

11 terrorists arrested
F.P. Report
LAHORE: The Counter Terrorism Department police during targeted search operations in various districts across Punjab have arrested 11 terrorists including a key commander of banned TTP. A CTD spokesman told media men on Saturday that targeted operations were conducted in various areas of Lahore, Sargodha, Jhang, Bahawalpur, Sahiwal, Narowal and Jhelum districts.

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PESHAWAR: Pakistan People's Party Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing public gathering.

PPP supports CPEC for benefits of masses: Bilawal

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari here Saturday that his party has all-ways supported the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for benefits of people of Pakistan.

Addressing a public gathering here, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that former President Asif Ali Zardari has paid several visit to the brotherly country China and initiated work on CPEC for which credit goes to his father. On the other hands, he said that PMLN had diverted huge financial resources to projects such as Orange Line and had this amount spent on education and health sectors may have benefited hundreds of thousands of people.

Bilawal said that PPP strongly believed in power of masses rather political victimization, adding there was no political prisoner in the tenure of Benazir Bhutto and Asif Zardari governments. He said PPP was the first political party that presented its manifesto and that his struggle was against unemployment, poverty, price hike and hunger.

Without naming PTI Founder, he said a political leader who was making tall slogans of arresting and throwing political opponents in jails besides not giving NRO was now in prison and is talking about negotiation. Despite 10 years long rule of PTI, he said that the

problems of people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were not addressed and grievances of masses increased.

Bilawal said that people were real powers in democracy and urged them to exercise their right of franchise wisely on February 8, 2024. While highlighting salient features of his party manifesto, he said that his party would construct three million houses for poor people. Bilawal said the politics of two times elected Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto Shaheed and Quaid e Awam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto revolves around masses.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be put on path of development besides the 10 years long sense of deprivation of people of the province to be removed. Bilawal while expressing sorrow over embattled Imran Khan-founded party during electioneering in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) gets bad karma after trying to clutch political lifeline of its rivals besides promoting hate based politics.

Without naming Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Amir Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Bilawal said that he don't know what would happen to those who were trying to run away from elections due to winter season. "They have the history of running away from polls whether it was municipal elections or by-polls," He said PTI founder had been asked to refrain from arresting women and stop doing

politics of hate when he was premier and paid it a deaf year.

Bilawal said PTI founder had topped his government by saying 'surprise' and questioned how do you feel about the surprise now?" He claimed that the PML-N represents the elites while the PPP symbolises the common people, which is, according to him, the only party contesting general polls with a manifesto.

Bilawal vowed to end politics of division and hate after coming into power and would shift the political dynamics. He said that there was only a contest between 'arrow' and 'lion' in the forthcoming general polls and appealed voters not to waste their votes on independent candidates.

The PPP came second after the Nawaz-led party in 2013 election and secured 42 of the 342 seats while in 2018, with 54 seats, it was runner-up to PMLN and PTI. Bilawal vowed to bring an economic revolution to the country, focusing on improving per capita income (PCI), employment, regularisation of katchi abadis, 300 free electricity units to deserving families via solar projects, construction of three million houses, kisan cards, youth cards and a chain of hospitals for free medical treatment. Bilawal Bhutto urged masses to exercise their right of votes wisely and elect committed political representatives with a strong will to address their problems swiftly and take the country on road to progress and development.

People imposed to destroy economy: Fazl

F.P. Report

KANDHKOT: JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Saturday said certain individuals were imposed on Pakistan to destroy the economy and create chaos a reference to the PTI founding chairman as he said the destruction during the last five years had no parallel in the history.

They were brought in power through vote theft and rigged elections, he told his supporters in Kandhkot and added that his party stood for progress and prosperity in Pakistan. As the JUI-F aims at a strong showing in Sindh, especially in its upper parts, he said killings and kidnappings were a norm in the province. The people associated with his party were facing pressure and threats in Sindh, the JUI-F chief said.

Pakistan requires internal peace and stability. Fazl noted and promised to safeguard the neglected segments of the society and promote their interests. He also mentioned the martyrdom of over 25,000 people in Gaza and criticised the United States and the West for their double standards, saying they could not lecture others on human rights.

Fazl said attempts were being made to sabotage Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan and also mentioned that the United States was fully backing Israel. On Friday, Fazl had told a rally in Muzaffargarh district of Punjab that an illegitimate assembly and illegitimate ruler came to power after the 2018 elections. "Besides deception and lies, what else did you [the PTI founder] do?" he asked, as he urged the masses to use the power of the vote to bring a change.

Elections would bring political stability: PM

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said that the general elections on February 8 would bring political stability in the country.

In an interview with a private television channel, he said the caretaker government successfully achieved most of the targets set by it and a white paper will be issued to enlist those successes. He said the next government will have to work with the International Monetary Fund and bring reforms in the taxation system to take the economy forward.

The prime minister said the Special Investment Facilitation Council led the efforts to sign 25 billion dollars worth of memoranda of understanding

(MoUs) with the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. Caretaker Prime Minister Kakar said all the political parties had a level playing field for taking part in the elections, with millions of voters having the opportunity to elect their representatives freely.

In separate interviews with private news channels, he said it was priority of the caretaker government to hold peaceful elections and the Election Commission would be provided every support. He dismissed the notion of a ban on social media or internet during the elections. He said members of the previous National Assembly used their constitutional right to remove the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf through a vote of no-confidence.

During the PTI government, he said, the nation faced numerous economic problems and had difficult times in relations with other countries. He welcomed the Supreme Court's decision on the intra-party elections of PTI. Talking about the May 9 incidents, he said cases of some of the persons involved in the incidents would be tried in civil courts and some would undergo trial in military courts.

Investigations into the May 9 incidents had been completed to a large extent, he said, adding the culprits would be handed down sentences in the coming months. He said Pakistan would need assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the next few years.

Imran, Qureshi to be represented by state lawyers

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi will be represented by state lawyers in the cipher case after their counsels failed to appear in court.

Malik Abdul Rehman will represent Khan while Hazrat Younus will represent Qureshi in the case and cross-examine the witnesses. Both leaders are currently incarcerated in Adiala jail. During the hearing today, Qureshi took the file from the state-appointed lawyer and hit it on the wall.

The development comes after the PTI founder and vice chairman's counsels failed to appear in the special court, established under the Official Secrets Act, during the hearing of a petition filed by the prosecution seeking to terminate

the right to cross-examination for the witnesses. Special court Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain reserved the verdict on the plea on Friday. Special Prosecutors Zulfikar Abbas Naqvi and Raja Rizwan Abbasi were present in court while the accused lawyers failed to appear.

Assistant lawyers Qamar Anayat Raja and Khalid Yusuf Chaudhary then represented the defence. When the court inquired about the absence of the senior lawyers for the accused, Raja, filing an application to postpone the hearing, explained that senior counsel Sikander Zulqarnain was undergoing dental surgery and could not attend.

Naqvi expressed concern about the repeated adjournment requests, emphasising the inconvenience to witnesses who have come from Dubai for cross-exam-

ination. Despite the explanation regarding the ongoing dental surgery, the court expressed frustration. Prosecutor Naqvi questioned the regularity of lawyers' appearances, suggesting a pattern of deliberate delays. Lawyer Raja defended the situation, saying that the adjournment request was not intentional but due to Sikandar's dental surgery.

Judge Zulqarnain expressed anger, noting the previous adjournments and the importance of the case. Later when the hearing resumed, Prosecutor Abbasi accused the defence of intentionally delaying the case, citing legal provisions. Judge Zulqarnain instructed the assistant lawyers to contact the absent lawyers by 12:30pm and warned that proceedings would continue according to the law if they failed to do so.

Another massive hike in gas tariff on the cards

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has put forth a recommendation for yet another substantial increase in gas prices, this time by a staggering 41%.

Sources within the Ministry of Petroleum said that the proposal is expected to receive government approval, paving the way for the hike to take effect from next month. This move comes on the heels of a jaw-dropping 400% increase in gas prices implemented by OGRA in the past year. The sudden surge in costs has left consumers grappling with the economic repercussions, prompting concerns and debates across various sectors.

The new tariff structure, which took effect from November, introduces a categorisation of domestic consumers into two distinct groups: non-protected and protected. Non-protected consumers are those who have an average gas consumption of 91 cubic meters or more during the four-month period from November to February. On the other hand, those using less than 90 cubic meters fall under the protected category. The implications of this categorization are expected to impact households differently, with non-protected consumers likely to bear the brunt of the proposed 41% price hike.

Siraj vows to end VIP culture

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Emir Sirajul Haq on Saturday vowed to end VIP culture in the country if voted into power. Expressing his thoughts in Karachi, the JI emir said, "I want to see the end of VIP culture in the country following the elections, slated to happen on February 8. We will end the extravagant expenses of the ministers if they are voted into power."

"We will invest more in the health and education sectors by decreasing non-development expenses," Haq said. Speaking about the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Haq said, "We will bid farewell to the IMF." He pointed out the uplifting of industries, saying, "If we vote into power, we will collect profit and invest in the industries."

"The consumers will have to bear the brunt of the losses," the JI emir stated. "We are not of the view to increase tax," he said. Siraj slammed Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Thursday, saying the masses will not "forgive" the latter. Hitting out at the former foreign minister, Haq said, "Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari says that he will forgive everybody if he becomes the country's premier. We have seen the change you brought to Sindh. May the higher power save us all from such a change." He expressed optimism that the fate of Sindh will be changed after the general elections, slated to happen on February 8. "Now is the time to bring revolution into the masses' lives," he said.

Pneumonia kills over 240 children

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pneumonia continued to claim lives as 7 more children have died of the disease during the past 24 hours in Punjab, Punjab health department sources said.

A total of 942 new pneumonia cases have been reported across the province in the last 24 hours, with Lahore confirming pneumonia in 212 new patients. Over the course of the current month, Punjab has reported 244 pneumonia-related deaths, with Lahore alone recording 50 fatalities.

9 Pakistanis killed in firing incident in Iran

TEHRAN / ISLAMABAD: At least nine Pakistani citizens were killed and three sustained injuries in a firing incident near the Pakistani border in Iran, it emerged on Saturday.

As per Iranian media, nine "foreigners" were slain in an armed attack in the country's southeastern region near the border with Pakistan. The report also stated that "no group has claimed responsibility" for the attack. Two of the victims, who have been identified so far, were labourers hailing from Pakistan's Lodhran area as stated by their family, while five including two brothers belonged to Tehsil Alipur of Punjab's District Muzaffargarh. "Zubair and his nephew had gone to Iran for labour," media reported citing the family. The two worked at an auto-repair workshop in Iran.

Meanwhile, the families from Alipur reached out to the tehsil's assistant commissioner and demanded help in return for the victims' mortal remains. Speaking to media, a friend of one of the victims said that the incident took place in the wee hours of Saturday, around 2:30am. He said that three people were injured in the shooting. The unfortunate incident came as a jolt in the neighbouring countries' efforts to mend bilateral ties following a short but aggressive episode of cross-border tensions that arose after Iran's surprise attack targeted at a militant outfit inside Pakistan.

Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilil Abbas Jilani expressed grief over the gun attack on Pakistani citizens in Iran, which he said was a "bid to ruin Pak-Iran ties". Demanding the Iranian government to take action against the elements responsible for the attack, He also extended condolences to the victims' families.

Earlier, Pakistani Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Muddasir Tipu, who landed in Iran's capital on Friday night, confirmed the shooting of nine Pakistanis in a post on microblogging site X, formerly known as Twitter. According to the envoy, the incident took place in the Iranian city of Saravan, which is located in Sistan-Baluchistan, Iran's bordering province with Balochistan.

"Deeply shocked by [the] horrifying killing of 9 Pakistanis in Saravan. [The] Embassy will extend full support to bereaved families," Amb Muddasir wrote. In the tweet, he said that an official was also sent to visit the site of the incident and the hospital where the "injured" were being treated.

The envoy also stated that the Pakistani authorities have called upon Iran to extend full cooperation in the matter. In response to media queries regarding reports of a terrorist incident killing Pakistani nationals in Iran, Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch condemned the "horrifying and despicable incident".

She said that the FO was in touch with Iranian authorities and underscored the need to immediately investigate the incident and hold to account those involved in this heinous crime. Baloch added that the embassy would do its best to repatriate bodies at the earliest. "Such cowardly attacks cannot deter Pakistan from its determination to fight terrorism," she said.

The Pakistani and Iranian diplomats joined their duties in Tehran and Islamabad, respectively, after returning to the capitals late on Friday. The neighbouring countries had shortly halted diplomatic ties, recalling their envoys, after an "unprovoked" cross-border attack from Iran, which followed the "precision military strikes" on terrorists' hideouts in Sistan-Baluchestan by Pakistan as a response. Returning to Tehran, Amb Muddasir had pledged stronger ties with Iran on Pakistan's behalf. — Agencies

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GAZA: A displaced Palestinian woman stands at the entrance of a tent flooded by heavy rain in Rafah.

PML-N unveils election manifesto

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The much-awaited election manifesto by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has been unveiled on Saturday by the party's supremo Nawaz Sharif. The party launched its manifesto with the slogan 'Pakistan Ko Nawaz Do'.

Addressing the media after manifesto's launch, PML-N supremo said his party will ensure the implementation of the manifesto, highlighting that the country's biggest problem is its state of economy. Criticising PTI, the Imran Khan-founded party that formed a government following the 2018 elections, Nawaz said: "You broke the poor's back through inflation. You cut off the electricity, while it was never cut off during my time."

He added that action is a distant thing, some people don't even have a manifesto. However, Nawaz said he wants to get the country out of all problems. The PML-N supremo added that a tractor was worth Rs900,000 during his government in the past,

while a car which was worth Rs2 million during his time is now worth Rs10 million today.

The former prime minister, addressing the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said they must now prove their responsibility. "The people of KP should understand what kind of man they gave a chance to," he said, deriding the PTI. He reiterated that his focus this time around is on the politics of development, not revenge, as he has always "done politics on principles".

"If we were allowed to work without interference, the shape of the country would have been different," the former premier added. Initiating the launch of the manifesto, the party's Manifesto Committee Chairman Senator Irfan Siddiqui said there is nothing in the manifesto that the PML-N will not be able to do when it comes to power.

Siddiqui added that the PML-N supremo directed the committee not to include anything in the manifesto that the party cannot fulfill in the future. "Nawaz Sharif had forbidden [us] from show-

ing false dreams in the manifesto," he said, adding that he was fully guided by the leadership during the preparation. He said the delay in the announcement of the manifesto came as the party was focusing on reforms during the preparation.

"At least 32 committees were formed to draft the manifesto, which also includes the party's past performance," he said. Party's President Shehbaz Sharif, who was also present at the launch alongside senior leadership, said a special body will be established to ensure the effective implementation of the manifesto.

"People must see which political party fulfilled promises made in its manifesto. Everyone presents the manifesto, but some act upon it," he added.

Also present at the launch, PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal said there is a difference between social media myths and reality while taking a jibe at social media campaigns being led by other political parties, particularly the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).



KARACHI: Renowned intellectual Anwar Maqsood and President of the Arts Council Muhammad Ahmad Shah viewing paintings made by the students during the first Alumni Festival 2024.

CM, fed govt agree to sing MOU for remodelling of quarter projects

KARACHI (PPI): The Sindh and the federal governments have approved the draft Memorandum of Understanding to be signed for the remodelling and development of Jahangir, Martin, Clayton and Pakistan Quarters Project'. The draft of the MOU was prepared by the Ministry of Housing & Works (federal govt) and the Sindh government in consultation with each other which Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar has approved. As per the agreement between the two governments, federal and provincial, the MOU would be signed between Ministry of Housing & Works (federal govt), the Sindh government, and Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) for the implementation of 'Remodeling and Development of Jahangir, Martin, Clayton and Pakistan Quarters Project'. The old quarters have 335 acres of prime urban land in the middle of the city. At present, there exist government-built residential quarters that are mostly in dilapidated condition.

Minister advocates evidence-based studies to counter health issues

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Minister of Health Professor Dr. Javaid Akram underscored the importance of promoting evidence-based studies to address crucial healthcare challenges. Addressing the 1st symposium of the Services Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS) 2024 on Saturday, Dr. Akram congratulated the organizers for convening the symposium on such a vital topic, highlighting the urgent need for focused attention on newborn care and the consistent implementation of positive policies across different eras. He emphasized protecting children from prevalent diseases, stressing the critical role of maternal health in child development. Addressing concerning health trends, Dr. Akram revealed alarming statistics, noting a rising prevalence of hypertension and diabetes among individuals over 39 years old in Pakistan. He emphasized the significance of maternal milk in child development, advocating for initiatives to ensure the health and well-being of mothers and children nationwide. Dr. Akram also reaffirmed the fundamental

Matric and inter students granted financial relief

KARACHI (NP): In a landmark decision, the Sindh High Court (SHC) has issued a directive halting educational boards across the province from collecting examination and certificate fees from both matriculation and intermediate students. The decision was upheld after the SHC Sukkur bench, presided over by Justice Iqbal Kalhoro and Justice Arbab Ali, dismissed a review plea filed by the educational boards. The legal representative for the educational boards had sought a review of the order that imposed restrictions on fee collection. However, the SHC firmly maintained its prior decision, providing a substantial financial reprieve to matriculation and inter-

mediate students. The court's decision aligns with a report presented, revealing that the Sindh government had declared free education up to the intermediate level in the province back in 2017. The report highlighted that educational boards receive funds from the provincial government to conduct examinations and issue certificates to students. Assuring the court, the Assistant Advocate General stated that the provincial government is committed to releasing the necessary funds to the educational boards to compensate for the waived fees. Despite this relief, unrest simmers among intermediate students in Karachi who are actively protesting what they per-

ceive as 'unfair marking.' A considerable number of students, who did not pass the intermediate examinations, are flooding the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) with scrutiny forms. Adding to the discontent, parents have voiced their frustrations over the exam results, emphasizing the financial strain they bear for their children's education. "The BIEK is charging Rs 400 for scrutiny of each subject," lamented some parents. Responding to the mounting concerns, the education department has taken action by forming a committee to investigate the alleged 'unfair marking' issue. The submission of scrutiny forms will continue until February.

