a 23 from 24, including three fours.

## Salah has 'proper tear' in hamstring, sidelined 3-4 weeks

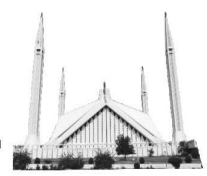


LIVERPOOL (AFP): Mohamed Salah has returned to England for treatment on a hamstring tear to give him the best possible chance to be available for the Africa Cup of Nations final, should Egypt make it. Liverpool assistant manager Pep Lijnders said on Tuesday. Salah was forced to watch from the stands as Egypt secured their passage to the last 16 of the competition in dramatic fashion on Monday after a 2-2 draw with Cape Verde. The two-time African player of the year hobbled off during his country's second game of the tournament against Ghana, but the Egyptian federation have maintained hope he could return should the Pharaohs progress far in

the tournament. However, Lijnders suggested that only the final on February 11 is realistic, even if Salah's recovery goes as planned. "They made a detailed scan and it came out that it was a proper tear in his hamstring. So it means his expected return to play is between three to four weeks if everything goes smooth and everything goes right," Lijnders said at a press conference ahead of the Reds' League Cup semi-final, second leg against Fulham on Wednesday. "Knowing Mo it will go smooth and it will go right because (of) how he's treated his body before." Salah's injury is the latest cruel twist of fate for the player at the AFCON. He has never won the trophy

and twice fallen short in the final, to Cameroon in 2017 and Senegal two years ago. But Lijnders hit back at criticism claiming that Salah was prioritising his club commitments over leading his country. "The one you should never doubt the commitment of is Mo Salah. I never met a guy, a player but also a human being, who is more committed to the life of being a professional football player," added Lijnders. "I know the country is devastated losing him. We were devastated to hear that he got injured. He plays the first game, scores, assists, captain, massive importance of course. "But the only reason why our medical team and their medical team decided for him to come back is to give him the best possible chance to be available in the final, if Egypt reaches the final." Salah's injury is also a blow to Liverpool's quest for just a second Premier League title in 34 years. Jurgen Klopp's men are five points clear at the top of the table, but will now be without their top goalscorer for crucial matches at home to Chelsea and away to Arsenal.





## In brief

### ANF seizes 190 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in its crackdown against drug traffickers managed to recover over 190 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that 3 kg Ice drug was recovered from three Doha-bound passengers in two different operations at Islamabad Airport. 500 grams heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Bahrain at Bacha Khan Airport. 52 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the stomach of a passenger going to Doha at Allama Iqbal Airport. In another operation, 186 kg hashish was recovered from Toor Dara border Khyber area. In the sixth operation, 850 grams Ice was recovered from two women netted near Rohtas Road Islamabad. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the accused and further investigations are under process.

### Police arrest nine kite sellers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police on the directives of a City Police Officer, Rawalpindi are making efforts to control kite flying and managed to arrest nine kite sellers on recovery of over 1200 kites and kite flying string rolls, said a police spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed, that Taxila police arrested a kite seller namely Owais and recovered 1000 kites and four kite flying string rolls. Race Course police conducted a raid and netted Alam, Afzal and Dilbar on recovery of 115 kites and string rolls while Westridge police rounded up four accused, Aziz, Abdul Wahab, Mozan and Taimoor and recovered 37 kites and string rolls from their possession. Mandra police also arrested Kaleem for having 85 kites and string rolls. Divisional Superintendents of Police directed the police teams to accelerate operations against kite sellers and flyers. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi said that strict action by the law would be taken against the rules violators and they would be sent behind bars.

### CTP issues special travel advisory

RAWALPINDI (APP): The City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi has issued a five-point traffic advisory for the tourists coming to Murree amid foggy weather. The CTP after issuing special instructions for tourists advised the general masses to keep in touch with the Police officials during their trip to hilly region of Murree. According to the CTP news release, Chief Traffic Officer, Taimur Khan said that current weather conditions, especially heavy fog, reduce drivers' visibility, and increase the risk of potential road hazards. However, in this regard, the CTP Rawalpindi appeals to all road users to exercise extreme caution and follow the instructions given for their own safety and security, he added. Drivers are advised to keep their speed as low as possible and maintain a safe distance from the vehicle coming from the opposite direction. Fog limits visibility and makes it difficult to react to sudden obstacles or changes in traffic conditions. Make sure your vehicle's fog lights are in working order and use them appropriately, he said while quoting the advisory issued here. "Be sure to use double indicators or hazard lights to make your vehicle stand out to others on the road in extremely low visibility and not cause confusion or distress to other drivers.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Shahid Ashraf Tarar being briefed regarding the working of Control room established by Ministry of Interior to monitor the overall security situation during Elections.

## PPP's 10-point election agenda road-map to public prosperity: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader Sherry Rehman on Tuesday described the 10-point election agenda of her party to address the concerns of the working class and marginalized communities in the country. The PPP leader, in an interview with a private news channel, emphasized that her party chairman, Bilawal Bhutto, in his recent address at a public rally in Sahiwal,

focused on ending the politics of hatred and division and advocated for solutions to economic crises. Rehman highlighted that Bilawal was committed to addressing the issues faced by the public rather than engaging in divisive politics.