Pakistan Army organizes free medical camp near Lahore

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan Army organized a free medical camp for the residents of Bhasin and its neighboring villages on the outskirts of Lahore. According to a report on Saturday, hundreds of people were medically examined and treated by several doctors and paramedical staff including gynecologists in the medical camp. Doctors and paramedical staff also gave awareness lectures on hygiene, prevention and treatment of various diseases including dengue. The people appreciated Pakistan Army for its public welfare work. Free Medical Camps are organized by Pakistan Army to provide modern public health facilities and free medicines to poor people in remote areas.

CM performs Umrah, prays for country

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi performed Umrah on reaching Masjid Al-Haram. He prayed for the integrity, economic stability and exaltation of Pakistan after performing Umrah, said a handout issued here on Saturday. Mohsin Naqvi also specially prayed for the prosperity of the people of Pakistan and peace. CM also made special prayers for the unity, brotherhood and solidarity of the Muslim Ummah. Mohsin Naqvi prayed that may Allah Almighty grant all of us the ability to serve the humanity along with granting an elevated place to Pakistan among the comity of nations.

Rain, snowfall alert for Murree, Galliat

LAHORE (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Punjab has issued alert to the administration for expected rains and snowfall until Jan 31. A spokesperson for the PDMA told the media on Saturday that there was a possibility of snowfall with light and heavy rain in Murree, Galliat areas from January 27 to 31. Rain is expected at Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Lahore, Narowal, Mandi Bahauddin, Mianwali, and Sargodha on Jan 30 and 31. The spokesperson cautioned about potential road deterioration in Murree and Galliat due to snowfall and advises tourists to check weather conditions before traveling. There's a risk of landsliding in mountainous areas, prompting a call for preparedness against a sudden increase in cold intensity. The PDMA instructed the administrations across Punjab to stay vigilant, maintaining a 24/7 information exchange system with national institutions. Rescue agencies are on alert, disseminating weather information to the public through various media channels. Foreign tourists are urged to exercise caution, and traffic police are directed to provide regular updates, including fog alerts.

India has no right to call itself a republic: Mushaal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick said that the apartheid and supremacist Indian state had no right to celebrate its Republic Day in the bleeding Kashmir. Mushaal criticised the RSS-led Indian government for celebrating the abrogation of the constitution, targeting minorities, and undermining the so-called democratic values, said a press release issued here. SAPM said that the RSS-inspired fascist government has unleashed a wave of state terrorism and brutalities to suppress the dissenting voices. Mushaal said that they could not dampen the courage of the brave Kashmiri people, who, she said, would continue their freedom struggle until getting the birthright to self-determination. It is pertinent to mention here that Kashmiris on

both sides of the Line of Control and across the world observed Indian Republic Day, as Black Day in protest against India's continued denial of Kashmiris' right to self-determination. The SAPM went on to say that it was shameful for India to call itself a republic despite the illegal occupation of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), which was converted into a world largest tortured cell. Mushaal said that the notorious Indian authorities usurped fundamental rights of the Kashmiris, as top Kashmiri leadership including Yasin Malik were put in jails in fake and fabricated cases just to silence their voices. SAPM lamented that India was committing the worst atrocities and usurped all legal and constitutional rights of Kashmiris but the international community, UN bodies and human rights organization still called it the largest democracy, which was disgusting. She said that India was not a largest

democracy but a world's most fascist and apartheid state, where living a life not only for Kashmiris muslims but for all other minority communities was a nightmare, who were subjected to inhuman and barbaric acts. Mushaal vowed that despite the atrocities of the Indian troops, the Kashmiri people would not give up their struggle and would continue it till taking the freedom struggle to its logical end. She said the current situation of IIOJK was a big challenge for the international community and urged the world powers to help settle the lingering Kashmir dispute according to the UN resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people to avoid the world's worst looming humanitarian and human crises. Mushaal remarked that Indian PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the idol of Lord Ram at the new temple constructed on the site where the Babri Masjid stood for centuries before being demolished by a Hindutva mob.

1st Alumni festival of Arts council of Pakistan kicked off with full swing

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The "First Alumni Festival 2024" organized by the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi, kicked off in Karachi. Renowned scholar and humorist Anwar Maqsood, and the provincial Minister of Information, Minority Affairs, Social Protection, and President Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi Muhammad Ahmed Shah. Shah inaugurated the festival. Addressing the gathering during the opening ceremony, Anwar Maqsood praised Ahmed Shah for his dedicated work towards the promotion of art and culture. He acknowledged the exceptional work done by

the participating students and urged them not to rush into selling their work, advising them to accumulate experience over time. He encouraged students to continue their efforts, emphasizing that the destination of their journey is unknown, and they should focus on refining their craft. Muhammad Ahmed Shah, in his address, highlighted that the Arts Council aims to bring art out of elitist circles and onto the streets. He commended mentors like Anwar Maqsood, who guide students, expressing the council's commitment to educating students with a passion for learning and creating. Shah mentioned the outstanding role played by the Arts Council

faculty and praised the efforts of Zeeshan, a visual artist teaching in the Arts Council. Ahmed Shah emphasized the importance of Arts Council Academy and Art School in nurturing the talents of those who cannot afford formal education. He mentioned that the first convocation of Arts Council Academies took place, bringing immense joy to the faces of students and their parents. Shah also shared that a private bank has rewarded the work of seven academy students. The festival showcased their art in the Arts Council Gallery for two days. It's important to note that the Alumni Festival 2024 featured art exhibitions, including art

pieces created by students from ACIAC (Arts Council Institute of Arts and Crafts). Additionally, the festival included Drum Circle, Dance Flash Mob, Open Music and Live Painting, and Dance Performances. Renowned singer Shafqat Amanat Ali enchanted the audience with his mesmerizing voice during the festival. The Alumni Festival 2024 will continue until Sunday, featuring performances by the acclaimed singer Ali Azmat. The event attracted a large number of people, including personalities associated with art and culture, making it a significant celebration of art and creativity.

ECP announces free '8300' SMS service ahead of general elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a major development, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has declared that the '8300' SMS service will be provided free of charge starting on Monday, January 29. This announcement was made by ECP's Spokesperson, Syed Nadeem Hyder, Additional Director General Nighat Sadique, and the Project Director of the Project Management Unit during their appearance on Radio Pakistan. According to ECP officials, voters can now easily access details about their constituencies and polling stations by simply sending their computerized identity card numbers to '8300'.

It was reiterated that voters must bring their computerized national identity cards (CNICs) to the polling stations for voting. Notably, even expired CNICs or tokens issued for new CNICs will be deemed valid for casting votes. To ensure the fairness and transparency of the electoral process, ECP has implemented a robust technological mechanism. Additional Director General Nighat Sadique emphasized the presence of a substantial number of international observers who have been invited to monitor the elections, underscoring the commitment to a fair and unbiased electoral process. ECP's Spokesperson, Syed Nadeem Hyder, high-

lighted a crucial provision in the Election Act that mandates a specific time limit for the completion of election results. Presiding officers are obligated to submit the election results to the Election Commission by 2 a.m. Any delays will be thoroughly scrutinized and reported by the returning officer. Emphasizing the importance of a swift process, Hyder stated that election results must be finalized by 10 a.m. the following day. As the nation gears up for the upcoming general elections, these measures are designed to enhance accessibility and transparency, ensuring a smooth and efficient electoral experience for voters.

LESCO load-shedding schedule for Sunday

LAHORE (APP): In connection with maintenance and repair of electricity lines, the Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has issued load-shedding schedule for Sunday, January 28. According to company's spokesman here on Saturday, power supply would remain suspended on the following feeders from 9am to 2pm on Sunday. Feeders from Central Park Grid: Ali Haider, Madhav Shah, Waraich, Chuck 65 Feeders from Grid: Eastern 2, Industrial, PGA, Raid 2, 3, Reshma, Shah Nawaz, Sharif Spanning Feeders from Koh Noor Textiles, Elcott, Afzal Spinning, Alam Cotton, Greenhouse, Koh Noor Looms, K&Food, Season Food, Khalid Shafiq, Saad, MICT, Polypack 2, Style, Polypack, Deepalpur Grid: Asadullahpur, Chauhan Shaman, Godhara, Mul Musa, Pipal Pahar, Probanabad, Dola Pukhta, Kennedy, Khallilabad, Kausar Mill, Mehtab Wala, Peer Di Hatti, Rafiq Jameel, Razaqia, Sakhi Saidon, Souvenir,

Baba Farid Mill, Basir, Pur, Faridkot, Kandowal, Mancharian, Rao Qaiser, SSM, Johar Town Feeders from Grid: Katarband Road, Niaz Beg, Badar Colony, Feeders from KRK Grid: Handal, Kot Radha Kishan, MICT, Feeders from Shah Inayat, Kahna Grid: Sheikh Nooruddin 2, Khadian Grid Feeders: Chabar, Ghous Sabri, Gohar, Khadian, Veeram, Mahmoodpora, Bakrke, Dostpora, Khai, Kotli Rai Abubakar, Murali, Noel, Saad, Sikandarpora, Mandi Osmanwala; Feeders from Army industry, Malikpur Grid from feeders: B2, C3, Mor Khunda, D4, E6, G8, F7, A1, Jogekot, Muridke. Feeders from Grid: Bangla Road, Chand Bagh, Hasan Park, Mubarakabad, Platinum, SKP Bedad, Gujranwala Road, Nangal Sehda, Rahim Food, Ashraf Poly & Hasan, Cordoba Feeders from Grid: State Bank, Rayon New Grid: Al Nasr, AM Steel, Arfin, Eastern Leather, Ehsan Cotton, Glamor Textile, Golden Packages, Kot Babu, Manga Road, Nafis, Nishat, Polypack,

Sahar, Shafi Textile, Sunder Road, Superior, Umar Spinning, Eastern Dairies, Rayon. Feeders from Grid: Din Textile, Mayfair, Surj Cotton, Eastern 1, Ravi, Ruby, Sharif Spinning, Renala Feeders from Grid: Aleem Town, Rao Ziauddin, Shergarh, Welcome Road, Sharqur Feeders from Grid: Head Lalian, Mandianwala, Mian Sher Muhammad, Fatowala, Ahmedwala, Jalalpur, Sahjuwal, Kot Mehmoood, Sharqur, Faizabad, Feeders from Township Grid: Expert AID, Fine Gas, Green Town, Industrial 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, Mader Millat, Medi Pak, Style Textile, Wilshire, Zong, Feeders from Hera Grid: Elkot, Feeders from Ghazi Grid: Padhana, Paragon, Ghovandi, Jahman, X Air Avenue Feeders from Grid: Barki 2, Hadiara 2, Noor Feeders from Pur, Ghowandi, Rustam Grid: Al Rehman Garden, Anees Printing, Arafat Park, Bhatianwala, Faizpur, Fazl Haq, Ulam Deen, Jaranwala Road, Jaya Musa, Kot Abdul Malik, Malik Park, Miraj Park, Mulat Tractor,

Punjab police gets Rs 1.19b

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab police will get Rs 1.19 billion in funds for the security of the general election 2024 in Punjab. As per details, over Rs 533 million has been released for the petrol expenses of the Punjab police and Rs 150 million for plant and machinery. The provincial police will get Rs 30 million for stationary and Rs 133 million for food expenses on election day. Moreover, more than 110 million will be allocated for the Lahore police, Rs 50 million for Faisalabad whereas Gujranwala, Rawalpindi will get Rs 25 million each. Earlier, Sindh Police informed the election commission about election security arrangements with over 625.4 million expenses. The police have suggested deployment of 1,22,000 personnel for security of general elections in Sindh. "The province has 1,05,000 policemen available, 17,000 less than the required personnel", police sources said. Pakistan is holding general elections next month on February 08 to elect public representatives for the National Assembly and legislatures for Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. Mustafaabad, Nain Sukh, Nizampur, Ravi Autos, Sagian, Sharif & Sons, Tube Well, Yusuf Park, Feeder from Shadman Grid: Jail Road, Chohang Grid Feeders from: ICC, Rangeilpur, Sikh Chain Grid Feeder from: Ali Hussainabad. Similarly, the power supply would be suspended from 8 am to 4 pm on the feeders from Bund Road Grid: Saidpur, Shirakot, Fazal Colony, Pedro Road, Sabzazar, Rana Town, Kattar Bund Road, Piko, Hyderi Colony, Hanjarwal, Amna Park, Old Kot Feeders from Lakhpat Grid: Liaquat Electricity supply will be suspended from Abad, Model Town, S Block Model Town, Ferozepur Ward.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chairing a meeting regarding Chashma Right Bank Lift Canal Project.

Building capacity of public servants imperative

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Building capacity of public servants is imperative for good governance. Professional trainings like Senior Management Course are very productive for enhancing the skills and competencies of public service for efficient and effective public service delivery.

These views were expressed by Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry who was chief guest at the graduation ceremony of 34th Senior Management Course at National Institute of Management, Peshawar.

Addressing the officers, he said that public service is quite different today than the public service in the past. People are much more informed and the challenges of governance are more complex. Therefore, public servants have to do more than their routine assignments by putting in their last ounce of energy and dedication. "Keep high goals and be sure what you want to achieve. You must be aware of your destination and the journey ahead.

Life is not about success or failure but about one's contributions to the society and the people around," he remarked. He urged the graduating officers of 34th SMC to keep a very positive and friendly attitude with the people and follow the golden principles of political neutrality, honesty and transparency laid down by the founder of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. On this occasion, Director General NIM/PARD/PPSACaptain (R)



Usman Gul also addressed the graduating officers and highlighted the contributions of the three premier training institutions i.e. NIM, PARD & PPSA.

He said that since their inception, more than 48000 public servants have been trained by the three training institutions which included about 60 % officers from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He further said that in the past 03 years, the three institutions trained 3000 officers.

He paid special thanks to the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for assistance in the infrastructural development of the campus like 50 rooms hostel facility, the under construction cafeteria, IT lab, employees welfare center and the solar tube well in the campus with the financial support of Rs. 300 million by the provincial

government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He added that the institute has increased the number of seats in the MCMC and SMC to facilitate timely promotions of the PMS and other officers of KP. He also stated that the focus of the three training institutions is on attitude and character building as attitude equally counts with skills in the performance of official duties.

The Chief Instructor SMC Tariq Bakhtiar presented the course report to the chief guest on the occasion. He informed that the 34th SMC was a good mix of 36 officers from provincial and federal services and occupational groups and represented almost all the geographic regions of the country including AJ&K and Baluchistan. The Chief Guest distributed course completion certificates among the graduating officers.

JAC demands redressal of employees' grievances

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Joint Action Committee (JAC) demanded redressal of Islamia College University employees' grievance on priority basis.

This was demanding by JAC during a 1st ever meeting chaired by Dr. Fazal Wahid in which Teaching Staff Association ICS president Kafeel Ahmad, AMA Shah Faisal Khan, Class-III Israr Khan, Class-IV Zain Ullah Khan and Chand Masih were present.

Moreover, the general secretaries of the associations were also participated for collective efforts. JAC stressed on redressal of employee's children adjustment among Islamia College and University of Peshawar. JAC also demanded establishment of girl's school in the premises of Islamia College and argued that a meeting would held with Vice Chancellor Dr. Gul Majeed Khan in this regard.

Kainat Anwar defends M. Phil thesis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A Master of Philosophy (M. Phil) scholar in Pakistan Studies Kainat Anwar defended her thesis successfully at University of Peshawar.

The research titled as; 'A critique of women parliamentarians role in legislation from 1998-2008' while Dr. Khan Faqir supervised the scholar.

Dr. Nausheen Jamsheed of Islamia College University was external examiner while Director Pakistan Studies Center at University of Peshawar Dr. Shahbaz Khan was also present during the defense of dissertation.

PML-N to overcome crisis: Farhad

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: PML-N will overcome contemporary crisis after securing majority in upcoming general elections scheduled on 8th February.

This was claimed by PML-N Lawyer Forum Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Senior Vice President Farhad Ali Advocate in statement issued to press. He asserted that PML-N will obtain majority in upcoming elections under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

PML-N has mobilized public as well as turned public opinion due to developmental projects across the country which had pave way economic sustainability despite it was derailed multiple times, Farhad Ali argued.

Governor highlights significance of justice

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali on Saturday highlighted the significance of justice for betterment of people and said that provision of inexpensive and speedy justice is a prerequisite for establishing a law abiding society.

He was addressing a ceremony in that was organized by District Bar Association in Judicial Complex Charsadda. The ceremony was also attended by CM's

aides including Justice Retired Irshad Qaisar, Zafarullah Umerzai; President District Bar, Mujeeb-ur-Rehman, Deputy Commissioner, District Police Officer and lawyers.

Addressing the ceremony, Governor said that importance of lawyer fraternity in provision of justice to people and establishing a health society could not be undermined adding that supremacy of law is needed to achieve progress and prosperity.

He urged lawyers to help

out needy and poor and said that they should work with more professionalism for provision of speedy and inexpensive justice to people. He also praised role lawyer fraternity for their role to strengthen democracy in the country. Governor also inaugurated Revenue Courts in District Bar and assured to make efforts for addressing problems confronted by lawyer community. The ceremony was also addressed by CM aides, Irshad Qaisar and Zafarullah Umerzai.

Steps for promotion of furniture industry sought

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) vice president Ijaz Khan Afridi urged the government to take pragmatic steps for promotion of furniture industry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and issues businesspeople attached with this sector.

Ijaz Khan Afridi said that the furniture industry has played a pivotal role in economic development and enhancement of the country's export, which should be lifted up at an optimal level.

He was speaking as chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of the International Furniture and Craft Fair Pakistan 2024 Expo in Peshawar, said in a press release here on Saturday. Various Pakistani and international furniture stalls set up in the expo.

During the opening event, RF Events Private Limited CEO Dr Nazish Faisal, organisers and representatives of partners and members of the business community were



present. Ijaz Afridi heaps praises on a variety of furniture in different designs put during the exhibition and asked RF Events Private Limited and various brands to share their issues with SCCI to address them on a chamber level with the government.

The SCCI vice president said huge potential exists to make investment in the furniture sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He asked to create maximum opportunities for promotion of the furniture industry and investment in the sector. On the occasion, the expo organizer told the SCCI vice president that the organization has planned to hold Furniture Expo (Pakistan)

Afghan Transit Exhibition) in Kabul, Afghanistan for which collaboration of the chamber is required, on which Ijaz Afridi said SCCI is ready to cooperate in this regard.

Ijaz Afridi expressed satisfaction over organizing the mega furniture expo in Peshawar and hoped such events will continue in future in KP/Peshawar and rest parts of the country. Later, the SCCI vice president visited various stalls set up in the exhibition and lauded the furniture designs and quality of various brands. On the occasion, the chamber VP Ijaz Khan Afridi was honored by the organizer with a shield as a memento.

EC KP send notices to election rules violations

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In the light of the instructions of the Election Commission in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, notice of violations of the code of conduct, fines imposed on various contesting general election candidates.

Releasing the names of those violating the election rules, District Monitoring Officer Lower Dir imposed fines of Rs. 50,000 on the following candidatures including PK 15 Lower Dir independent candidate Humayun Khan, PK 7 Lower Dir independent candidate Mehboob Shah, Rs. 30,000 Chairman

Village Council Gulabad Lower Dir Murad Rehman. The candidates are instructed to submit the fines by January 29 and submit the challan as well.

District Monitoring Officer in Peshawar also imposed fines including uJalal Khan, candidate of Muslim League (N) from constituency PK 79 Peshawar, fined Rs. 5000. Likewise imposes fine of Rs. 5000 including on Arbab Waseem Hayat, candidate of PTIP from constituency PK 73 Peshawar and JUI-F candidate from constituency PK 73 Peshawar Abdul Haseeb. Similarly, imposed fine of Rs.50,000 on Chairman

Neighborhood Council Bihari Colony Haji Muhammad Ismail. All the candidates are instructed to collect the fines and submit the challan by January 29. District Monitoring Officer Dir Upper.

Chairman Village Council Nishanbada Upper Dir Malik Shahuddin has been fined Rs. 5000. District Monitoring Officer Kurram. Circle PK 95 Kurram, Chairman Tehsil Council Central Karam Ehsanullah fined 25000, independent candidate of PK 96 Karam Ali Hadi fined 15000. All of them instructions to collect the fines by January 29 and submit the challan.



PESHAWAR: KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali inaugurating Revenue Courts.

Int'l Customs Day observed in Peshawar Customs House

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A prestigious ceremony has been organized in Peshawar Customs House in connection with the World Customs Day with Chairman Federal Board of Revenue Malik Amjed Zubair Tiwana was the chief guest while Chief Collector Customs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Syed Akram and other senior officials of Custom Department attended the ceremony.

International stakeholders and partners and their representative delegations have also participated in the event. In his address to the gathering Chairman Federal Board of Revenue Malik Amjed Zubair Tiwana has said that Customs has played a key role in the global and domestic economy. He said that it is because of cus-

oms agencies that international trade and safe movement of goods is being ensured. He has said that the customs officials and officers are taking practical steps to prevent cross-border smuggling despite the challenges.

Chairman Federal Board of Revenue Malik Amjed Zubair further said that every possible effort should be made to prevent cross-border smuggling because it has a negative impact on the global and domestic economy and the money from smuggling is used in terror financing and other similar crimes. Customs authorities are taking measures for more safe transportation and exports, he added.

Speaking on the occasion of World Customs Day, Chairman FBR said that January 26 not only

reminds the Customs officials of their duty but also generally informs the whole world about the usefulness and importance of Customs. He said that the government and customs agencies not only support Customs Day 2024 but are also playing a key role in its awareness campaign.

Chief Collector Customs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Syed Akram also spoke on this occasion and said that celebrating Customs Day 2024 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in a prestigious manner is proof that customs authorities are always working hard for the safest delivery of goods and cross border trade. He said that the role of customs in the economic stability of the country is pivotal and significant. He further said that we need to make cross-border trade better and safer.

AKF opens skill development center

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Alkhidmat Foundation opened a vocational and skill development centre for women in Chamkani, a suburban area of provincial metropolis. The centre would provide dress-making training, beautician and computer courses to females aiming for their empowerment and create employment opportunities for them. The skill development centre has all the needed facilities and is registered with Trade Testing board.



PESHAWAR: PPP candidates wearing party caps to newly joining members during public gathering.



In brief

CTD arrests terrorist

JAMSHORO (INP): The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Hyderabad on Saturday arrested terrorist of a banned organization from Jamshoro. As per details, CTD has foiled a terrorist attack in Jamshoro ahead of the general election 2024. The operation was conducted by the CTD Hyderabad, arrested the terrorist and recovered 600 kg explosives, a detonator, anti-state pamphlets, and banners from the possession of the arrested terrorist. The CTD officials stated that the terrorist had planned to carry out terror attack on the polling day of election 2024. Earlier, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed to have apprehended two terrorists of the banned organization Daesh from Peshawar. The SSP operations CTD, Najam Husnain Liaquat, during the presser, claimed that the arrested terrorists were planning to target the leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Fazlur Rahman and Awami National Party (ANP) leader Aimal Wali Khan. The SSP further revealed that the suicide bomber was identified as Adil, who allegedly took his training from the Paktia province of Afghanistan. The police arrested a suicide bomber and a facilitator meanwhile, two suicide jackets, three hand grenades, and a pistol were recovered from the location pointed out by the arrested accused.

Six profiteers arrested

SARGODHA (INP): Six shopkeepers were booked over profiteering from various parts of the city, here on Saturday. According to official sources, the price control magistrates inspected various points including Silanwali road, Lahore road, Quenchi Morr, Noori gate and got held six shopkeepers including Waqar, Ghulam Murtaza, Muhammad Saleem, Abid, Muhammad Faisal and Asif for overcharging and imposed hefty fines.

Ch Shujaat Hussain turns 85

GUJRAT (INP): PML-Q chief and former prime minister and Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain celebrated his 85th birthday on Saturday. Ch Shujaat was elected as member national assembly for first time in 1985 and became minister for industries under then prime minister Muhammad Khan Junejo. After joining Muslim League, Ch Shujaat remained interior minister for two terms. During the rule of later General Pervez Musharraf, Ch Shujaat was appointed as prime minister for a period of three months. After exile of Nawaz Sharif, Ch Shujaat laid the foundation of PML-Q and he is still leading the party as its chief. Friends, relatives and political workers of PML-Q have expressed best wishes for the senior politician.

People's court to give its verdict

SIALKOT (APP): Former defence minister and senior leader PML-N Khawaja Muhammad Asif said the biggest court of the country will be held on February 8, and people will give their verdict who will serve them during the next five years. Addressing the PML-N youth convention in Union Council Rangpura on Friday night, he said February 8 would be the victory day of Nawaz Sharif with the power of people's vote. PML-N candidate from NA-71 constituency Kh Asif said people would be judge on Feb 8 to decide would served them in the past and who destroyed the country.



CHARSADDA: Qaumi Watan Party Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao addressing party workers in Doaba.

ANP, PPP candidates pose challenge to ex-CM

MINGORA (APP): The candidates of Awami National Party (ANP) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) started posing serious challenge to Pakistan Tahrik e Insaaf Parliamentarians Vice Chairman and former Chief Minister, Mahmood Khan in his home constituency of the National Assembly NA-4 Swat-III.

Political observers said that close electoral battle was expected among Brigadier (r) Mohammad Saleem Khan of ANP, Kamal Khan of PPP and Mahmood Khan of PTIP. Sohail Sultan who was backed by PTI, Rahimullah of the JUI-F, Fazal Subhan of the Jamaat-i-Islami, Mohammad Raza Khan of the Tahrik Labaik Pakistan and Malik Zada of the Pakhtunkhwa National Awami Party can also surprise many in the polling day.

A.H Hilali, former Chairman Political Science Department, University of Peshawar said the political landscape in Swat was unique with voters balancing between loyalty to established parties and the promises of new entrants making the Febuary 8, 2024 elections a closely watched affair. He said Swat was once considered a stronghold of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, which swept the 2013 and 2018 general elections in the district. However, in election 2024 it would be difficult for PTI backed candidates to repeat the same performance in Swat where split mandate is expected.

He said the PTI nominees were contesting elections independently with different symbols, which could confuse the party's voters, and if that happened, the PTI-P would benefit in Swat. He said that Mahmood Khan has parted ways with the PTI after the May 9 violent protests and became part of the PTI-P founded by former chief minister of the party Pervez Khattak.

"Definitely Mahmood Khan had an political influence in his home district due to the execution of mega development projects including Swat motorway and provision of government jobs to locals that may benefit him," he said. He said that mostly Swat residents voted for candidates considering the government jobs provided to

them and not the development projects executed in the area, so Mahmood Khan and former MPA Mohibullah Khan as PTI-P nominees were likely to attract voters attention on D Day.

Mahmood Khan is a candidate for the National Assembly seat NA-4 and provincial assembly seat PK-10, while ex live-stock minister Mohibullah will contest election in PK-9 constituency. NA-4 Swat-III was created in 2018 general election after separating tehsils Kabal and Matta from NA-3 Swat. In 2018 general election, NA 3 was won by former MNA Murad Saeed with 71,600 votes against Saleem Khan of ANP who bagged 30, 975 votes.

Hilali 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 of Swat. He 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.

He said eradication of poverty, unemployment and alleviation of poverty in the area were major issues and candidates showing programs for its resolutions would get an edge over others. Meanwhile, election campaign in the constituency was in full swing where candidates were addressing public and corner meetings besides rallies to persuade voters.

Besides corner meetings and approaching large tribes, the political stalwarts started door to door campaign to attract voters. Political observers said that young voters will play an important role in deciding fate of these candidates on February 8, 2024. Meanwhile, leaders of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz have claimed the party will win Swat region's national and provincial assembly seats in the Feb 8 elections. They recently met in Mingora and vowed to support the party's election nominees, including provincial president Amir Muqam (NA-2), Wajid Ali Khan (NA-3) and Irshad Khan (PK-6). As the polling day became nearer, election campaign was likely to increase further in Swat.

ECP impose fine over code of conduct violation

F.P. Report

MARDAN: General Elections 2024, monitoring code of conduct violations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the light of instructions of Election Commission, investigation of District Monitoring Officer Mardan. According to the details, Aqib Ismail, candidate of Jamaat-e-Islami of NA-23, was fined 50 thousand rupees.

The candidate had posted large size advertising material which falls under the category of violation of code of conduct. Deputy Commissioner Mardan directed to submit the challan after receiving the fine from the candidate and depositing it in the government treasury. The candidate was summoned to appear in the office of the District Monitoring Officer Mardan on January 17, but he did not appear on which a unilateral action was taken against him.

Like this Ikram Ghazi an independent candidate of PK-39 Mansehra was fined 10,000 rupees. The candidate

was accused of aerial firing during the election campaign on which he was summoned on January 24, he appeared and gave an explanation which was considered unsatisfactory and fined the candidate Rs 10,000.

The fine was submitted in the government treasury and present challan while the District Monitoring Officer in Bannu fined JUI candidate PK 101 Adnan Khan Wazir 10 thousand rupees. The candidate was accused of posting large-sized advertising materials and was fined on January 23 for repeated violations.

Motorbike ambulance service kicks off: Further expansion of Mardan Rescue 1122 service included in motorbike ambulance service, motorbike service started in Mardan. According to the details, a motorcycle ambulance has been provided to Rescue 1122 Mardan under the supervision of District Emergency Officer Inman Khan Yousafzai by Director General Dr. Khateer Ahmed

to timely access to affected people in narrow alleys will be possible through motorbike ambulance.

Motorbike Ambulance is equipped with modern equipment like ambulance vehicle, motorbike ambulance also has emergency equipment like Pulse Oximeter, Blood Pressure Apparatus, Cervical Collar, Portable Stretcher, Nebulizer, Glucometer, Portable Oxygen Cylinder, Turmcoat, Digital thermometer, Embo bag, manual suction machine, operative torch, airway kit, CPR mask, bleeding kit etc. are available with the help of which it will be effective to provide timely first aid to the patient and save life.

Meanwhile, Chairman BISE, Mardan Farid Ahmad Khattak presented BISE Mardan's Newsletter and Result Analysis to Haseeb Khan Country Welfare Counsellor and Mrs. Sugra Habib Commercial Counsellor Pakistan High Commission/Embassy at Kaula Lampur Malaysia.



HYDERABAD: A worker busy in paint on the tanker body at his workplace.

QWP believes in serving people, says Sherpao

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Expressing annoyance at the belated unveiling of the polling scheme, Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Saturday said the Election Commission of Pakistan violated the law by delaying the issuance of the polling scheme for the general election slated for February 8. Addressing a gathering in Doaba area in Charsadda district, he said that under the law, the ECP should have announced the polling scheme 30 days before the election, but the election watchdog also missed the second deadline to publish the polling scheme 15 days before the polling day.

Commenting on the ECP's plan to use the Election Management System (EMS) for election results, Aftab Sherpao said the Result Transmission System's failure (RTS) was still fresh in our memory; therefore, the election commission should stop experimenting and ensure the holding of the free, fair and transparent election.

The QWP leader said that electricity and gas loadshedding were the two main problems being faced by the residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that though skyrocketing inflation had made life miserable for the people, the high tariff coupled with record gas and electricity loadshedding was adding insult to injury. He said that KP generated cheap and surplus hydel electricity, but it was unfortunate that the local people were facing power cuts and were receiving inflated bills.

Aftab Sherpao said the QWP would not let the people down and would come up to their expectations by honoring the pledges. He said the QWP would spare no effort to work for the development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the well-being of its residents. He said his party believed in serving the people with any consideration for political affiliations. He advised the voters to check the track record of the candidates before casting their ballots.

Four women candidates to contest on general seats

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Four women candidates were going to contest elections on general seats in eight provincial constituencies of district Mardan in the general polls scheduled on February 8, of the next month.

As per data provided by the relevant officials of election commission office Mardan, at least 105 aspirants including four women candidates were in the field to face each in the upcoming general elections. The woman contender identified as Laila Zaman had submitted her nomination paper as independent candidate for the PK-54 constituency. Total 11 candidates were in the field in the said constituency.

Similarly, the female aspirant Lubna Faheem was trying her fate in PK-55 constituency where 19 other candidates were struggling to win the seat. Aneela Shehzad who was contesting elections on the Pakistan People Party ticket in PK-56 constituency, was the third female aspirant.

Seminaries had no links with militancy, says Mufti Fida

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A total of 27 ulema, 14 Hufaz e Kiram and 28 females were graduated at the Jamia Farooqia Hajiabad here on Saturday. A ceremony in this regard was held at the seminary which was attended by hundreds of local youths, relatives of the graduated students and religious clerics from all parts of the district.

The grand certification ceremony was addressed by Sheikh ul Quran Mufti Fida Muhammad from Swabi, Mufti Tahir Syed and head of the seminary Khalid Yousafzai. The speakers highlighted the importance of religious education and termed it essential for the Muslims. They also appreciated the contribution of local wealthy people. The speakers said that since all religious seminaries were being run by the public they needed financial assistance from the well-to-do.

Later talking to local journalists, Mufti Fida Muhammad said that religious seminaries had nothing to do with the militancy. He said that seminaries and their students were being blamed for militancy in order to keep the masses away from those seminaries.

He said that seminaries spread the teachings of love, brotherhood, peace and tranquility.

Feud resolved: A local jirga of elders on Saturday resolved a conflict between two Afghan families at the Chakdara refugees' camp. The parties in front of the jirga promised to live like brothers. The families of two Afghan nationals; Khalid Khan Safi and Najibullah Mishwani had a conflict on some business matters and several people had been injured during a clash between them. After the clash, two Afghan tribes; Safi and Mishwani had locked horns and the families' tussle was feared to turn into a tribal war.

Sensing the severity of the situation the Adenzai Islahi Jirga led by its chief Khawaja Faizul Ghafoor started efforts to settle the feud. A function in this regard was held at a mosque in the Chakdara Afghan refugees' camp which was attended by elders of both the Safi and Mishwani tribes. Afghan influential figures including Maulvi Izzatullah Safi, Maulvi Essa Khan, Maulana Ahmad Shah, Anwarullah and others were also in attendance.

The jirga convinced the parties and they promised to end their enmity and live like brothers in future. The parties' elders also signed a document agreeing to withdraw cases against each other. The Afghan elders appreciated the jirga's efforts and said that locals had taken a wise step for ending the enmity.

PTI-P joined: Several activists of the Jamaat-i-Islami including its former councilors Gul Hakim Khan, Haji Zamin Khan and others joined the Pakistan Tahreek Insaaf Parliamentarian during different functions held at Talash and Timergara Sheikhanoh here on Saturday.

The PTI-P candidate for PK 16 and former provincial minister Muzafar Said advocate welcomed the new entrants and said the party would never leave them alone. Scores of political activists including Noor Zamin, Asghar Khan, Amjad Khan and Wakil Khan also joined the PTI-P. Addressing the functions, Muzafar Said said the PTI-P would form the next government in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its founder Pervez Khattak would be the next chief minister.

PPP stands with politics for uplift of marginalized segment

F.P. Report

KHYBER: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate for NA-27 and PK-69 Shah Rehman has said that the party's politics focused on uplift and development of the poor segments in the society.

Speaking on the occasion of "Meet the Press" at Landi Kotal press club district Khyber last day he said that PPP was a party of downtrodden classes of the

society and previous rules witnessed that it always cared for the wellbeing of masses.