She emphasized that the PPP was dedicated to resolving the problems of the people through hard work and dedication.

"We are not pursuing a politics of hatred or divi-

sion; instead, we are striving to solve the problems of the people," remarked Sherry Rehman.

Furthermore, she mentioned that her party aims to advocate for the rights of laborers and workers through the issuance of Benazir Cards, ensuring their rightful entitlements.

Sherry Rehman stated that the PPP plans to register laborers to provide them with financial assistance, pensions, and free healthcare facilities.

## Expert encourages citizens to wear masks

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health expert Tuesday encouraged citizens to wear face masks and boost their immune systems which can reduce their chances of catching the 'Pneumonia virus' where due to weak immune systems several pneumonia cases among children have also witnessed a surge in Punjab during this month.

Talking to a Private news channel, Child Specialist Dr Ibrahim Yousaf stressed that 'Pneumonia' can be prevented by immunization, adequate nutrition, and by addressing environmental factors. Experts asked people, especially those vulnerable to Pneumonia attacks to be more careful as chronic exposure to air pollutants is associated with severe infections and higher mortality. He suggested taking those diets that can boost their immunity to fight seasonal diseases, revert to organic foods and handle such issues with home remedies. Those with serious conditions especially continuous fever must contact the health providers immediately, he advised.

In a message on the occasion, Wafaqi Mohtasib Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi said that the increasing number of complaints reflects the trust and confidence the general public has in the institution, which is strengthening day by day. He expressed confidence in achieving the core values of Ombudsmanship,

## 'Strong institutions, competent teachers play crucial role in overall national progress'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Tuesday underscored the crucial role of strong institutions and competent teachers in expediting national progress and prosperity. Speaking at the convention 'Youth — Pivot of National Integration' organized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), he urged the nation to work diligently and said hard work would eventually be rewarded.

He lauded the HEC for bringing together a diverse group of individuals from across the country and acknowledged the fact that Pakistan was a great country with robust institutions and armed forces.

Drawing on his global perspective due to travels worldwide, the Chairman Senate emphasized the value of Pakistan's skilled and hardworking population, as compared to the nations with profound resources, but lacking similar human capital.

Recognizing the significant contributions of HEC in establishing universities in

Balochistan, he noted the positive transformation in the province's overall narrative and mindset.

He cited examples of progress, including improved infrastructure, electricity, and the establishment of a university in District Chaghi, the largest district in Pakistan. Expressing pride in Balochistan's development, he called upon the youth to actively contribute to the nation's progress and emphasized that every individual was part of the governance system, urging them to play a vital role in the country's development.

Chairman Senate reminded the audience that Pakistan was a free and sovereign nation with collective responsibilities. Sanjrani also invited the HEC to collaborate for organizing a similar youth convention in Gwadar or Quetta, Balochistan, highlighting the importance of engaging the youth in shaping the nation's future.

## Wafaqi Mohtasib successfully addressed grievances from almost 2.1 mln households

ISLAMABAD (APP): Since its establishment, the Wafaqi Mohtasib has successfully addressed grievances from almost 2.1 million households, with 193,028 complaints resolved in 2023 alone.

January 24 holds special significance in the history of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, as it came into existence on this day 41 years ago in 1983. To commemorate the 41st year of the Wafaqi Mohtasib's existence, simple yet impressive ceremonies will be held in all regional offices to observe this momentous occasion, said a news release.

In a message on the occasion, Wafaqi Mohtasib Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi said that the increasing number of complaints reflects the trust and confidence the general public has in the institution, which is strengthening day by day.

He expressed confidence in achieving the core values of Ombudsmanship,

including the elimination of maladministration and the promotion of good governance to pave the way for the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

He said that January 24 holds special significance in the history of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, as it came into existence on this day 41 years ago in 1983.

The institution, he mentioned, has followed a positive trajectory and provided speedy and free administrative justice to millions of households, particularly the disadvantaged and marginalized segments of society.

The increasing number of complaints received by the offices, he said, is a clear indication of the people's trust in the institution's capacity to address issues of maladministration, inefficiency, neglect, and discrimination.

Looking ahead to the New Year, he said that enhancing the institution's outreach and accessibility

will continue to receive special attention.

This involves opening regional offices and sub-offices, conducting open forums in remote areas, and inspection visits to improve service delivery for agencies generating persistent complaints.

Raising awareness among the general public about the mandate and scope of the institution's work through regular interaction with electronic, print media and periodic awareness lectures will add value to these efforts.

He renewed the commitment to the cause of ombudsmanship, particularly the steadfast adherence to its core values of promoting and protecting human rights, good governance, and the rule of law.

He expressed confidence that with collective efforts, the goals and objectives of the President's Order establishing the Office of Wafaqi Mohtasib will be realized.

## International Day of Education to be marked on Jan 24

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sixth International Day of Education will be celebrated across the globe including Pakistan on January 24 to emphasize the role of education in ensuring peace and development.