He maintained that in last rules of PPP, revolutionary initiatives like guaranteed right of vote to the tribesmen, gave self-governing authorities to the province through 18 amendment, renamed Previous North west Frontier Province as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,

kicked off pro people projects like Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) were adopted in the best interest of masses.

The party is competent enough to pull the country out of the prevailing economic and other crises if it comes into power, he claimed. He went on that as contrary to other political parties PPP was contested election in greed of rule but to serve the masses.



QUETTA: PML-N leader for PB-41 Sehar Gul Khilji addressing a press conference.

High retraction rate sparks' concerns in Academia

Dr. Waseem Hassan

ARTICLE or research paper retraction occurs when a published scientific paper is withdrawn by the publisher or the authors due to various reasons. An article is retracted under various circumstances. Firstly, retraction occurs when the data presented (in the paper) is intentionally fabricated or falsified. Secondly, if the paper includes substantial portions of text or ideas that have been copied from other sources without proper citation, it may be retracted. Additionally, disputes about authorship or the inclusion of individuals who did not significantly contribute to the research as listed authors can lead to retraction.

Furthermore, if there is evidence indicating that the peer-review process was compromised or manipulated, retraction may be warranted. Finally, errors in the research methodology, analysis, or interpretation that significantly undermine the validity and reliability of the results can also be grounds for the retraction of an article.

According to Research Article published in international scientific research

journal "Nature", Pakistan has the 2nd highest retraction rate. This is a matter of grave concern for Pakistan, that requires immediate attention and strategic intervention. The surge in the number of retractions in recent years poses a significant threat to the credibility of academic research in our country.

As papers play a pivotal role in securing degrees, jobs, and promotions, it is imperative that we establish clear and comprehensive policies to navigate the consequences of paper retractions in these crucial domains. We should implement a comprehensive approach to address the implications of paper retractions on academic qualifications and professional considerations.

Firstly, it is essential to clearly define the criteria under which a degree awarded based on research work may be subject to reconsideration or reversal in the event of paper retraction.

There is a need to specify the procedures for addressing situations where a paper's retraction raises concerns about an individual's professional qualifications. Secondly, guidelines should be formulated for employers to assess the impact of paper retractions on job placements. These

guidelines should take into account the nature of the retraction and its relevance to the individual's role. In fact, criteria should be developed for evaluating the impact of paper retractions on promotion decisions.

Proactively addressing this issue and establishing clear guidelines, we can promote accountability, maintain the credibility of academic and professional achievements, and contribute to the overall integrity of our institutions. Pakistan's high rate of withdrawing academic research article has many effects. It can significantly affect the scientific community, universities, and how the country is seen by others.

Furthermore, it will also exert negative effects on the credibility, reputation, academic integrity, undermining trust, impact on grants, impact on researchers, educational institutions, collaboration concerns, and loss of public trust.

Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort from academic institutions, researchers, policymakers, and funding agencies to implement effective measures to improve research integrity, ethical standards, and the overall quality of academic output in Pakistan.



Beijing steps up mily pressure on Taiwan



TAIPEI (AP): China sent more than 30 warplanes and a group of navy ships toward Taiwan, the island's defense ministry said Saturday. The military pressure comes on the heels of an announcement that senior American and Chinese representatives were expected to meet in the Thai capital as the two countries seek to cool tensions.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army sent 33 aircraft, including SU-30 fighters, and six navy vessels around Taiwan. Of these, 13 warplanes crossed the midline of the Taiwan Strait — an unofficial boundary that's considered a buffer between the island and mainland. Taiwan has monitored the situation and employed its own forces in response to the activities. China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory and in recent years has shown is displeasure at political activities in Taiwan by sending military planes and ships. Taiwan said six Chinese balloons either flew over the island or through airspace just north of it days after the self-governing island elected Lai Ching-te as the new president. Lai's Democratic Progressive Party largely campaigned on self-determination, social justice and a rejection of China's threats.

United States National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi were both in Bangkok for talks, though it wasn't clear when the meeting would take place or if it already had. US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of a summit in November in an effort to patch up frayed relations due to quarrels over a range of economic and geopolitical issues. US National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said the planned meeting in Bangkok continues the commitment Biden and Xi made "to maintain strategic communication and responsibly manage the relationship."

During talks, Foreign Minister Wang would make clear China's position on Taiwan and on US-China relations, and discuss international and regional concerns, ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said. An immediate international concern to both countries is tensions in the Red Sea that have upended global trade by forcing many shippers to avoid the Suez Canal. Beijing said it has been making positive efforts to de-escalate the situation in which Iran-backed Houthi rebels have fired missiles at international ships.

Philippines, Vietnam to sign coastguard deal

HANOI/MANILA (Reuters): The Philippines and Vietnam will agree to boost coastguard cooperation during a visit to Hanoi next week by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, officials said, a move that risks angering China.

The two Southeast Asian countries have competing claims over swathes of the South China Sea, an important waterway for fishing and global trade that China claims almost in its entirety. The two countries will sign a memorandum of understanding on cooperation between their coastguard forces, the Philippine coastguard said.

It is unclear what the agreement will entail, but coastguard cooperation is crucial to reducing the risk of clashes between fishing vessels that encroach into foreign waters - a step that could help ease bilateral territorial disputes. China, with its vast claims to the South China Sea, tends to view progress in the resolution of border disputes among other claimants with scepticism.

After Vietnam and Indonesia recognised the boundaries of their respective Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the South China Sea in December 2022, China's coastguard repeatedly sailed close to those strategic areas triggering angry reactions from both Jakarta and Hanoi. China's response however

could be muted in this case because the deal is not about recognition of maritime claims, said Phan Xuan Dung, researcher on Vietnam at the Singapore-based ISEAS think tank.

Marcos will meet Vietnamese leaders on a two-day visit starting, Vietnam's foreign ministry spokeswoman said, noting the countries had close ties in multiple fields including defence and security. In November, Marcos said the Philippines had approached Vietnam and other neighbours to discuss a separate code of conduct for the South China Sea, another move that would irk China which has been promoting a broader regional pact for years without success.

The two countries are also expected to boost their cooperation on rice supplies, according to a Philippine official, with the Philippines being already the largest market for Vietnam's exports. "The two most promising areas of cooperation between the Philippines and Vietnam are food security and maritime security," Alexander Vuvung, of the Hawaii-based Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, said.

"But Vietnam is far more cautious than the Philippines about not angering China" on maritime security, he added. Vietnam's foreign ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment

about the expected agreement on coastguard cooperation.

NK, China to defend common interests

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea and China agreed to strengthen tactical cooperation and defend common interests, the North's official KCNA news agency said on Saturday, reporting on Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui's meeting with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong.

China said the two countries pledged to strengthen strategic communications "at all levels" and reaffirmed "unswerving stance" on deepening ties as Sun met his North Korean counterpart, Pak Myong Ho, in Pyongyang. Sun arrived in Pyongyang, passing through the city of Sinuiju on the border of the two countries. It was the latest exchange by North Korea with China and Russia while it steps up confrontation with the United States and South Korea.

North Korea has dramatically upgraded its ties with the two UN Security Council permanent members and traditional allies, which have come around to stand with Pyongyang as it speeds up the development of an array of tactical and strategic weapons.

Russia struggles to sell Pacific oil, 14 tankers stuck

MOSCOW (Reuters): More than a dozen tankers loaded with 10 million barrels of Russia's Sokol grade crude oil have been stranded off the coast of South Korea for weeks, so far unsold due to US sanctions and payment issues, according to two traders and shipping data.

The volumes, equating to 1.3 million metric tons, represent more than a month's production of the Sakhalin-1 project, once a flagship venture of US major Exxon Mobil, which exited Russia after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Sakhalin-1 was one of the first post-Soviet deals in Russia made under a production sharing agreement. When Exxon Mobil left in 2022, output fell to nearly zero and hasn't fully recovered since.

Difficulties in selling Sokol grade pose one of the most significant challenges Moscow has faced since the West imposed sanctions and one of the most serious disruptions to Russian oil exports in two years. Washington has said it wants sanctions to reduce revenues for President Vladimir Putin and his war machine in Ukraine but not to disrupt the flows of Russian energy to global markets.

Last year, the United States imposed sanctions on several vessels and companies involved in transporting Sokol. At least 14 vessels loaded with Sokol were stuck around South Korea's port of Yosu, including 11 Aframax vessels and three very large crude carriers (VLCCs), according to LSEG, Kpler data and traders. The volume stored in tankers represent 45 days of production from Sakhalin-1, which averages output of 220,000 barrels per day (bpd).

Supertankers (VLCCs) La Balena, Nireta and Nellis with some 3.2 million barrels onboard (430,000 metric tons), currently near South Korea's Yosu, are acting as a floating storage for the Russian oil grade, Reuters sources said and Kpler and LSEG shipping data show. The VLCCs previously accepted oil from several Aframax vessels via ship-to-ship, the data showed. Supplying oil volumes from smaller ships to bigger ones can save on freight.

The rest of the Sokol oil loaded from November to January is stored on smaller Aframax vessels (able to carry 500,000-800,000 barrels) - Krymsk, NS Commander, Sakhalin Island, Liteyny Prospect, NS Century, NS Lion, NS Antarctic, Jaguar, Vostochny Prospect, Pavel Chernysh and Viktor Titov. Shipments of Sokol to the Indian Oil Corp have been delayed by payment problems, forcing India's biggest refiner to draw from its inventories and buy more oil from the Middle East.

A source close to IOC said the company did not expect to receive any Sokol shipments soon due to a disagreement over which currency would be used to pay for it. IOC is the only state refiner that has an annual deal to buy a variety of Russian grades, including Sokol, from Russian oil major Rosneft.

Bodies of 77 Ukrainian soldiers repatriated to Kyiv

KYIV (AFP): Ukraine said that Russia had returned the bodies of 77 soldiers, days after the crash of a Russian military transport plane threw doubt on the future of such exchanges.

Moscow and Kyiv traded fresh accusations over the plane that Russia says was shot down by Ukraine forces near the rivals' border, killing 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war. While Kyiv has not denied the claims outright, officials have appeared to question whether its POWs were on board. The latest repatriation of bodies appeared unrelated to the downing of the plane, which crashed in a fireball in Russia's western Belgorod region. "Preparations for the repatriation had been underway for a long time," Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War said in a statement.

Hundreds of captured prisoners have been freed in dozens of exchanges throughout the nearly two-year war. But Russia's claims that

Ukraine shot down a plane ferrying Ukrainian detainees has thrown doubts on the future of such exchanges.

Ukraine was still disputing Russia's account of how the Ilyushin 76 military transporter crashed. The Kremlin dismissed the idea of releasing evidence proving that dozens of Ukrainian soldiers had been killed. "Investigators are working, I have nothing to add on this topic," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked if Russia planned to publish evidence on how Ukraine shot down the plane, and who was on board.

Russia's Investigative Committee published video footage of what it said was the crash site, showing a small chunk of plane debris and blurred close-ups of a body. A second video published showed more of the debris, a forensics team sealing up a body bag and photos of three identification documents it said were from dead victims.

It then published a blurry video purporting to show vehicles transporting the prisoners to the plane before it took off, but the quality was too poor to immediately verify this. Ukraine's human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets dismissed the material released so far by Moscow as "elements of an information propaganda campaign against Ukraine". Kyiv and Moscow have opened criminal investigations, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has called for an international investigation.

Zelensky accused Moscow of "playing with the lives" of Ukrainian soldiers and their families. Kyiv has not confirmed nor denied its involvement in the crash, or said whether it was carrying captured Ukrainian soldiers. It confirmed that a prisoner exchange was due to take place, but that Moscow had not informed Kyiv that the soldiers would be transferred by plane, as it had done in the past.

Court rules deploying nation's cops to Haiti unconstitutional

NAIROBI (AP): Kenya's high court blocked the United Nations-backed deployment of Kenyan police officers to Haiti to help the Caribbean country bring gang violence under control.

Kenya's parliament passed a motion in November allowing the deployment of 1,000 officers to lead a multinational force in Haiti. But Judge Chacha Mwita said Kenya's National Security Council, which is led by the president, does not have the authority to deploy regular police outside the country. "It is not contestable that there is no reciprocal arrangement between Kenya and Haiti and for that reason, there can be no deployment of police to that country," Mwita said.

The judge said Kenya's offer was noble but needed to be carried out in accordance with the constitution. Mwita made the ruling in response to an application from Thirdway Alliance Party leader Ekuru Aukot, who argued that the government's plan to send the officers to Haiti was illegal.

Kenyan government spokesperson Isaac Mwaura said it will appeal the decision. UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric noted the government's announcement that it will appeal and said: "The need for this multinational force authorized by the (Security) Council remains extremely high."

"It was the Kenyan authorities that stepped forward ... and we thank them for doing so when so many countries are not stepping forward," Dujarric said. "We need urgent action, we need urgent funding, and we hope that member states will continue to do their part and then some." The decision was considered by many to be a blow to Haiti, which first requested the immediate deployment of a foreign armed force in October 2022.

"This is terrible news for

Haitians," said Diego Da Rin of the International Crisis Group. "The vast majority of the population was waiting for external help to assist the police regain some control of the capital and the areas most affected by violence." Mercy Corps Country Director for Haiti, Laurent Uwumuremyi, supported the High Court's decision saying that previous international peacekeeping missions — such as the UN mission MINUSTAH that was deployed there 2004-2017 — and international interventions have had disastrous consequences for Haiti.

"Solutions for Haiti, including those to bolster the Haitian National Police and the army to tamp down violence and return some semblance of security, should be led by Haitians," Uwumuremyi said. He said another international intervention might inadvertently worsen the situation, exposing more people to violence.

"It is critical that any intervention is done to restore stability, respects human rights and humanitarian laws, and does not jeopardize or hinder aid operations or worsen the violence," he said. An unprecedented surge in gang violence is plaguing Haiti, with the number of victims killed, injured and kidnapped more than doubling in 2023, the UN secretary-general's special envoy for the country said.

"I cannot overstate the severity of the situation in Haiti, where multiple protracted crises have reached a critical point," envoy Maria Isabel Salvador told the UN Security Council. She said the 8,400 victims of gang violence documented by her office last year — 122% more than in 2022 — were mainly targeted by gangs in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince.

Some 300 gangs control an estimated 80% of the capital and

accounted for 83% of last year's killings and injuries, Salvador said. She said they have expanded north into the Artibonite region, considered Haiti's food basket, and south of the capital, where "gangs conducted large-scale attacks to control key zones" and systematically use sexual violence to exert control. Guy Philippe, a former rebel leader in Haiti, implored Kenyans in a video message this week not to allow their police or military be deployed to Haiti.

Philippe said the Haitian people view Kenyans as their fellow African brothers but if the police were deployed to the Caribbean, Kenya's people would become the "enemies" of Haitians because they would be seen as supporting an illegitimate government. "We have a government here in Haiti that has no legitimacy, no one loves them. This government is helping gangs, killing innocent people, kidnapping and serving the interest of imperialism," he said.

Philippe served nine years in a United States prison following a guilty plea to a money laundering charge. He is best known for leading a 2004 rebellion against former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and masterminding attacks on police stations. Earlier in January, his supporters launched protests that paralyzed some cities across Haiti as they demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry.

Kenyan authorities told The Associated Press in December that the first group of about 300 officers was expected to arrive in Haiti by February. Kenya's contribution would eventually rise to 1,000 officers at the head of a 3,000-strong multinational force. Burundi, Chad, Senegal, Jamaica and Belize also have pledged troops for the mission.

Second-largest US aluminum plant to lay off most staff

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The second-largest US aluminum smelter in southeast Missouri will not require "most employees" after curtailing its operations by Jan. 28, according to a local news report citing a letter from plant management. "Due to abnormally cold weather, our operations have been severely impaired to the point where they cannot be restored while running," the Heartland News report cited the letter from Magnitude 7 Metals Llc as saying.

The letter added that Magnitude 7 would continue looking for fresh capital from potential investors to restart the smelter in the future. The 263,000 tonne-a-year smelter in Missouri's New Madrid county restarted in mid-2018

after Swiss-based ARG International AG led by former Glencore trader Matt Lucke, bought it out of bankruptcy from Noranda.

Heartland News said Lucke refused to comment on the curtailment decision. ARG International did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. The plant employs around 450 union workers, and according to a Reuters review of pollution monitor data for 2019, chemicals and soot pouring out of its smokestacks consistently produced the dirtiest air recorded in America. Industrious Labs, a nonprofit working on the energy transition, said the main challenge for aluminum plants today is the high cost of electricity, which makes up around 40% of their

total production costs. "The announcement is yet another blow to the fragile primary aluminum industry in the United States and a clear signal that the Biden Administration must act swiftly to secure renewable affordable energy to retain this essential material for America's economy," said Annie Sartor, Aluminum Campaign Director for Industrious Labs.

The United States had 23 operating plants in 1998. It now has five, including Magnitude 7, with many of the lost smelters dismantled and sites reclaimed. In March 2023, Alcoa announced the permanent closure of its 279,000 tonne-per-year Intalco aluminum smelter in Washington state to prepare the site for redevelopment.

An unlikely challenger to Putin brings a rare show of defiance

MOSCOW (AP): They have lined up by the thousands across Russia in recent days, standing in the bitter cold for a chance to sign petitions to support an unlikely challenger to President Vladimir Putin.

Boris Nadezhdin has become a dilemma for the Kremlin as he seeks to run in the March 17 presidential election. The question now is whether Russian authorities will allow him on the ballot. The stocky, bespectacled 60-year-old local legislator and academic has struck a chord with the public, openly calling for a halt to the conflict in Ukraine, the end of mobilizing Russian men for the military, and starting a dialogue with the West. He also has criticized the country's repression of LGBTQ+ activism.

"The collection of signatures has gone unexpectedly well for us," Nadezhdin told The Associated Press in an interview in Moscow. "We didn't expect this, to be honest." Nadezhdin's name is a form of the Russian word for "hope," and although he is highly unlikely to defeat the still-popular Putin, the lines are a rare sign of protest, defiance and optimism in a country that has seen a harsh crackdown on dissent since its troops rolled into Ukraine nearly two years ago.

Nadezhdin is running as a candi-

date for the Civic Initiative Party. Because the party is not represented in parliament, he's not guaranteed a spot on the ballot and must collect over 100,000 signatures, with a limit of 2,500 from each of the dozens of the vast country's regions, not just the biggest, more progressive cities. Putin, who is running as an independent candidate rather than as the candidate of the United Russia ruling party, has collected over 3 million.

Waiting to sign a petition in St. Petersburg, Alexander Rakityansky told AP he went through a "period of apathy when I thought I couldn't do anything." Now, however, he sees Nadezhdin's campaign as a chance to exercise his civil rights. Originally from Belgorod, the Russian border city hit by repeated Ukrainian attacks, Rakityansky said he backed Nadezhdin so his hometown "doesn't get bombed and people don't die on the streets."

Online videos have shown queues of supporters not just in Moscow and St. Petersburg but also in Krasnodar in the south, Saratov and Voronezh in the southwest and beyond the Ural Mountains in Yekaterinburg. Even in the Far East city of Yakutsk, 450 kilometers (280 miles) south of the Arctic Circle, Nadezhdin's team said up to 400 people a day braved temperatures

that plunged to minus 40 Celsius (minus 40 Fahrenheit) to sign petitions.

"Our weather conditions are not perfect and it's generally accepted that it's difficult to involve people in the north in some kind of activity, but people are coming every day," said Alexei Popov, the head of Nadezhdin's election team in Yakutsk. He said they had initially expected about 500 signatures in total for the entire region. At a petition collection site in Moscow, Kirill Savenkov, 48, said he supported Nadezhdin because of his stand on Ukraine and peace negotiations.

Others said they wanted a real alternative to Putin, who they suggested had led the country into a dead end. "The economy is really falling, people are getting poorer and prices are rising," said Anna, 21, of St. Petersburg, who refused to give her full name because she feared for her security. Putin, she said, has not done "anything good for the country." Nadezhdin's campaign got a boost after opposition leaders abroad, including former tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky and supporters of imprisoned opposition politician Alexei Navalny, urged Russians to support any candidate who could deny Putin a share of the vote.

Exiled opposition activist Maxim Katz said on YouTube that whatever the outcome, Nadezhdin's candidacy shows "there is one thing we know right now: Conversations about civic apathy in Russia are very far from reality. What we have is not civic apathy but a civic famine — an enormous hidden potential." Some analysts say the surge of support for Nadezhdin has surprised even the Kremlin, although Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that "we don't see him as a rival."

Analysts say the election's outcome is a foregone conclusion and that Putin will stay in power for another six years, but some also suggest it's still a moment of genuine political risk for the Kremlin, which must project an aura of legitimacy for the balloting to be seen as a genuine contest. For Putin to win a convincing victory, he needs his supporters to turn out and his critics must stay home with no "glimmer of hope," said Ekaterina Schulmann, a political scientist and nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center in Berlin.

"This is why Nadezhdin is such a problem," she said in an interview. "He provides a shadow of hope." Nadezhdin's supporters lining up in Moscow and St. Petersburg told AP it

gave them the rare opportunity to be with like-minded people who want a different leader from Putin, 71, who has ruled Russia for 24 years.

"I understood that these are the people who want to change the current government and I want to be a part of this," said Margarita, a 28-year-old student who also declined to give her surname for fear of retribution. So far, Russia's Central Election Commission has approved three candidates who were nominated by parties represented in parliament that largely support Kremlin policies: Nikolai Kharitonov of the Communist Party, Leonid Slutsky of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party and Vladislav Davankov of the New People Party. Kharitonov ran against Putin in 2004, finishing a distant second.

In December, authorities barred from the ballot Yekatarina Duntsova, a former regional lawmaker who had called for peace in Ukraine. The commission cited technical errors in her paperwork. Duntsova was probably barred because authorities "don't know her, and so in their terms she is unpredictable. And above all they dislike unpredictable things," Schulmann said.

Although there have been claims that Nadezhdin secretly has the

Kremlin's approval to run and is seen as kind of a spoiler candidate, he still could be ruled ineligible. He has appeared as a pundit on Russian television and even criticized the conflict in Ukraine during a talk show on state-controlled NTV in September 2022 — a rare level of visibility not enjoyed by other opposition politicians such as Navalny and Vladimir Kara-Murza, both now imprisoned.

In that appearance, Nadezhdin said Putin was misled by intelligence services that apparently told him Ukrainian resistance would be brief and ineffective. In his AP interview, Nadezhdin said he believes he has been allowed to run because he is a known entity and has not specifically criticized Putin. "I personally know Putin," he said, saying he met him before he became president in 2000, adding that in the 1990s, he was an assistant to then-Prime Minister Sergey Kiriyenko, now Putin's first deputy chief of staff.

Schulmann said that while authorities could allow Nadezhdin to run, it's a "dangerous gamble." "I think they will cut him off at the next stage when he brings those signatures," she said, suggesting the Central Election Commission could declare some of them invalid and bar him from the ballot.

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ICJ, global agenda selective execution

THE International Court of Justice (ICJ) stopped short of ordering a ceasefire in Gaza in a case brought forward by South Africa accusing Israel of genocide in the tiny coastal enclave but demanded that Israel try to limit deaths and damage caused by its military offensive there. While considering the urgency of the situation the international court released a six-point interim decree ordering provisional measures to protect Palestinians in Gaza. The court observed that its adjudicators are well aware of the extent of the human tragedy that is unfolding in the region and are deeply concerned about the continuing loss of life and human suffering. The court ruled that Israel must refrain from killing Palestinians or causing harm to them and that it urgently needs to get basic aid to people in Gaza. It also ruled that Israel should prevent and punish any incitement to genocide, among other measures.

Gaza and its residents have witnessed unimaginable destructions and woes during the four-month war in a thickly populated tiny enclave. Israel's unceasing bombardment and reckless ground offensive have killed more than 26,000 Palestinians, decimated vast swaths of Gaza, and driven nearly 85 per cent of its 2.3 million people from their homes. There has been tremendous pressure from the global community on Tel Aviv to halt its indiscriminate operation and allow humanitarian aid to the war-torn region but all those appeals and persuasions could not work against Israel's resoluteness and US hegemonism. Unfortunately, the United Nations and its executive arm the UN Security Council (UNSC) failed to adopt a ceasefire resolution despite weeks-long debates and multiple attempts to conceive consensus among 15 member forum primarily due to multiple uses of discriminatory veto power by the United States during the current conflict in Gaza.

After the global efforts at the UN together with OIC shuttle diplomacy, Chinese and Russian endeavours grew dim in bringing calm to the Middle East, once apartheid victim South Africa brought the case of ongoing Palestinian genocide in Gaza to the International Court of Justice, to get justice and provide some relief to bereaved Palestinians who otherwise badly betrayed by the western nations and their vanguard the UN Security Council. The Gazans' plea was not only about one of the world's most intractable conflicts and severe human rights issues but a test for the judges sitting at the most prestigious court in Hague that owes responsibility for dispensation of justice and protection of rights for the whole of the universe. Historically, it was a test of consciousness, humanity, principality, and justice for a weak and highly marginalized society vis-a-vis the ego of an apartheid regime and its powerful ally.

Ironically, over 100 days of ruthless bombing on the civilian population, unbelievable destruction of Gaza, over 26000 deaths, nearly 80000 injuries, and months-long siege of the territory neither satisfy the Israeli revenge for the October 7 attack and nearly 1200 Israeli deaths nor limitless Muslim blood prove its worth to 17 member bench at the Hague court who did not pronounce a verdict to stop the continuing bloodshed in Muslim majority region. All global institutions and multilateral forums adopt dual standards for scaling different phenomena and use different words/terms for friends and foes, for the West vis-a-vis Asia and Africa. Such shades are very much clear at the UN, the ICJ, the IAEA as well as the ICC whose agendas are universal by implementation is selective. So far, another global forum shed off its responsibility where Palestinians should move for now?

Elections versus political stability

CARETAKER Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that February 8 elections would bring political stability to the country. He hoped that the next government would work with the IMF and bring reforms in the taxation system to take the economy forward and bring political stability to the country. Pakistanis have long been victims of political anarchy and persistent economic volatility that ruined their family life and brought chaos and polarization in society. Political analysts and the public commonly perceive that a fresh election is the only recipe that can bring calm in the ongoing political tussle and revitalize peace and economic stability in the turmoil-hit nation.

In fact, fresh elections are not a guarantee for future peace and political stability rather this exercise could bring further disagreement and collusion if our politicians and civic groups do not demonstrate maturity, observe the code of conduct, cooperate with concerned authorities, and display resilience and big-heartedness in accepting the electoral results whether they champion the contest or suffer defeat. All parties and contesting candidates could not be victorious at the same time, as one's victory would be a defeat for others and vice versa. That is a part of the game and this political process should not be taken as a matter of ego, life or death rather all defeating candidates must look for their weaknesses and speed up their efforts for a victory in the next term.

Trading blame for rigging, criticizing state institutions, and making disputes out of nothing has been a long-held practice of Pakistani politicians and political parties throughout the past. The politics of hatred, accusations, and dogfighting have never brought any positivity in this country. The nation has paid a heavy price for the selfish politics of its leaders, and such behavior cannot be tolerated anymore. All Political groups have sufficient time to run their electoral campaigns and use all lawful means to get public approval in the upcoming election. However, it is the beauty of democracy and the political process that civic groups respect the public verdict and each publically elected government completes its full 5 years term. It is vital for the consolidation of democracy and the only way forward to achieve political and economic stability in the country.

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How much of the UK are we willing to sell to the ‘dear friends’ of Putin?

Fraser Nelson

THERE aren't many countries in the world willing to roll out the red carpet for Vladimir Putin, but the Emiratis did so with gusto when he visited Abu Dhabi last month. They laid on a 21-gun salute as jets painted the colours of the Russian flag on the sky. The previous evening, 48 Iranian-made drones had been sent by Russia to bomb targets in five Ukrainian cities; a typical day in his war. But Putin was treated as a conquering hero by the Emirati royal family, who greeted him as their "dear friend" when he arrived in their palace. It was televised, but hard to watch.

All the harder for me because, soon, I could be working for this family. They have agreed to buy The Spectator and The Telegraph through a US-based vehicle, RedBird IMI. There may be more layers, but if you follow the money the trail leads to Abu Dhabi. The White House suspects they're also developing military links with China and that this tiny dictatorship is not neutral but playing all sides. Buying Putin's oil and berthing Xi's ships. Now they want to be British media proprietors as well.

Lucy Frazer, the Culture Secretary, has put the Emirati bid on hold as she considers whether to let it go ahead. She has spoken about referring it to the competition regulator, but the issue here isn't about competition. It's a more important question: how close should we get to the Emiratis? They're our long-standing allies, friends of Israel (still) and have been robust against the Houthis in Yemen. But they are also the proud, flag-waving "dear friends" of Putin. Should this give us pause?

Diplomacy means accepting countries as they are, not as you'd like them to be. Saudi Arabia remains one of the most repressive nations on earth but under Mohammed bin Salman, its young Crown Prince, the kingdom is modernising as fast as anyone could reasonably expect. These are deeply conservative societies whose old attitudes are not so easy to shake. So

do we shun them until they're like us? Or do we act as allies, encouraging their progress? Perhaps offering British investment as an incentive?

For the best part of two centuries, Britain has had warm relations with what is now the UAE. The sheikhdoms that united to create the country in 1971 were all British protectorates and, even now, the RAF uses airbases there. But they have been busy

Keir Starmer's main economic policy is to attract external investors. Sunak wants them, too. The Emiratis are standing with an open cheque book, their latest offering being £10?billion to invest in various British priorities. They may even bankroll the Sizewell C nuclear plant in Suffolk, a deal Sunak badly needs. So if we close our eyes and think of the petrodollars, there is plenty of cash on offer. George Osborne was a big advocate of a "golden era" of economic relations with China where they'd be given access to Britain's mobile networks and civil nuclear plants in return for - well, not very much.

making new friends of late, buying Putin's anti-tank weapons and supporting him when he tried to bolster Assad in Syria (when Britain was mulling whether to depose him). They've been helping the Kremlin to get around sanctions, buying up Russian oil, gold, diamonds: whatever it struggles to sell in the West.

So the UAE is moving from British ally to Kremlin stooge and is trying to find out if anyone in London will notice or care. It's not clear that anyone does. Keir Starmer's main economic policy is to attract external investors. Sunak wants them, too. The Emiratis are standing with an open cheque book, their latest offering being £10?billion to invest in various British priorities. They may even bankroll the

Sizewell C nuclear plant in Suffolk, a deal Sunak badly needs. So if we close our eyes and think of the petrodollars, there is plenty of cash on offer.

George Osborne was a big advocate of a "golden era" of economic relations with China where they'd be given access to Britain's mobile networks and civil nuclear plants in return for - well, not very much. The then chancellor thought he was being worldly and

ously. But in Britain (unlike in some other countries) there are no laws that stop newspapers being bought by foreign governments. It has never really come up before.

But the security implications of foreign investment seem to have only dawned on governments in the past few years. Emirati purchases have been creeping up the scale of cultural sensitivity. A 10 per cent stake in Heathrow Airport, a 15 per cent stake in Vodafone, and a 49 per cent stake in wind farms (Dogger Bank and East Anglia Three). They bought Man City FC and poured so much money into it that its rivals started to cry foul. Buying a newspaper is a new frontier, something no foreign government has done before.

So where, if anywhere, do we draw the line? Many democracies have moved to restrict foreign government ownership of advanced technologies (microchips), health infrastructure (hospitals) and critical infrastructure (water, energy, ports, 5G). Britain has tended to be more liberal. "We can be quite sentimental about some of our so-called treasured assets," said Dominic Johnson, one of Kemi Badenoch's business ministers, a few weeks ago. "Media and information has moved on." If this view prevails, then the deal will pass.

The media is certainly changing. More people get their news from Instagram than any newspaper. But I'm not sure how healthy this trend is, or whether Facebook or TikTok can ever be expected to perform the role played by the free press. There is something precious in our tradition of independent, vibrant newspapers. Something worth protecting. And something that is simply not compatible with being owned by a foreign government. To be sure, the Emiratis are our allies. At least for now. But if that changes and they get closer to Moscow, how much of the country's apparatus do we want in their hands? So now, this deal isn't about simple investment: this is about testing what influence it can buy. It is now up to Lucy Frazer to decide what she is willing to sell.

The Telegraph

Azeri journalists believe media arrests are retaliatory

Aziza Goyushzade, Parvana Bayramova & Tapdiq Farhadoglu

EFFORTS to free investigative journalist Hafiz Babali from prison in Azerbaijan failed last week when the Baku Court of Appeal denied a motion to release him to house arrest. Babali, an editor at the independent Turan News Agency, was detained on December 13 on charges of "smuggling foreign currency" and ordered to be held in pre-trial detention for three months.

His lawyer, Rasul Jafarov, told VOA that Babali denies the accusations and believes the case against him is related to his investigative journalism. Babali is editor of Turan's economy section. Since late 2023, accusations of smuggling foreign currency have been leveled against five other journalists, all of whom work at Abzas Media, an outlet that focuses on corruption.

If convicted, they could face up to eight years in prison. The journalists deny the accusations and link their persecution to investigations into suspected corruption among high-ranking officials in Azerbaijan. The arrests came amid a spike in media detentions, with at least 10 journalists detained since November.

Some journalists and human rights defenders have noted the timing of the arrests, with a snap presidential election due to be held February. Aynur Elgunesh, editor-in-chief of Meydan TV, says the arrests took focus away from other issues, which benefited the government. "We began to focus a little more on ourselves, and arrests and agitations inevitably led to other issues being pushed back," she told VOA.

Bahruz Maharramov, a member of the Azerbaijani parliament, told VOA he did not agree with the claim that the legal cases are related to media activity. "There are specific legal facts about any citizen against whom criminal prosecution has been initiated. Work is being done in this direction," he said.

One of the detainees, Elnar Gasimova, spoke with VOA shortly before being called in for questioning a second time. Gasimova, who also works for Abzas Media, said she expected to be detained on bogus charges. "I do not accept the accusations related to the Abzas Media case, neither on my behalf nor on behalf of others, because we are journalists and are subjected to this treatment solely because of our professional activities," she said.

Authorities later detained Gasimova on January 13 and ordered her held in pre-trial detention for 2 1/2 months on charges of "group smuggling." Elgunesh told VOA that Abzas Media was trying to convey real information to the audience about owners of investments, the companies involved, and that few tenders - invitations to bid on a project - are held in the country. "At the same time, Abzas Media questioned the wealth of people represented in the highest level

of power. Thus, it became a threat to the government. They saw that the law they drafted had little effect on independent journalists," said Elgunesh, referring to a 2022 media law.

Enacted by President Ilham Aliyev in January 2022, the media law was condemned by media groups, international organizations and the Venice Commission, a Council of Europe body that advises on constitutional matters. Human rights defender Anar Mammadli told VOA that freedom of media and expression have always been under government pressure. "Azerbaijani authorities, demonstrating political intolerance, are conducting a policy of pressure against those with different opinions, including critical journalists, media organizations and social media users. The main purpose of this is to prevent different, alternative opinions in the country," he said. Mammadli said the arrests of so many journalists in recent weeks is an indicator of the government's intolerant attitude toward freedom of expression. To prevent this, he said, the government must show tolerance for criticism.

"It should not be afraid of criticism. It must demonstrate political will. Unfortunately, this does not exist," he said. Elgunesh says international organizations are paying attention to the human rights situation in Azerbaijan. "We saw from the PACE session that the issue of human rights is on the agenda. I hope that external pressure will continue. In Azerbaijan, the government will not be able to narrow the boundaries of freedom of speech as much as it wants," she said. PACE is the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. In a statement to VOA, the European Union foreign policy and security affairs press office said freedom of expression and independent media are universal values.