The day will be celebrated through several activities including seminars, conferences, discussion programmes, rallies and competitions highlighting this year's theme "Learning for lasting peace" which seeks to illuminate the path to global harmony through the voices of our youth.

To mark the day, the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) organized the sixth annual 'International Day of Education English Speech Contest' on Tuesday where many students from Secondary School Certificate and Higher Secondary School Certificates students shared their perspectives on fostering peace, tolerance, interfaith harmony and gender equality. Through this opportunity, the students exhibited their extraordinary oratorical skills, showing their eloquence and originality and igniting discussions on critical global issues while representing their institutions at a national level.

The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has planned to celebrate the day by hosting celebrations at the National

Library to promote the power of learning on Wednesday. The event will have awareness activities about social issues affecting youth and opportunities for vision screening and career counselling.

The National Education Foundation (NEF) will also be participating by setting up a stall with the help of their transgender learners and community school students. By providing education to vulnerable groups, NEF is helping fulfill the promise of quality education as a human right.

The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has arranged a meeting to review the arrangements for celebrating the day under the supervision of Senior Joint Secretary, Syed Junaid Akhlaq.

The meeting was attended by the senior officials of the ministry and its allied departments, different stakeholders and media teams.

UNESCO has dedicated this year's International Day of Education to the crucial role education and teachers play in countering hate speech, a phenomenon which has snowballed in recent years with the use of social media, damaging the fabric of our societies. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 January as the International Day of Education, in

celebration of the role of education in peace and development. Education is a human right, a public good and a public responsibility. Without inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong opportunities for all, countries will not succeed in achieving gender equality and breaking the cycle of poverty that is leaving millions of children, youth and adults behind.

According to UNESCO, today, 250 million children and youth are out of school, and 763 million adults are illiterate. Their right to education is being violated and it is unacceptable. It's time to transform education.

The world is seeing a surge of violent conflicts paralleled by an alarming rise of discrimination, racism and hate speech. The impact of this violence transcends any boundary based on geography, gender, race, religion, or politics, offline and online.

An active commitment to peace is more urgent today than ever: Education is central to this endeavour, as underlined by the UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development. Learning for peace must be transformative, and help empower learners with the necessary knowledge, values, attitudes skills and behaviours to become agents of peace in their communities.

## Senate hosts Parliamentary Interface for learning experience

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Parliamentary Interface regarding learning experience of the Provincial Assemblies Secretariat with Senate Secretariat of Pakistan was held on Monday here at the Parliament House, jointly organized by the Senate of Pakistan and Mustehkam Parlmaan.

The event focused on providing an overview of the Senate's structure, legislative processes, parliamentary research and overall work of the Senate of Pakistan. Secretary Senate, Pakistan Secretary Senate, Mohammad Qasim Samad Khan, welcomed the delegation and received a brief introduction from the members of the provincial assemblies accompanying

the delegation.

Haris Rehman, Principal Secretary, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the structure, electoral college, and functions of the Senate of Pakistan. Muhammad Zubair Thaheem, Joint Secretary briefed the delegation about the reforms and key initiatives undertaken by the Senate to equip itself for modern challenges, a news release said.

Joint Secretary of Legislation in the Senate, Rafi Ullah briefed participants from the Parliamentary Interface on International best practices in the working of the Upper House of the Parliament. He also covered topics such as Senate House

proceeding, Senate powers, its legislative role, accountability, and policy guidance.

During the session, members stressed upon ways to enhance the Senate's relevance in terms of powers to money bills. Muhammad Azam, Deputy Secretary Legislation also briefed on new Senate practices, including public petitions, PAC, Senate assistance in International Parliamentary Congress and Women Parliamentary Congress.

Additionally, Ifat Mustapha, Director Research in the Senate, inquired about participants' research scope in their provinces and provided insights into parliamentary research.



ISLAMABAD: IESCO workers repair the electric line at Park Road in Federal Capital.



Over a million refugees deported

KABUL (TOLOnews): The acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Khalil Rahman Haqqani, in a meeting with the head of International security and supplies of UNHCR said that over a million refugees have been deported from neighboring countries, especially from Pakistan, in 2023. Khalil Rahman Haqqani also said that aid organizations should provide regular aid to refugees to ensure that no one remains homeless.

Pakistan's coal imports slow down

KABUL (Pajhwok): With prices of coal from Afghanistan rising in recent months, Pakistan has shifted to imports from other countries. Amid a slowdown in coal imports from Afghanistan, supplies from other sources have increased, reveal data from the Pakistan International Bulk Terminal Limited (PIBTL). The terminal handled a record 493,000 tonnes of coal in the first 16 days of January 2024, the highest half-month shipments in the last two years.

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

# Afghan nationals top the list of asylum seekers in France in 2023



KABUL (agenices): The Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons in France (OFPRA) has announced that Afghans, with 17,500 requests, were the largest group of asylum seekers in the country in 2023. This agency stated that in total, 142,500 people requested asylum in France last year. OFPRA released the first asylum data for the previous calendar year on Tuesday, January 23rd.

According to this agency, Afghans have been the top asylum seekers for the sixth consecutive year. The office noted that citizens from Bangladesh, Turkey, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Equatorial Guinea submitted the most asylum requests to France in 2023. According to these statistics, the asylum demand in France increased by 8.6% compared to 2022. The agency also mentioned that the COVID-19 crisis significantly affected refugee population movements. Reportedly, during 2023, this office issued 136,700 decisions regarding asylum cases. The Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons in France mentioned that the provided statistics are provisional, and final figures will be released after further review. Recently, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Germany also announced that over 50,000 Afghans applied for asylum in the country in 2023. Since the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan, many Afghan citizens are fleeing to neighboring countries in their quest to reach Europe for a safer future. They are escaping persecution, security threats, reprisals, and extrajudicial killings, especially those who were part of the former Afghan security forces.

# Turkish police detain 76 Afghan refugees



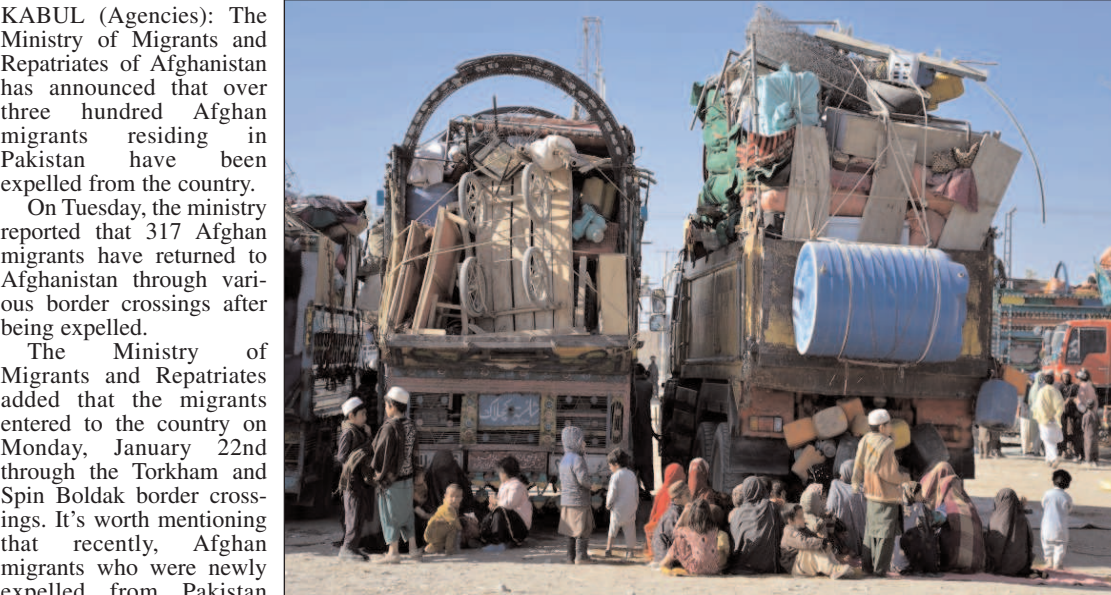
KABUL (Agencies): Following the expulsion and detention of Afghan refugees in Turkey, the Turkish authorities have announced that they have detained 76 Afghan refugees in the city of "Bitlis." The Bitlis Governorate's office, in a newsletter, stated that these refugees were detained on Sunday, January 21st, in a truck at the inspection point in the central village of "Tanriyar." According to the newsletter, all the detained individuals were Afghan citizens, and the reason for their detention was cited as "lack of official residence permits in Turkey." The authorities in this country have also arrested one person on charges of "human trafficking." Previously, Turkish media reported the detention of 99 Afghan refugees in the city of "Erzincan" on the 20th of an unspecified month. This comes as Turkish authorities have announced that operations to combat the entry and detention of illegal immigrants will continue throughout Turkey. Meanwhile, statistics from the Council of Occupational Safety and Health in Turkey show that 18 Afghan workers lost their lives in occupational accidents in 2023. It is worth noting that, according to official statistics, more than 300,000 Afghan migrants are living in Turkey. Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, a significant number of Afghan citizens have been seeking refuge in neighboring countries, such as Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, in search of better opportunities and with hopes of eventually reaching European countries. The instability and uncertainty in their homeland have forced many Afghans to embark on perilous journeys in search of safety and improved living conditions, often enduring difficult circumstances along the way. These neighboring countries have been grappling with the influx of Afghan refugees, and the situation highlights the urgent need for international cooperation and support to address the humanitarian crisis and provide assistance to those displaced by the conflict in Afghanistan.