"The human rights situation in Azerbaijan, and the situation of independent media in particular, remain an issue of concern that we repeatedly raise with our Azerbaijani counterparts," said the statement, attributed to spokesperson Peter Stano. "We use every opportunity to call on Azerbaijan to uphold its domestic and international obligations regarding freedom of media and human rights of its own citizens." Azerbaijan is ranked 151 among 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index where 1 shows the best media environment. Maharramov, the parliamentarian, told VOA he does need believe the annual index compiled by Reporters Without Borders is objective. "We do not consider this kind of prejudice acceptable," he said. Babali's lawyer says the efforts to secure his client's release or move to house arrest will continue. "If there is a desire or request from him, relevant complaints will be sent to the European Court of Human Rights," Jafarov said.

Decoding Trump's 10% tariff plan

Anthony William Donald Anastasi

IT seems as though Donald Trump has secured his position as the GOP nominee with a recent victory in New Hampshire; leaving Nikki Haley, Trump's last remaining Republican contender, with no real path to the party's nomination for president. With the ever-increasing chances of Trump returning to the White House, his proposed 10 percent tariff on all imported goods deserves a much closer look.

This bold, protectionist move, aiming to boost American manufacturing, could have profound implications for the US economy, disrupt global trade, and add a new dimension to the already complex and tense US-China relationship. At its heart, Trump's tariff plan aims to reinvigorate American manufacturing by imposing a blanket tariff, attempting to encourage local production and reduce reliance on foreign goods. However, what

this plan would do is shift income from net importers to net exporters, weakening demand for foreign-made goods and giving the Treasury an influx of new revenues. This could potentially narrow the US' trade and budget deficits and might spur employment in certain sectors, offering a glimmer of hope to the industries long overshadowed by global competition.

However, this approach is not without its pitfalls. Increased tariffs mean higher prices for imported finished consumer goods and intermediate goods, which could stoke the fires of inflation at a time when the economy is still recovering from pandemic-induced upheavals. Additionally, this policy could exacerbate income inequality. The increased costs of imports would disproportionately affect lower-income households, widening the economic divide. Thus, while some sectors may flourish, the broader picture

could be one of rising prices and deepening inequality.

As the world's largest economy running the world's largest trade deficit, Trump's tariff plan for the US could send shockwaves through an already unsettled global economy. The US consumer, a cornerstone of global economic growth due to the country's substantial trade deficit, plays a crucial role in driving demand worldwide. By curtailing US demand for foreign goods, thus dampening global demand, the plan would negatively impact the global economy, namely for countries with large trade surpluses such as Germany, China, and Japan. Tariffs often provoke retaliatory measures from trade partners, which could complicate global supply chains, and encourage countries such as China to seek alternative markets or impose their tariffs, affecting American consumers and exporters. This

could initiate a shift in global trade norms, leading to an era where protectionist policies become the new standard, further destabilizing an already fragile global economy, exacerbating deglobalization, and decreasing international cooperation.

The potential implications for US-China trade relations are particularly significant. The US is China's largest export market, and any disruption in this trade flow could have far-reaching effects on the Chinese economy. This might entice Chinese firms to look for economic partners elsewhere, further hurting the bilateral economic relationship. More importantly, such a policy shift by the US would likely be viewed in Beijing as a move toward increasing unpredictability and antagonism, potentially leading to reciprocal trade barriers and derailing the recent progress made in the

bilateral relationship.

Unbeknownst to Trump and whoever helped him form this plan, it's essential to recognize that trade imbalances are not solely a function of trade policies but are deeply intertwined with domestic economic policies and economic imbalances. Trade imbalances are caused by domestic imbalances of savings and investment, which are in turn caused by imbalances in domestic distributions of income. Trump's plan overlooks the complexity of the modern global economy and attempts to solve a 21st-century problem with a 17th-century solution. The US' focus should be on the complex task of fostering a balanced global trading environment and crafting international institutions, by consensus building among nations, that encourage the balancing of domestic savings and investments, rather than resorting to tariffs, which are merely symptomatic treatments of deeper economic

issues. In an era where products are "Made in the World" rather than in single countries, tariffs could negatively impact American businesses and workers who are part of these global value chains, hurting the folks this plan was made to help.

In light of Trump's victory in New Hampshire, his large lead in the polls of the remaining states in the GOP primary contest, and the increasing likelihood of his return to the White House, his proposed 10 percent tariff plan requires a careful look at its potential global impact. Much like as we saw in his first stint in the White House, Trump's trade policies seem to be out of step with the complexity of the current global trading system. As Americans and the world watch the unfolding horse race between Trump and Biden, we should all hope for a more balanced approach to international trade from whoever occupies the White House in 2025.

For an innovative France-China partnership

David Gosset

THIS year, France and China celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations. In a rapidly changing global environment, the connection between the two countries has evolved into a dynamic partnership marked by historical collaborations, shared economic interests, and a common quest for strategic independence.

As we navigate the intricacies of a multipolar world, it is imperative that these two ancient nations do not only build on their existing cooperation but also pioneer innovative avenues that will propel their bilateral exchanges to new and meaningful heights. Over the past decades, the two countries have developed a robust foundation of collaboration in areas such as trade, finance, technology, science, culture and international relations. The bilateral relationship has weathered major geopolitical transformations, economic crises and global challenges, demonstrating its resilience and unique potential.

The economic ties between France and China have flourished, making them integral players in each other's economic landscapes. According to data from the French National Institute of Statistics, China-France trade in goods in 2022 exceeded the 100 billion (\$108.56 billion) mark for the first time. However, as economic powerhouses, both countries have much to gain from fostering deeper cooperation. A true innovative spirit it should be harnessed to create

novel economic opportunities that go beyond traditional sectors. Embracing emerging technologies, sustainable development and green initiatives can lay the groundwork for forward-thinking economic synergies.

Besides, France and China are cultural powers that have consistently engaged in cultural exchanges that celebrate diversity and the effort for better mutual understanding. While continuing these exchanges is crucial, a creative approach would involve leveraging technology to enhance cultural collaboration. Virtual reality, augmented reality and other cutting-edge tools can bridge the physical divide, allowing people from both countries to experience each other's rich cultural contexts in unprecedented ways. This not only fosters cultural appreciation but also opens up new avenues for artistic expression and collaboration. As the China-Europe-America Museums Cooperation Initiative demonstrates, museums in particular can become leading platforms to deepen people to people exchange.

Scientific and technological cooperation between France and China has been a cornerstone of their relationship. From aerospace and nuclear industry to renewable energy, the two countries have made significant strides in joint research and development. The next frontier in their collaboration lies in embracing emerging technologies such as artificial intelli-

gence, applications of quantum physics, biotechnology and neuroscience. By investing in joint innovation hubs and research centers, France and China can pool their intellectual resources and talent to address global challenges and contribute to the advancement of mankind. Environmental sustainability is an urgent global concern, and both countries have expressed their commitment to combating climate change. The traditional cooperation in renewable energy and environmental protection should be expanded to include joint ventures in sustainable urban development, eco-friendly technologies and green infrastructure.

Research on nuclear fusion is also of the utmost importance. Should they know how to combine their strengths in the knowledge economy, France and China would emerge as leaders in the global effort to build a sustainable future. In the realm of international relations, Franco-Chinese synergies are increasingly crucial. As the world undergoes profound geopolitical shifts, the two countries, which are permanent members of the UN Security Council, must work together to promote stability, peace and dialogue. Innovative diplomatic approaches, such as digital diplomacy and joint initiatives to address global challenges such as public health crises and cybersecurity threats, can solidify their roles as responsible global stakeholders. France and China should, among other policies, coor-

dinate their approach toward the African continent whose population will reach 2.5 billion by 2050 according to some UN projections.

Education remains the bedrock of progress, and the two countries have highly successful academic institutions. To further strengthen their ties, they should explore innovative educational collaborations, such as joint research programs, ambitious student exchange initiatives, and the development of interdisciplinary courses that prepare the next generation for meeting the challenges of the future. While pushing ahead inspired by an innovative mindset, it is crucial for France and China to be mindful of preserving their cultural identities and their humanistic values. A harmonious blend of tradition and progress can create a unique and powerful partnership that serves as a reference for international cooperation, and introduces to new forms of globalization.

Obviously, the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations offers an opportunity to redefine the contours of the Franco-Chinese partnership. By looking at innovation and creativity across economic, cultural, scientific and diplomatic spheres, the two sides can deepen their cooperation as well as contribute to shaping a more harmonious and prosperous world. Their collaborative innovation will not only strengthen their bilateral ties but also inspire the global community to aspire for a future marked by cohesiveness, sustainable progress and shared prosperity.

The China Daily

Democrats risk pushing business community into Trump camp

Khaled Abou Zahr

DURING any presidential election year in the US, one wonders how candidates will handle their policies, whether related to security, the economy or foreign affairs. Additionally, consideration is given to how different target groups perceive or judge these candidates. Recently, there has been a surprising shift, with various prominent businessmen in the US expressing positive views of Donald Trump's presidency. As we are still in the early stages of the primaries, one might question if this is a vote of confidence, an encouragement for Trump or a message for President Joe Biden.

During the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos last week, Jamie Dimon, chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase, the biggest bank in the US, gave a view of the Trump administration that no one was expecting to hear from him. During a CNBC interview, he stated: "Take a step back, be honest. He was kind of right about NATO, kind of right on immigration. He grew the economy quite well. Trade tax reform worked. He was right about some of China. He wasn't wrong about some of these critical issues." It is also interesting to note that, a few months back, there were rumors and calls from other leading business executives for Dimon to stand in the elections.

Meanwhile, billionaire former Facebook executive Chamath Palihiptiya, who views himself as a Democrat and had initially criticized Trump, praised some of the former president's policies on a podcast at the end of 2023. Palihiptiya admitted to initially grading Trump an "F" and fearing the "end of the world" when he was elected in 2016. However, as time passed and emotions subsided, he revised his assessment, eventually recognizing Trump as a "B, B-plus," saying that he did a pretty good job as president. This shift in perspective highlights Palihiptiya's evolving appreciation for certain aspects of the Trump administration.

The underlying message is that it is time for a less divided political landscape, especially when facing severe global challenges. The US political establishment should focus on results, rather than each administration destroying or moving away from its predecessor's policies. In short, the business community is seeking stability and continuity on important topics. There is

also a real worry among the business community over the drifting of the Democratic Party toward what one might call a European-style leftist position, or deploying a socialist vision for the US.

Judging by the reactions and attacks on Dimon following his statement, it is evident that this time has not yet come and the political divide will persist. It is also apparent that Trump is now being used as an excuse to avoid meaningful conversations. What is being conveyed is that political leaders should not denigrate the people who vote for Trump; on the contrary, they should listen to their grievances and understand their wishes. Dismissing their concerns, as well as any positive remarks about Trump's actions, is misguided.

This is probably why renowned billionaire investor Ray Dalio expressed pessimism about the 2024 presidential election potentially being a rematch between Biden and Trump, citing concerns about the acceptance of its outcome and clashes between the far left and far right. Also speaking at Davos, Dalio highlighted his worries over Biden's vigor and the emergence of a "more progressive" Democratic Party against a "conservative, nationalistic" Republican Party. He clearly stated that both candidates are a threat to the stock market. And if we consider the stock market as a forward-looking indicator, this means that he considers both politicians to be a threat to the future of the US.

This highlights the general concern about the divisive state of American politics and the potential for a contentious 2024 election, similar to the tumultuous 2020 race. It is evident that, starting with the business community, more voices are calling for a stronger middle ground, with some even advocating a return to a more centrist approach to bridge ideological divides. The drift toward irreconcilable differences and the dangerous impact of ideological infighting are very clear for the future of the US both domestically and internationally. Key elements of governance, economics and taxes have also been politicized. The entire business community is now emphasizing the importance of reforms, regardless of the election outcome, in order to avoid any uncertainty on the future trajectory of US politics.

This is probably why

Blackstone Group CEO Steve Schwarzman, a billionaire who was a Trump supporter in 2020 before coming out against the former president two years ago, has said he is still deciding whether he will publicly back the former president or one of his rivals this year. He said he was watching for any election "surprises" as he weighs his support. "I'm in the let's wait and see how this works. I'm not into the hypothetical world yet as much as you'd like me to be," he said last week. As the primaries have now kicked off, the tone indicates more aggressiveness. In New Hampshire on Tuesday, Trump continued his winning streak in the Republican race against Nikki Haley, adding to his previous victory in Iowa. However, unlike the previous overwhelming outcome, Trump did not achieve a knockout blow. The allocation of New Hampshire's 22 delegates saw Trump receiving 12 and Haley securing nine.

On the other side, despite not actively campaigning in New Hampshire, Joe Biden secured victory in the state's Democratic presidential primary through a write-in campaign organized by his allies and surrogates. It is worth noting that hedge fund billionaire Bill Ackman committed \$1 million to support Rep. Dean Phillips' challenge for the Democratic nomination, clearly looking for a change in the future of the party.

All this suggests that the business community no longer aligns with the current Democratic Party leadership. Although such businessmen hesitate to openly endorse Trump, there is growing skepticism toward Biden, who appears to have allowed the left-leaning middle management of his administration to exert significant influence. There is no doubt that leading executives are now starting to believe that the Democratic Party has been taken over by the progressives, pushing the entire political spectrum to the extremes. Their bullying tactics of cancel culture and forcing agendas that go against American family values have created the need for voters to look to Trump. This is why the next election goes beyond choosing the next president - it is about the risk to the core principles and values that have made the US the great nation that it is. And business leaders find themselves uneasy with both likely solutions, as they grapple with the risk posed to the country's fundamental principles and values.

Farmers' revolt has turned France into a tinderbox

NO battle plan survives contact with the enemy," said Bismarck's great field marshal Count von Moltke, a piece of wisdom Emmanuel Macron (who's just given a funeral oration for the late Wolfgang Schäuble in serviceable German) might want to ponder. His brand-new cabinet and brand-new 34-year-old PM, Gabriel Attal, were supposed to bring relief, and a breath of fresh air, to government.

Instead, after the own goal by new education minister Amélie Oudéa-Castera, who has attracted controversy over her reasons for moving her son from a state school to Paris's poshest, private Catholic Lycée, le Président is facing a much more serious crisis: farmers are rising in anger.

As in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Poland, columns of tractors blocking roads, and demonstrations barring access to prefectures across the country, are giving rise to a fear of a gilets verts revolt, akin to the 18-month 2018 gilets jaunes popular rebellion that scarred the fabric of politics for far longer than it actually lasted.

"Being a farmer in France amounts to reading Kafka on a tractor," the environmental journalist Emmanuelle Ducros wrote this week in L'Opinion, a centre-Right daily, in a piece detailing in excruciating detail the thicket of rules and regulations blighting French farmers.

These come from local, regional, national and European agencies, often contradict one another, and each require their own field of application (a farm can be "zoned" in as many as five different areas, operating under different rules

managed by different bodies, almost all empowered to fine and ban).

There are norms for everything: for a chicken farm producing eggs, the rulebook is 167 pages long, and includes the minimum width of a chicken cage (30cm), the inclination of the bottom part (14 degrees), the trapdoor size (40cm wide, 35cm high), and more rules on dust, ventilation, and shape of perch. There are 14 separate regulations on how to properly trim a hedge bordering a field, depending variously on the zoning code, national heritage code, environmental code, and so on.

Subject to whether a ditch is classified as such, or as a small brook, you either must, or are forbidden, to clean it up. The Common Agricultural Policy investigators require timestamped and geo-localised pictures of each field to prove cultivation on the right dates, and use a channel on an EU satellite to spot any deviation. Days when work is banned, to allow birds to nest, clash with those mandating trimming.

France is known for the "over-transposition" of EU regulation: to placate the French Green party (who join the politics of Jeremy Corbyn with the bolshiness of Extinction Rebellion), many rules have been pushed further by the government. No wonder that French farmers spend 20 per cent of a very long working week on paperwork.

As a result, they watch with fury their produce being priced out of a market that has been hit by inflation like everywhere else, while competitors from countries France has

free trade deals with undercut them. Morocco, which isn't bound either by the French employment code or most of the Brussels sanitary or green regulations, can sell 420,000 tonnes of tomatoes a year at 2.49 a kilo, while the French ones cost 4.50, earning centimes for the growers. Brazilian or Thai chicken goes at 5 a kilo, against 11 for a French-raised bird. France waived import duties for Ukrainian grain when the country was invaded by Russia, but this doesn't help French wheat growers.

The situation turned nasty this week, with a family of farmers demonstrating peacefully mowed down by a car running a roadblock. It was described as an accident, with the driver charged for involuntary manslaughter. But the issue has become a tinderbox.

So far, Attal has spent a lot of time sweet-talking farmers. His one stroke of luck is that, unlike the Yellow Vests, farmers traditionally have unions and professional organisations who seem determined not to raise the stakes unless they see clear provocation. They, as well as the government, are careful not to alienate the public: the French love their farmers and the countryside, which they see as the base of France's traditions, from gastronomy to landscapes, and even greatness.

But the danger remains that a mishandling of such an electric situation may yet add votes to the extremes, mostly on the Right. There's no general election scheduled in France before 2027; but the June European elections could become a life-size poll on Macron's loss of the people's trust.

Under Kremlin suppression, speaking your own language is a protest

DURING a visit to Ukraine in 2021, I had an encounter in Lviv that left a profound impression. I met S., a young man from the republic of Chuvashia who deliberately chose not to speak Russian. Instead, we communicated in Ukrainian and Tatar. What could have led to his decision?

At the age of 16, he was convicted as an extremist for sharing memes related to Crimea and the Russian Orthodox Church on VKontakte. As soon as he turned 18, he left for Ukraine and learned Ukrainian, reserving Russian solely for conversations with his Russian-speaking Ukrainian mother. Having grown up in his father's indigenous region of Chuvashia, S. had some knowledge of Tatar from private tutoring, given Tatarstan's proximity to his hometown.