# At long last, century- old tribal feud resolved in Kunar

ASADABAD (Pajhwok): A 100-year-old feud between Gubaz and Wadir tribes in eastern Kunar province has been converted into friendship as a result of mediation by local officials and tribal elders. The long-running enmity in Chapa Dara district had led to the killing of two people from the two tribes. Ulema Council head Sheikh Abdul Qahar Seddiqi told a gathering arranged on this occasion that both tribes had lived in fear. Finally, they agreed to live in peace. In addition to suffering financial losses, the hostile tribes had also lost two people to the enmity, Seddiqi said. A representative of Wadir tribe, Maulvi Karimullah, expressed his pleasure over the resolution of the enmity through negotiation. He said: "Wadir and Gurbaz tribes in Chapa Dara district often clashed over the pasture, forests and land, which resulted in financial and life losses on both sides." Tribal elder Mohammad Islam, representing the Gurbaz tribe, said: "We had our life embittered by this enmity; keeping our fingers on the trigger. I am very happy to see an end to the feud—thanks to tribal elders and local officials." Provincial Governor Maulvi Qudratullah Abu Hamza, who also participated in the gathering, claimed there was peace and stability across the country.



# Hundreds of Afghan migrants expelled from Pakistan



KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Migrants and Repatriates of Afghanistan has announced that over three hundred Afghan migrants residing in Pakistan have been expelled from the country. On Tuesday, the ministry reported that 317 Afghan migrants have returned to Afghanistan through various border crossings after being expelled. The Ministry of Migrants and Repatriates added that the migrants entered the country on Monday, January 22nd through the Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossings. It's worth mentioning that recently, Afghan migrants who were newly expelled from Pakistan have been registered with the Ministry of Migrants and introduced to assist the offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme, and the International Organization for Migration. There has been a significant surge in the expulsion of Afghan citizens from Pakistan recently. This situation comes at a challenging time as these newly expelled individuals from Pakistan are simultaneously facing numerous difficulties, especially with the onset of winter and the lack of essential resources for their livelihood. This highlights the need for greater support for Afghan migrants who have faced expulsion from Pakistan.

# Desperate to support families, some deportees try to enter Iran again

KABUL (Pajhwok): Unemployed and desperate to support their families, a number of young men try their luck again and again to enter Iran after being forcibly deported to western Herat and Nimroz provinces. Mohammad Mehdi, who was deported from Iran last month, arrived at the Kandahar bus stop in Kabul once again on Monday morning to travel to Nimroz province and reach Iran via smuggling routes. Haunted by unemployment and financial problems, he said his family was forcing him to go to Iran again and support the family. Mohammad Ali, who wanted to go to Iran, said he had tried to enter Iran six times so far. He succeeded thrice to enter Iran, but got forcibly expelled last time. Ali, who has completed his higher education, said that he decided to go to Iran again due to financial problems and unemployment. Zakirullah, who is planning to go to Iran, said he could not even earn 10 afghanis here and he has to support his family of 12. These young people asked the government to create work opportunities for all citizens of the country so the youth avoid the dangerous journey to Iran and other countries. However, officials of passenger transport companies say the number of passengers going to Iran from Nimroz or Herat has decreased recently compared to their number three months ago. Samim Jannati, manager of a passenger company at the Kandahar bus stop in Kabul, said their ticket sales declined following forced evictions and recent developments in neighboring countries. Jahanzeib, manager of another company, pointed out that Nimroz and Herat bound passengers had decreased. "Passengers who go to these two provinces hail from remote provinces and they travel with families and do not have a good economic situation". According to him, many people even in a better financial situation go to Iran on visa through Islam Qala port, but poor persons try to reach Iran via smuggling routes. However, Samiullah Ebrahimi, a spokesman for the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, said jobs were created for more than 50,000 people last year. He emphasized that the caretaker government was committed to creating more job opportunities for all young people in the country.



# Afghan women treated based on islamic law: Deputy Minister

KABUL (TOLOnews): The deputy Minister of Vice and Virtue, Mohammad Faqir Mohammadi, said that whatever is enforced on women in Afghanistan is based on Islamic law. In an interview with TOLOnews, Mohammadi referred to the detention of women and said that the women were arrested by the female forces of the Interior Ministry because they had not observed hijab. He argued that the detainees were gathered in one place and provided with advice. "Hijab is not an order from the Islamic Emirate nor from the Vice and Virtue Ministry, it is an order from almighty God. One hundred percent of the people of Afghanistan want to observe Hijab. No one denies that they don't accept Hijab" he said. Mohammadi said that the ministry launched various seminars for its employees to treat the people with good behavior. "We have provided advice for them. We have instructed them to treat the people in a way that you earn the hearts of the people," he said. Mohammadi said that the international sanctions on the Islamic Emirate will not bring any result and that the world should avoid interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. "They should have good engagement with the Islamic Emirate and not interfere in the Islamic Emirate's internal affairs. They cannot stop vice and virtue through these certain restrictions," he said. The detention of several women in various parts of Kabul earlier faced widespread reactions by the international community.





# Country facing unprecedented price hike

**E.P. Report**

CHINIOT: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a mammoth public rally in Chiniot said that he had come to the people of the region before the 2018 elections, then when the floods hit it, and now has come to visit the Jiyalas to campaign for the 2024 elections, and they have welcomed the Party with fervour and zeal each time.

Bilawal said that the country is facing unprecedented price-hike, unemployment and poverty. We are

against Pakistan internationally. We cannot let this happen.

Bilawal said that he has himself prepared a 10-point Awami economic agreement, which is symbolic of the promise he is making to the people, following the footsteps of Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. The Jiyalas of Chiniot should go door to door and apprise the people of the aims of the 10-point agenda. We are not instructing our workers to engage in the politics of hate, use foul lan-

only party that believes in 'Kissan Khushaal, Mulk Khushaal'. For our labourer brothers and sisters from all backgrounds, the PPP will bring the 'Benazir Mazdoor Card' and will get them their due rights by devolving the numerous ministries operated by the federal government. Most importantly, the PPP resolves to introduce the 'Benazir Youth Card' for the brothers and sisters who go from pillar to post in search of employment, despite having the necessary educational qualifications. Through this card, the PPP wishes to empower the youngsters of the country by providing financial assistance to all those deserving of it, and simultaneously equipping them with the necessary skills and experience required.

Through Youth Centers, the PPP aims to establish a place where the youth can access the internet, libraries and all other facilities needed to flourish. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was known for providing employment, and Chairman Bilawal too wishes to be remembered for the same, he expressed.

Bilawal said that the people should ask whether those wishing to come to power for the fourth time established free healthcare institutions. No other country can compete with the number of patients suffering from cardiac ailments that the NICVD treats, and that too free-of-cost. Not one government provided a free healthcare institution for Chiniot, which the PPP aims to do within six months of coming to power.

The ones wishing to compete with us wish to come to power the fourth time, but they should be asked what they did during three times. After coming to power, they only aim to engage in the traditional politics of hate and then repeat the 'Mujhe Kyn Nikala?' narrative. The PPP is contesting the elections to come to power, not to make excuses. Chairman Bilawal said that he needs only one opportunity to change the fate of the people. The people have to elect the PPP so that a rule of the people, farmers, labourers, youngsters and the downtrodden can be formed once again.

The elections are set to take place on February 8, and this is the time that the conspiracy being hatched for the fourth time is rendered redundant, Chairman Bilawal said. If the workers of the PTI deem that the tough days are over, they are not ready for the revenge they will be subjected to if Nawaz Sharif comes to power for the fourth time, since their politics is based on revenge and violence. This is what the Jiyalas need to convey to the pro-democracy political workers. The contest is between the 'arrow' and the lion, and the arrow will be triumphant through the power of the vote. The arrow is the symbol of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and all those contesting on it will be made victorious by the people of Pakistan. Allahyar Sipra, Sohail Zafar, Syed Hassan Murtaza, Syed Inayat Ali Shah and Syed Kaleem Ali Ameer will be representing the PPP from Chiniot.



witnessing a historic economic crisis. A societal crisis has also been created in our society by traditional politicians. They are engaging in the politics of division and hate instead of serving the people. They are doing politics of personal vendetta which is harming our society and economy. The PPP is doing politics to bury the traditional style of the politics of hate and division for good. We have to learn to live with political differences.

The Jiyalas have tolerated the violence and injustice meted out by dictator General Zia ul Haq and in the first two tenures of Nawaz Sharif. The Jiyalas have dealt with dictator General Musharraf's highhandedness and Imran Khan's style of vendetta and victimisation. Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was sent to the gallows, but upon coming to power, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto taught us that 'Democracy is the best revenge'. She prioritised serving the people and solving their problems over settling personal scores. When President Zardari came to power after the martyrdom of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, he raised the slogan of 'Pakistan Khappay'. There was not one political prisoner during PPP's five-year tenure. This is because the PPP believes in its narrative and manifesto.

Bilawal said if given the opportunity, he will focus solely on serving the people and there will be no political prisoners. We will not have any woman political prisoner, as arresting sisters and daughters is not our politics or culture. This politics of hate has caused divisions between families and institutions. If the politicians of Pakistan keep fighting each other, then it will benefit all those wishing to harm Pakistan. Chairman Bilawal said that he has served as the Foreign Minister of the country, and he knows the conspiracies being hatched

guage or violence against our political opponents. We are directing them to make the people aware of the PPP's resolve to serve them.

The first aim of the PPP after coming to power is double the wages of the people within five years. Chairman Bilawal said that the PPP aims to provide 300 units of electricity free-of-cost to all the deserving people. Moreover, we wish to implement Quaid-e-Awam's promise of providing shelter to the people, as we are already doing for the flood victims in Sindh by constructing two million houses for them and giving ownership to the women of the households. Chiniot often suffers through floods, but not once has any other political party constructed any houses for it. The PPP promises to build three million houses all over the country, including Chiniot and give ownership to the women of the households.

The PPP also wishes to give ownership rights to all those living in temporary housing, so that they too can live in the serenity of their own home. The PPP plans to not only expand the internationally-acclaimed Benazir Income Support Programme but also provide the women of the country with interest-free loans so that they can contribute to the economy. We wish to bring the 'Benazir Kissan Card' and 'Benazir Mazdoor Card' to provide financial assistance to the farmers and social security to the labourers. The federal government gives 1500 million rupees' worth of subsidies to the elite of the country, the largest share of which goes to the energy sector followed by the fertiliser sector. The PPP deems this a great injustice, as electricity, gas and fertilisers are all out of reach of the people.