I attempted to argue with S., emphasizing the importance of separating politics from language, viewing it solely as a means of communication. However, S. remained resolute. Instead of calling his hometown by its Russian name Cheboksary, he used the local name - ?upa?kar. Many people depoliticize language, viewing it as nothing but a tool for communication. But under the Kremlin's oppression, speaking the languages indigenous to Russia's diverse regions has become an instrument of protest, as can be seen with the most widely spoken of these languages, Tatar.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the relaxation of central control from Moscow, Russia's republics experienced a brief period of national awakening. Tatarstan, in particular, gained a degree of sovereignty. People began to advocate for independence and voted in favor of it in a

referendum. However, due to complex Tatar-Bashkir relations and the absence of a border with independent Kazakhstan, full independence remained out of reach.

In those 10 years, Tatar went through a period of revitalization, resulting in the emergence of activists undertaking remarkable Tatar language projects. Tatar became less marginal and more visible in public spaces, even being spoken in schools. However, by the 2000s, this momentum began to stagnate. Tatarstan's sovereignty waned, and the Tatar language was relegated to nominal status within the republic.

Beginning with the 2004 law that halted the shift of Tatar to the Latin alphabet and culminating 2017 legislation that rendered the study of Tatar optional, we have witnessed a gradual erosion of Tatar language rights. Notably, Tatar is a Turkic language that has been written with multiple alphabets like many other languages within the former USSR. The Cyrillic version of Tatar has faced ongoing scrutiny from linguists due to its inherent flaws. Consequently, Tatarstan made efforts to revert to the Latin alphabet in 1999, even printing textbooks for schools and universities and erecting street signs in the script.

However, President Vladimir Putin's administration perceived these as signs of separatism, leading to the introduction of a new law that prohibited languages within the Russian Federation from being written in any alphabet other than Cyrillic. This did not just affect Tatarstan. The Karelian authorities declined to comply with the law, resulting in Karelian, a Finno-Ugric language, not being recognized as a

state language, firmly rooted in their refusal to relinquish their linguistic heritage.

In 2017, Russian-speaking parents from Tatarstan wrote to Putin, requesting that Tatar be reclassified as an elective subject in schools. A particularly alarming aspect of the resulting law is that Tatar schools in the republic could no longer use textbooks in Tatar. These materials must be certified by the federal Education Ministry, which faces a shortage of competent personnel for this task.

As of 2024, this certification process has stagnated, rendering Tatar schools institutions where Tatar is taught as if it were a foreign language rather than fully integrated into the curriculum." This law primarily impacts Tatar speakers, as Tatarstan remains the only place in the world where their language holds official status and is used in books, media, and government discourse. Astonishingly, even if you are pursuing a Ph.D. in Tatar language and literature at Kazan University, it is forbidden to submit your thesis in Tatar.

The law has had a direct impact on Tatar language teachers, most of whom either lost their jobs or had to retrain as Russian language instructors. The majority of schools in Tatarstan have undergone police inspections to sniff out "forced Tatar teaching." During this period of scrutiny, the renowned Tatar writer, Rkail Zaidulla, said that while the checks should stop, the authorities clearly saw teaching the Tatar language as a "manifestation of extremism." Currently, the infrastructure that allows the embrace of Tatar culture to exist and develop is limited. Despite Moscow's efforts, self-initiated schemes are develop-

ing, though they do not yet constitute major pillars of support for the Tatar-speaking population. Numerous organizations and events like Urban Tatar, Tat Cult Fest and Peç'n bazar? promote Tatar culture and language in a contemporary context.

But these initiatives can also assume a political purpose, even if that was not the intent. In one notable performance, a Tatar rapper named Usal is screaming from the stage of Kazan Kremlin, "Azatqa - Azat!?" (Freedom to Azat)," referring to Tatar political prisoner Azat Miftakhov.

Nevertheless, even these initiatives may be at risk. Using Tatar in public spaces could potentially be categorized as hate speech or extremism. There is also the potential that embracing non-Russian languages universally could lead to accusations of nationalism and Nazism. A recent example involves a Sakha (Yakut) writer and teacher, Yuri Mekumyanov, who authored an article in his indigenous language for a local newspaper on language issues and subsequently faced accusations of hate speech against Russians. Many Tatars who use Tatar in public spaces have encountered similar accusations, as doing so is considered to be unethical because not everyone can understand it.

Despite the increasing risks and oppressive measures coming from Moscow, there are no laws prohibiting the use of non-Russian languages. But in these totalitarian times, it's important to remember that while history shows the Kremlin can crack down harder, the non-Russian languages spoken by Russia's diverse peoples have become a powerful tool and "safe" space to express political ideas.

The Moscow Times

The Tory party's total surrender is paving the way for a British Trump

Allister Heath

THERE are two viable ways to respond to an existential threat in the state of nature: fight or flight. You either destroy your predator, or you run away. You don't just stand still, wave a white flag and wait for the end. The same is true in the political jungle, and yet the Tories' nervous systems are now so dysfunctional that they have produced neither of the rational physiological responses to the terrifying likelihood of a Labour landslide.

Rather than launching the fight of its life, the Government's reaction has been to freeze, to keep making the same mistakes, to double-down on the same flawed strategy, to do little and to say even less; as political death wishes go, this one takes some beating.

Wouldn't it at least make sense to try not to lose the election, and to declare total war against the Labour Party, the Left-wing lawyers, the socialist civil servants and the woke Blob? Would it not be a good idea to seek to regain the initiative or to mould the news agenda? Such an obvious approach is apparently too arduous, too politically incorrect: it's less controversial to roll over and accept defeat. The Tories cannot even organise a proper putsch: Sir Simon Clarke's half-hearted attempt at ousting Rishi Sunak was never going to succeed. Clarke is right that the Tories' current strategy guarantees an electoral massacre - almost all Conservative MPs privately agree - but his colleagues won't remove

the Prime Minister. Apart from anything else, a successful coup requires a leader in waiting who could gain the support of enough MPs while promising significant improvement in the polls.

The Tories are so divided between their three warring factions - the woke Lefties who wouldn't be out of place in the Liberal Democrats, the centrist careerists, and the squabbling Right-wingers - that they would find it impossible to agree on a successor, let alone to back the sorts of policies that the public might actually want. Sunak's greatest mistake is an analytical one. He doesn't understand that Britain's centre-Right electorate - in common with its counterparts in other Western democracies - has changed dramatically. Potential Tory voters used to be broadly supportive of authority and opposed to Left-wing attempts at disrupting the status quo; today, they are largely insurgents who feel under pressure from a hostile Leftist elite and who believe the economy and society to be broken.

Republican primary voters are now certain to reselect Donald Trump; on the Continent, eurosceptic parties are on the rise everywhere, fuelled further by an eruption of farmers' protests across Europe. Old centre-Right parties are dying or have entirely reinvented themselves, and populist politics continues to gain ground. The British electorate thought that it was voting for change in 2016

and 2019, but was severely disappointed. Its appetite for radicalism hasn't waned. It is preparing to punish the Tories for their betrayal, but it hasn't fallen in love with Keir Starmer, a central figure in the Left-wing, business-as-usual establishment it has come to despise.

British centre-Right voters want competent leadership, but above all radical change. They are desperate for politicians who break the mould, who defy the establishment. They are extremely angry at the state of Britain, and at the record of all the political parties. They are, in other words, and whether we like it or not, on the hunt for a British Trump. To be clear, I don't mean somebody who cannot tell the truth, or who cannot accept defeat at elections. I mean somebody who, like the former US president, is an outsider, isn't the product of Westminster, who "tells it as it is", who is pro-growth, who isn't hamstrung by net zero or human rights laws, and who would be willing to do what it takes to crack down on crime and regain control of immigration.

Sunak briefly dabbled with a more popular approach to politics, but didn't communicate it well and quickly reverted to type. He represents a technocratic version of the centre-Right that is actually not very good at solving complex technical problems and which has no future. It can't truly address immigration, increase growth,

build more homes, tackle extremism, reform the NHS properly, reduce welfarism or even fix potholes. The PM's situation is thus disastrous. The recent YouGov MMR poll in The Telegraph put the Tories on 26 per cent of the vote, even with relatively benign assumptions; the most recent regular YouGov poll has them on 20 per cent, Redfield & Wilton on 22 per cent and WeThink on 23 per cent.

A crucial question is whether Nigel Farage properly re-enters the fray at the head of his very own Reform party. He isn't quite a British Trump - his appeal is more narrowly on the Right - but he may very well be elected in Clacton and would undoubtedly give his party a huge boost. The Tories fell to 165 seats in 1997 (out of 659) and 156 (out 670) in 1906; their floor this time around could be substantially lower. In the short-term, the Government needs some high-profile Rwanda deportations, a game-changing abolition of inheritance tax, and extended scrutiny of Labour's more unpopular policies if it is to avoid obliteration. But unless it embraces a very different approach, the most successful political party in history may finally have had its day.

New political vehicles can emerge even under first past the post, as the rise of the Labour Party in the 1920s demonstrates, and the gap in the marketplace is just as wide 100 years on. Will the next conservative Prime Minister really be a member of the Conservative party?



ISLAMABAD: A shopkeeper arranging and displaying perfumes to attract the customers at his shop in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Increase in exports cause historic hike in vegetable prices

ISLAMABAD (INP): A government document on Saturday exposed the cause of historic hike in vegetable prices in the country.

According to the paper the vegetable exports registered 232 percent increase in December last year.

“Over 92,000 metric tonnes of vegetables were exported to overseas in December,” the document shared.

The volume of vegetable exports remained 11.46 billion rupees in month of December. “In comparison vegetable exports were Rs 3.45 billion in previous financial year,” the paper read.

The exports of vegetables registered 86 pct hike in comparison to November. “The value of vegetable exports in November was over six billion rupees,” according to the government.

China's mobile phone shipments up 6.5 pct in 2023

BEIJING (APP): China's mobile phone shipments rose 6.5 percent year on year to 289 million units in 2023, according to the China academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT).

5G phone shipments came in at 240 million units last year, increasing 11.9 percent on a yearly basis and accounting for 82.

8 percent of China's total mobile phone shipments in 2023, said the CAICT, a research institute under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Domestic brands continued to dominate China's mobile phone market in 2023, with total shipments growing 1.1 percent from a year earlier to 231 million units.

A total of 406 domestic-brand new phone models were rolled out last year, up 5.5 percent year on year, CAICT data showed.

In December 2023 alone, the total mobile phone shipments reached roughly 28.28 million units, up 1.5 percent year on year, the data revealed.

Foreign ministry to set up counter at Sialkot: SCCI president

SIALKOT (APP): Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik said that Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar had accepted their demand to set up a Ministry of Foreign Affairs counter at the BFC Sialkot for attestation of trade-related documents.

In a statement, Abdul Ghafoor Malik said that the Sialkot chamber had advocated for the inclusion of federal government departments, such as FBR, PSW, WAPDA, SNGPL, and notably an attestation counter of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to enhance facilitation for Sialkot exporters. "I emphasized these considerations during various meetings with key stakeholders, including the

Punjab Chief Minister, Minister Industries Punjab, Secretary Industries Punjab, and notably, in a meeting with Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar on January 2, 2024, wherein the Prime Minister promised to incorporate federal government departments into Business Facilitation Centres (BFCs)," he added.

He said that the Prime Minister had ordered the ministries concerned to establish counters of PSW, FBR/Customs, Power Distribution Companies, and Sui Northern Gas Pipelines at all BFCs across Punjab. "In a significant breakthrough, the Prime Minister has also sanctioned the establishment of an additional counter of the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs only at BFC Sialkot. This development would alleviate the inconvenience faced by Sialkot exporters in traveling to Islamabad for the attestation of their business documents," he added.

Malik said, "I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar, Chief Minister Syed Moshin Raza Naqvi and Provincial Minister Industries Mr. S.M. Tanveer."

He said that their collective efforts had not only revolutionized government service delivery for businesses in Punjab but substantial steps were also taken for fostering a conducive environment for ease of doing business.

Reception for trade and investment officers posted abroad

SIALKOT (APP): Director General (DG) Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Punjab Region-I Shahzad Ahmed Khan has said that the world is changing rapidly and the organisation is going to serve in important countries to raise the prestige of Pakistan and introduce its products.

He expressed these views at a reception organized for 39 trade and investment officers posted in foreign countries by prominent industrialist of the country, Ejaz A. Khokhar, former chairman of Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PRGMEA).

President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Abdul Ghafoor Malik, Chairman AirSial Fazal Jillani, Vice Chairman AirSial Umer Mir, Chief Executive AirSial Amin Ahsan, former Chairman Sialkot International Airport Limited (SIAL) Babar Iqbal, Naem Akhtar, former Chairman Sialkot Tannery Zone (STZ) Sheikh Naveed Iqbal, former President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Abdul

Waheed Sandal, Dr. Khurram Anwar Khawaja, Chairman Pakistan Surgical Association Hassan Yousaf Bajwa, Jahangir Bajwa and other leaders were also present on the occasion.

Group leader DG TDAP Shahzad Ahmed said, "We assure you that we will serve you wholeheartedly and keep in contact with you. Now the business community also has to improve the quality of their products and fulfill their commitments on time. We will all work together to improve the image of Pakistan and will not give anyone a chance to complain." He also thanked Ijaz A. Khokhar for hosting the reception.

Earlier, prominent industrialist Ejaz A. Khokhar congratulated all officers posted abroad and said the business community of Pakistan, especially of Sialkot, expected that the trade and investment officers appointed abroad should keep in touch with all the trade bodies of the homeland and in whichever country they are stationed, they will establish contact with reputable importers of that country and introduce them to the products of Pakistan and by guiding

them in every possible way, they will give them ideal support in issuing visas to them as well. He added that the newly appointed officers would have to work under the changing requirements. Ejaz A. Khokhar said that by giving good businessmen the status of honorary consular of Pakistan can also have a good impact on our business. He said, "We will also need your guidance to make it possible to participate in fairs and roadshows in foreign countries and about new conventions and other conditions."

Adnan Mehmood Awan, former Deputy Commissioner of Sialkot, who was posted in New York, said that he had the opportunity to serve in Sialkot twice. "The people of Sialkot are loving towards officers and cooperative," he added.

Addressing the ceremony, Chairman AirSial Fazal Jillani said, "With much effort we have made a place for ourselves in the markets of the world. If the officers working in the Pakistani embassies cooperate even a little with the businessmen going here, it will make things easier for us."

Shamshad underscores doubling tax-to-GDP ratio to achieve development goals

KARACHI (INP): Caretaker Finance Minister Dr. Shamshad Akhtar underscored the imperative of doubling the tax-to-GDP ratio to achieve development goals during a ceremony marking World Customs Day at Customs House Karachi.

Addressing the gathering, the Finance Minister outlined the challenges in customs reforms, emphasizing the need for a simplified system to combat issues like money laundering, smuggling, fiscal fraud, and tax evasion, which adversely impact the economy.

Dr. Akhtar stated that the reform agenda includes reducing duty rates and the number of Statutory Regulatory Orders (SROs). He highlighted the ongoing consultation process for reforms in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), involving

discussions over the past 5 months and incorporating recommendations and schemes from FBR members. The Finance Minister expressed confidence in surpassing a revenue target of over 4 trillion rupees.

The integration of transit trade systems at border stations, supported by the Asian Development Bank, was also discussed as a means to expedite trade clearance without human intervention, potentially unlocking a revenue potential of 2 to 4 trillion rupees in Pakistan. Dr. Akhtar stressed the importance of strengthening taxation and valuation processing to bolster revenue.

In the context of financial transparency, the Finance Minister shared that the Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Finance are collaborating to inform the International

Monetary Fund (IMF) about the revolving loans of Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) and Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC).

Addressing the event, Dr. Farid Iqbal, Member Customs Operations FBR, commemorated the global role of customs administrations in facilitating trade and protecting borders. Under the theme "Engaging Traditional and New Partners," he highlighted the evolving dynamics of international trade and the critical need for collaboration.

Speaking on the Customs Department's achievements, Collector of Customs Basit Abbasi noted the successful anti-smuggling campaign, resulting in the seizure of smuggled goods worth 3.5 billion rupees in 1000 cases over the last 7 months.

KCCI seeks release of Rs7bn

KARACHI (PPI): President Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) Iftikhar Ahmed Sheikh has urged that in addition to immediately releasing the already earmarked Rs7 billion against previous incremental consumption package.

The government must also arrange the remaining Rs21 billion as a total of Rs28 billion were pending on incremental consumption of Karachi-based industries since long despite commitments made by previous government and assurance given by Caretaker Minister for Energy Muhammad Ali during his last visit to KCCI, Mr Sheikh said in a statement.

President KCCI pointed out that the funds against the said incremental package have been released across Pakistan except Karachi which was a sheer injustice to the largest city of the country which contributes more than 68 percent revenue to the national exchequer.

He further stressed that the government must also implement its decision to allow power tariff at the rate of 9 cents/KWh to industrial consumers of Karachi, which has been confirmed time and again by the Energy Minister at various platforms including mainstream media but the relevant notification, in this regard, was still awaited.

Delays in release of overdue Rs28 billion under the previous incremental package has triggered a lot of anxiety amongst members of the business community who were already too perturbed due to skyrocketing cost of doing business triggered mainly by the exorbitantly high energy tariffs. "The immediate release of funds is now crucial to prevent the imminent risk of industrial shutdowns, which would have a deep impact on the already ailing economy, besides triggering massive unemployment," he added.

Highlighting the miseries being faced by Karachi-based industries, President KCCI stated that it was really worrisome that substantial number of small and medium sized industries have closed down their production activities whereas the large scale manufacturing units were, nowadays, going through the toughest times and on brink of collapse due to bad economic situation.