The PPP also plans to introduce a system of crop insurance through the card given to the farmers. We are the

## SC reserves verdict on ex-judge's plea

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Tuesday reserved its verdict on a petition filed by former Islamabad High Court senior judge Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui against his removal.

A five-member bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and including Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi, and Justice Irfan Saadat — heard the plea. The proceedings were broadcast live on the apex court's website. In his petition, the former judge had challenged a decision of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) about his dismissal from service and an Oct 11, 2018 notification under which he was removed for a speech he had delivered at Rawalpindi Bar Association.

During the hearing, CJP Isa said the court could not punish anyone without conducting an inquiry. "The SC has to draw a line on the difference between the Supreme Court and the Supreme Judicial Council," he observed. "If removing a judge is so easy, then this is a threat to the independence of the judiciary," the top judge further noted, adding that the current matter was public and people had a right to know the truth.

During the hearing, Khawaja Haris appeared as Gen Hameed's and brigadier Ramay's counsel while Wasim Sajjad was present as Justice Kasi's lawyer. Hamid Khan appeared as the petitioner's counsel. At the outset, Haris came to the rostrum and informed the court who he was representing.

Justice Siddiqui's lawyer urged the court to conduct a "fair inquiry" of the matter, arguing that under Article 209(6) of the Constitution, the SJC could not present a report to the country's president without conducting an inquiry.



ISLAMABAD: Dr Mahrang Baloch addresses a press conference in outside the National Press Club.

## PHC to vacate Marwat interim bail on his absentia

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah had adjourned hearing on Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf leader Sher Afzal Marwat plea seeking record of cases registered against him till 13 February, on Tuesday.

However, Sher Afzal Marwat didn't appear before court due to fog, his lawyer informed PHC. In the meantime, Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim observed can reach from Dir (hilly area in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa comprised of

two districts) but he (Sher Afzal Marwat) can't come from Lakki Marwat (A district in south of KP known hot weather).

If the petitioner (Sher Afzal Marwat) didn't appear before PHC, the court will vacate his interim bail, Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim remarked. The counsel for petitioner argued that Sher Afzal Marwat is busy in election campaign and requested to fix hearing after 8th February.

Additional Advocate General Danyal Asad Chamkani informed that Sher Afzal Marwat is charged in three different cases and didn't joined

police investigation. The counsel argued that the petitioner is busy in election campaign and will join the investigation. Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim remarked that contesting election is right of every citizen even proclaimed offender can contest polls. He directed police then appear court summons.

PHC divisional bench comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah ordered Sher Afzal Marwat to ensure his appearance before on next hearing fixed on 13th February otherwise court will vacate interim bail.

## Twelve more children die of Pneumonia

LAHORE (INP): Twelve more children lost their lives due to pneumonia in Punjab during the last 24 hours due to an increase in cold weather. Pneumonia is an infection that inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs. The air sacs may fill with fluid or pus (purulent material), causing cough with phlegm or pus, fever,

chills, and difficulty breathing.

As many as 491 cases of pneumonia in children have been reported during past 24 hours alone. This brings the total number of cases in Pakistan's largest province to 10,061. Meanwhile, the death toll has reached 194 in Punjab. The high number of cases has also led to

extreme shortages of medicine in Lahore, where several children are being treated for various pneumonia, chest and other viral infections. The signs and symptoms of pneumonia vary from mild to severe, depending on factors such as the type of germ causing the infection, and your age and overall health.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Murtaza Solangi addressing a press conference.

## Tajik outgoing envoy calls on PM

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Outgoing Ambassador of Tajikistan in Pakistan Ismatullo Naserdin Tuesday called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

The prime minister, appreciating the role of Ismatullo Naserdin in promoting bilateral relations between the two countries, expressed his best wishes for him in future. He hoped that the upcoming ambassador would also play a key role in strengthening the bilateral relations.

Ismatullo Naserdin on the occasion termed the brotherly relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan as historic. He also appreciated the hospitality of Pakistan during his stay. The outgoing envoy thanked PM Kakar for the best wishes for him.

Meanwhile, the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said Pakistan offered vast opportunities for international investment in energy, information technology and other sectors.

He was talking to Chief Executive Officer of EnerTech Abdullah al-Mutairi who called on him here. During the meeting, the prime minister welcomed the investment by the international companies like EnerTech.

## ECP freezes development funds of LG

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has taken a significant step by freezing the development funds for all local government departments nationwide. This freeze extends until the announcement of the general election results.

The Election Commission's notification explicitly prohibits the initiation of any local development schemes or related activities throughout the country. The directive includes a suspension on tenders and contract awards by local governments and cantonment boards until the conclusion of the general elections. While the day-to-day affairs of sanitation and cleanliness will continue, the announcement or execution of any local development scheme is strictly forbidden.

Previously, the Election Commission of Pakistan had implemented a ban on appointments and transfers affecting federal, provincial, and local institutions alike. The Secretary of the Election Commission had communicated this decision to the caretaker governments in all four provinces, including the Federation.

Furthermore, the Election Commission ordered the retrieval of official vehicles from former ministers, advisors, and assistants, emphasizing similar actions for assembly members who were instructed to vacate official residences.

The Commission also directed the termination of employment for political figures appointed in various institutions, seeking detailed asset disclosures from the caretaker prime minister, chief ministers, and cabinet members.

While the caretaker governments are permitted to manage daily affairs in accordance with the law, implementing ongoing international and bilateral agreements, the Election Commission has set clear restrictions. The Provincial Election Commissioners have communicated these restrictions to the Chief Secretary of Punjab, IG, and all relevant authorities, outlining instructions for the supervisory setup across the four provinces.

## 49 foreign journalists issued visas for polls

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Tuesday that certain elements were just harping on the rumours that "no foreign journalists and observers would be arriving Pakistan for coverage of upcoming general elections" which was contrary to facts.

He was addressing a press conference flanked by Secretary Information and Broadcasting Shahera Shahid, Executive Director General External Publicity Wing Ambreen Jan, Principal Information Officer Dr Tariq Mehmood and Director General Radio Pakistan Saeed Sheikh. Many international media persons had applied for visas to cover the elections, Murtaza Solangi said adding that 49 visas (for Islamabad Lahore and Karachi) had been issued as

of today while 32 requests were under process with many other requests were still being received from different stations of the world.

He said that these 32 visa applications for coverage of elections were under process which had been received in Pakistan High Commission New Delhi and were being processed due to manual visa system in India for issuing visas. He said that so far 174 requests for ECP Accreditation Cards had been received and processed for foreign media representatives and their associated Pakistani staff who were based in Pakistan.

Responding to a question by media, he said so far 25 applications were under process from the UK alone, 08 from Russian Federation, 13 from Japan, 02 from South Africa while 05 from Commonwealth under the category of International Observers.

Accreditation Cards had also been processed for local Pakistani media houses, Murtaza Solangi said and added so far 6,065 journalists had been processed including 1200 from Lahore, 1470 from Karachi, 1050 from Peshawar, 600 from Quetta, 355 from Hyderabad, 250 from Faisalabad and 290 from Multan.

The cases where the media intends to go and cover other cities, besides Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, would be examined on case-to-case basis, in consultation with relevant ministries, he said. The minister said that even though the last date for application for visas of January 20 had already passed, the relevant institutions of the Election Commission of Pakistan and Ministry of Information were still receiving visa requests, which would be processed on case-to-case basis.

## KP CM launches Bannu Economic Zone

**E.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: As an important development for boosting economic activities and creating employment opportunities in the province, the Caretaker government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has launched Bannu Economic Zone. Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah has formally performed the commercial launching of the Economic Zone.

An impressive ceremony to this effect was held here at Chief Minister's House on Tuesday with Caretaker Chief Minister Syed Arshad Hussain Shah as chief guest on the occasion. Besides caretaker provincial minister for Industries Dr. Aamir Abdullah, secretary Industries Syed Zulfikar Ali Shah, CEO of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (EZZDMC) Javed Khattak, Board members of EZZDMC and other relevant officials attended the ceremony.

The chief minister on the occasion, also distributed allotment letters amongst the investors interested in investing in the economic zone. Earlier, briefing the

chief minister about the important features of newly established economic zone, it was informed that Bannu Economic Zone sprawled over an area of 415 acres, would have a total of 265 small and large scale industrial units and is likely to attract a massive investment of Rs 10 billion.

It was further informed that the economic zone would also create about 16000 direct and 48000 indirect employment opportunities. The chief minister on this occasion, was also briefed about the overall performance of EZZDMC with special focus on the existing and upcoming economic zones in the province.

"Currently, a total of 14 economic zones are operational across the province having an investment of Rs 346 billion cumulatively", the authorities told and added that work on establishing four another economic zones is also in progress. Addressing the ceremony, the chief minister Syed Arshad Hussain Shah extended his heartfelt felicitations to the management of Economic Zones Development and Management Company for successful launching of Bannu Economic Zone and

said that newly launched economic zone would prove to be a milestone towards promoting sustainable economic development by paving the path of new industrial activities in the province.

He maintained that strategic location of the zone is of vital importance; it can emerge as hub of the economic activities not only for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but other provinces and central Asia as well.

"This economic zone will also play pivotal role in the fast track development of southern districts and other adjacent areas of the region", he said and added that it is dire need of the hour to bring forward the southern and merged districts in terms of development and prosperity; the caretaker set up in the province is going all out for providing employment opportunities to youth of these backward districts.

He made it clear that stimulating investment opportunities in the province is one of the priority areas of his government adding that the industrialists interested in the investment here would be provided with all out facilities and cooperation in the province.

گیس کے استعمال میں لازم ہے احتیاط

گیس لیکچ کی صورت میں اپنی حفاظت یقینی بنائیں اور یہ احتیاطی تدابیر اپنائیں

کڑھائی اور دوائے کھانہ کی دکانیں

پانی کی پمپنگ سٹیشن

میں والو بند کر دیں

تیل کی دکانوں کو دیکھ کر

کھلی فضائیں آجائیں

آپ کی حفاظت کی ضمانت

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احتیاط کی عادت یقینی حفاظت