Businessmen urge FBR Chairman for measures to curb smuggling

PESHAWAR: A delegation of businessmen, during a consultation with the Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Malik Amjad Zubair Tawana at Custom House Peshawar, urged him to take effective measures to curb smuggling instead of imposing restrictions on Pak-Afghan trade.

The delegation was jointly led by Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi and President Khyber Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Syed Jawad Hussain Kazmi, said a press statement issued here on Saturday.

On this occasion, Chief Collector Customs KP, Saeed Akram, Chief Commissioner Inland Revenue Peshawar, Zafar Iqbal Khan, Member Inland Revenue FBR Islamabad, Mir Badshah Wazir, Collector Custom Enforcement, Khawaja Khuram Naem, Collector Customs Appraisalment,

Amjad ur Rehman, Director Transit Trade, Arbab Qaiser Hameed, Second Secretary Afghan Consulate Peshawar, Tahir Nafees, First Consul Consulate General Iran, Hussain Malki, Afghan Commercial Attache, Waheed Ullah and Director PAJCCI, Imtiaz Ahmad Ali were also present.

They told the Chairman FBR that through trade with Afghanistan, Pakistan can also get access to markets of Central Asian Republics (CARs) and the imposition of a ban on this important route would prove detrimental to the country's economy in the longer run. Speaking on the occasion, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi said the bone of contention in the Pak-Afghan trade is smuggling which can be stopped effectively through increasing monitoring and vigilance at border points.

While imposition of a ban on trade to curb smuggling is not a suitable approach and is proving detrimental regarding the expansion of commerce and trade at the regional

level with the scope of capturing CAR's markets. Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi who is also President of Frontier Custom Clearing Agents Association, recalled a similar decision taken around 18 years earlier about the imposition of ban on 17 items for trade with Afghanistan.

The decision caused a loss of around Rs. Three billion on annual basis to Pakistan Railways under the head of freight while all those banned items found the ways to Afghanistan through flights from UAE and then penetrated in Pakistani markets through smuggling, Zia claimed. The similar practice, he continued, was repeated on October 3, 2023, when the Ministry of Commerce through issuing SRO 1380 imposed a ban on 14 items which in detail became 212 different items of daily use. In the same way through another SRO 1387, a 10 per cent processing fee on transit cargo has been enforced besides the imposition of a 100 percent bank guarantee.

Pakistan's earns \$1,151 million from IT services' export in 5 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned US \$1,151.956 million by providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first five months of the current fiscal year 2023-24. This shows a growth of 5.89 per cent as compared with the US \$1,087.929 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2022-23, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the months under review, the export of computer services grew by 8.17 per cent as it surged from US \$864.429 million last year to US \$935.016 million during July-November 2023. Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 46.67 per

cent, from US \$1.710 million to US \$2.508 million this year while the export of hardware consultancy services also surged by 4.15 per cent, from US \$318.041 million to US \$331.231 million.

The export of repair and maintenance services however decreased by 40.74 per cent from US \$1.485 million to US \$0.880 million whereas the export and imports of computer software services surged by 4.05 per cent, from \$239.473 million to \$249.179 million.

Meanwhile, the export of information services during the months under review dipped by 22.91 per cent from US \$1.790 million to US \$1.380 million. Among the information services, the exports of information-related services increased by 12.37 per cent, from US

\$0.485 million to US \$0.545 million whereas the exports of news agency services however decreased by 36.02 per cent, from US \$1.305 million to US \$0.835 million.

The export of telecommunication services dipped by 2.77 per cent as these went down from US \$221.710 million to US \$215.560 million, the data revealed. Among the telecommunication services, the export of call centres services increased by 11.11 per cent during the months as its exports increased from US \$87.327 million to US \$97.026 million whereas the export of other telecommunication services witnessed a decrease of 11.798 per cent, from US \$134.383 million to US \$118.534 million during this year, the PBS data revealed.

Stock market today: Wall Street closes its 12th winning week in the last 13 with a mixed finish

NEW YORK (AP): Wall Street closed out its latest winning week with a mixed finish on Friday, as drops for technology stocks dragged on the market.

The S&P 500 slipped 3.19 points, or 0.1%, to 4,890.97. It's the first decline for the index after a six-day winning streak led it to set record highs for five straight days.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 60.30, or 0.2%, to 38,109.43. The weakness for tech stocks, meanwhile, dragged the Nasdaq composite to a loss of 55.13, or 0.4%, to 15,455.36.

Intel led chip stocks

lower even though it reported stronger profit for the last three months of 2023 than analysts expected. It dropped 11.9% after giving forecasts for revenue and profit for the start of 2024 that fell short of Wall Street's estimates.

KLA, a supplier for the chip industry, also dragged on tech stocks despite reporting better quarterly results than expected. It sank 6.6% after saying it still sees market conditions as challenging in the near term and giving a forecast for upcoming revenue that fell short of analysts' estimates.

The U.S. stock market

nevertheless closed out another winning week as reports keep suggesting inflation is cooling while the economy continues to power higher. The unexpected backdrop has hopes high that Wall Street's dream scenario can come true: one where a resilient economy drives profits higher for companies, while inflation moderates enough to get the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates many times this year.

The latest report on Friday showed the measure of inflation the Fed prefers to use behaved just about exactly as expected in December. Overall inflation by that measure was

2.6% during the month, matching November's rate.

The Fed pays more attention to the inflation figure after ignoring prices for food and fuel, which can zigzag sharply month to month. That figure cooled to 2.9% from 3.2% and was a bit better than economists expected.

At the same time, spending by U.S. consumers strengthened by more in December than expected. That helped calm worries that a resilient U.S. economy, which has so far refused to fall into a long-predicted recession, would mean upward pressure on inflation. The expectation is for the labor market to soften

some in upcoming months, which would further cool pressure on inflation, but not enough to halt the economy's growth. That has the market looking forward to what EY Chief Economist Gregory Daco calls "the 'holy grail' of non-inflationary growth."

Treasury yields yo-yoed in the bond market following the report but later rose modestly. The yield on the 10-year Treasury edged up to 4.13% from 4.12% late Thursday.

The Federal Reserve's next meeting next week will likely end with no change to interest rates, but traders are split on whether it could begin cutting rates in March. That

would be a sharp turnaround from the last two years, when the Fed hiked its main interest rate to the highest level since 2001. It's trying to slow the economy and hurt investment prices enough through high interest rates to get inflation fully under control.

Traders are betting the Fed will cut interest rates as many as six times this year, according to data from CME Group. That would be double what the Fed itself has indicated.

Critics say that overzealousness may be setting financial markets up for disappointment after their big rallies in recent months. For now, though,


the mood is still mostly ebullient on Wall Street.

American Express jumped 7.1% for the biggest gain in the S&P 500, even though it reported weaker results for the latest quarter than expected. It gave forecasts for revenue and profit for the full year of 2024 that were stronger than analysts', while also announcing plans to boost its dividend payout to investors.

Colgate-Palmolive climbed 2% after the company in control of more than 40% of the global toothpaste market reported stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts forecast.

JetBlue Airways rose 3.6% after it said it may end its bid to buy rival Spirit Airlines as soon as this weekend.

Change In Name and Fathers Name



I, Syed Muhammad Hammad Ali Shah Bunoori So Sakawat Ali Shah Resident of Behzadi Chakarkot Kohat do hereby solemnly affirm declare as under:- 1. That I was registered with FBISE at SSC Level under Registration No: 2244201059 passed the SSC Annual Examination 2022 under Roll No. 1042155-2. That I have decided to change my name/father's name from Muhammad Hammad Qureshi to Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bunoori and father name from Aamir Khan Qureshi to Sakawat Ali Shah which is/are written as Muhammad Hammad Qureshi & Aamir Khan Qureshi in Board's document/record. Hence the same may be changed.



In brief

Three-day winter festival held

GILGIT-BALTISTAN (Monitoring Desk): A three-day thrilling winter festival was organized by Pakistan Army in District Ghizer in Gilgit-Baltistan. The event attended by a diverse audience including political figures, social influencers, locals and tourists, aimed to not only celebrate winter sports but also to promote tourism in the breathtaking northern areas. The closing ceremony was attended by the Speaker of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly and Force Commander Northern Areas. Prizes were distributed among the winning players of various competitions. The locals expressed their appreciation for the joint efforts of the local government and Army in organizing the events.

Australia on top against West Indies

B R I S B A N E (Agencies): Australia need another 156 runs with eight wickets remaining to beat West Indies on day four of the day-night second Test in Brisbane. Having been set 216 for a 2-0 series win, the hosts reached 60-2 at the close with Steve Smith 33 not out. West Indies had earlier been dismissed for 193 as they carefully set a target. Number three Kirk McKenzie made 41, Alick Athanaze 35 and Justin Greaves 33, while Nathan Lyon and Josh Hazlewood both took three wickets. West Indies will likely be without seamer Shamar Joseph, who took 5-94 on debut in the first Test last week, on day four after he was hit on the toe while batting by Mitchell Starc. He was helped from the field after retiring hurt as last man out for three. Without him, Alzarri Joseph had Usman Khawaja taken down the leg side for 10 while Marnus Labuschagne was caught at third slip off Greaves' pace. Cameron Green reached the close unbeaten on nine while Smith's score is his best effort since moving to the top of the order at the start of the series.

Bopanna, Matthew win doubles title

M E L B O U R N E (Agencies): India's Rohan Bopanna and Australian Matthew Ebden dug deep to win the Australian Open men's doubles title on Saturday with a 7-6(0) 7-5 victory over Italian duo Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori. The second seeds fell to the ground after overcoming their Italian challengers before bowing to the crowd at the Rod Laver Arena. Bopanna becomes the oldest male player at 43 to win a Grand Slam title, and the Indian finally tasted success in Australia in his 17th consecutive Open, having lost the mixed doubles final last year and in 2018. "Age truly really is not even a number for this guy. He's young at heart, he's a champion, he's a warrior. He's fought hard by my side this whole past year" Ebden said. Bolelli and Vavassori held their own in the opening set and earned their first break point at 5-5, but the Indian-Australian pair rallied to save serve and ran out easy winners in the tiebreak, backed by the crowd. The second set looked to be headed the same way, going with serve and locked at 5-5, until Vavassori's serve was broken leaving Ebden to serve for the match. "This could not have been possible if I did not have a fantastic Aussie partner by my side," Bopanna said. It is the first Major win for the pairing, who lost last year's U.S. Open final, and Bopanna will be world number one when the rankings are updated on Monday.

Pakistan crush New Zealand by 10 wickets in U19 World Cup

EAST LONDON (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan U19 put in a thoroughly dominant performance with bat and ball to clinch a thumping ten-wicket win over New Zealand U19 in Match 22 of the ICC Men's U19 World Cup. Having achieved victories over Afghanistan U19 (by 181 runs) and Nepal U19 (by five wickets) in the previous two games, Pakistan finish the group stage unbeaten.

Pakistan's opening duo of Shahzaib Khan and Shamyil Hussain mowed down the meagre 141-target with great ease, getting over the line in 25.2 overs. Shahzaib was the more attacking of the two batters, exhibiting sparkling strokeplay with ten boundaries and three maximums in an 86-ball 80 not out.

Shamyil, meanwhile, bided his time in the middle initially, scoring just 12 in the Powerplay before he picked up pace as Pakistan neared the target. Shamyil struck six fours and two sixes in his undefeated 54 off 66 deliveries, providing able company to Shahzaib's masterclass at the other end.

New Zealand's decision to bat first was rendered ill-fated when Ubaid Shah bowled an excellent spell with the new ball to cause early damage. Luke Watson's off-stump went cartwheeling off a ripper from Ubaid in the third over of the innings. This blow was followed by Tom Jones' (14, 26b, 3x4s) and Snehit Reddy's (7, 10b, 1x4) departure with Ubaid's brilliance leaving New Zealand three down for 28 in

seven overs.

Mohammad Zeeshan struck in the 16th over to see the back of New Zealand U19 captain Oscar Jackson for 12. Lachlan Stackpole (42, 37b, 7x4s, 1x6) and Oliver Tewatiya (29, 55b, 4x4s) stitched a 61-run fifth-wicket partnership to apply brakes to New Zealand's slide but Naveed Ahmed Khan found the breakthrough to trigger a massive collapse.

New Zealand crashed from 117-4 to 140 all out in 38 overs with none of the lower-order batters able to put up a solid fight. Arafat Minhas, backing up his frugal outing against Nepal U19, found tremendous success again with three wickets for six runs in five overs including two maiden overs.

For the second time in the

tournament, Shahzaib Khan was named player of the match for his heroic knock. Pakistan U19, by finishing on top of Group D, will play the second and third-placed teams of Group A in the Super Six round. They will first play A3 in Potchefstroom on 30 January before taking on A2 in Benoni on 3 February.

Scores in brief: Pakistan U19 beat New Zealand U19 by 10 wickets. New Zealand U19 140 all out, 38 overs (Lachlan Stackpole 42, Oliver Tewatiya 29; Arafat Minhas 3-6, Ubaid Shah 3-30, Naveed Ahmed Khan 2-26).

Pakistan U19 144-0, 25.2 overs (Shahzaib Khan 80 not out, Shamyil Hussain 54 not out). Player of the match – Shahzaib Khan (Pakistan U19).



Pakistan opens Shamyil Hussain and Shahzaib Khan celebrate the win.

Dominant Sabalenka crushes Zheng to defend Australian Open title

MELBOURNE (AFP): Aryna Sabalenka said the Australian Open will always be her "special place" after blowing China's Zheng Qinwen off court on Saturday to become the first woman to defend her title in more than a decade.

The Belarusian world number two proved too strong for the 12th seed, administering a 6-3, 6-2 drubbing in 76 minutes to claim her second Grand Slam crown on Rod Laver Arena.

It capped an incredible display of power and poise from Sabalenka over the past fortnight, with the 25-year-old surging to the title without losing a set through her seven matches.

The last time the tournament witnessed a successful women's title defence was in 2013, when fellow Belarusian Victoria Azarenka achieved the feat.

"Like every player, you want to win them all (Slams), but Australia will definitely always be my special place and it's going to be in my memory for the rest of my life," she said.

"I think the first (title) is always special because it is so emotional when you win for the first time, second time it's just such a relief."

"I've been under a little pressure these two weeks and I'm super happy I was able to handle it and compete at such a high level."

With her latest exploits, Sabalenka cemented her reputation as one of the game's most consistent contenders at Grand Slams,

reaching at least the semi-finals in her past six majors, making three finals and winning twice.

She had words of encouragement for Zheng, who was in her first major final. "I know this feeling -- it is tough to lose in a final but you are such an incredible player, such a young girl. You are going to be in many more finals and you are going to get it," she said.

In vivid red, she overwhelmed Zheng with her crushing groundstrokes deep into both corners and a consistently reliable serve. Zheng had reached her first Grand Slam final without meeting a seed after a host of players crashed out early on her side of the draw, and the gulf in class was exposed.

Amazing memory "It's my first final and I'm feeling a little bit of pity," said Zheng. "I feel very complicated because I feel like I could've done it better."

"But I really enjoyed playing in this Australian Open, it's an amazing memory for me. I'm sure there is going to be more and better in the future."

The Belarusian opened with a comfortable serve then got a look at two break points at 15-40 in Zheng's opening service game when the Chinese star sprayed a backhand wide. She seized the chance, attacking her opponent's second serve for the break.

Sabalenka consolidated for 3-0, but only after saving three break points as

Zheng's nerves settled and she worked to get into the contest. The Chinese player finally got on the board as her serve hit its mark in game four, with two big aces and a forehand winner giving her confidence.

But she had few answers to the booming Sabalenka serve, struggling to get the ball back and get into any rallies. Zheng saved three set points with a pair of aces and a winner to hold for 3-5, but it was delaying the inevitable as Sabalenka closed out the set on serve in 33 minutes.

Three double faults, including on break point, immediately put Zheng on the back foot in the second set as the pressure took its toll. And there was no way back as she conceded another break to slump 4-1 behind when Sabalenka executed a perfect drop shot.

Fighting until the end, she saved four championship points before the second seed closed out the match to bank her 14th career title. "My aggressive game and that I put her under pressure a lot on the serve, that was the key to this match," said Sabalenka. "And I of course also served well, which is very important."

Despite the loss, it was a breakthrough tournament for Zheng, who will climb into the top 10 in the new rankings. Sabalenka will remain at number two behind Iga Swiatek, who crashed out in the third round.

Norway's Mowinckel wins World Cup downhill at Cortina

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO (Agencies): Ragnhild Mowinckel won Saturday's alpine skiing World Cup downhill at Cortina d'Ampezzo, claiming the honours in a race blighted by interruptions for crashes and driving winds.

Norwegian Mowinckel claimed her first ever World Cup downhill win with a time of one minute and 33.5 seconds, beating American Jacqueline Wiles by 0.35sec.

"I'm extremely happy with how I skied and how it went, today is one of those days I felt really proud of myself," said Mowinckel.

"I hit the right spots today, and also it was a huge difference coming down (the bottom) here today, because yesterday I was really bad here, so I fixed something and apparently that worked."

Reigning downhill champion Sofia Goggia, who finished 0.44sec off the pace in third, had been leading when the race was interrupted for over half an hour due to winds judged dangerous for competitors



just 17 runs into the event.

Goggia is still on course for a fourth straight World Cup title in the discipline as she leads the standings by 89 points from Friday's downhill winner Stephanie Venier. Mowinckel trails Goggia by 208 points in the downhill standings and is 11th in the overall race for the crystal globe.

"It wasn't the best descent, technically speaking, but there was character and grit. I got hit with a lot of wind... I made some mistakes because it moved me around," Goggia told RAI.

"I had to deal with a lot of wind... having to wait for so many minutes and the conditions changing made a big difference to the final result," she added later after being knocked off top spot. The long stoppage was

one of several on a difficult day in Cortina, with Isabella Wright having to be taken away by helicopter early on after losing control at the difficult Delta jump and slamming into the safety netting.

The American was spared any serious injuries and was later seen chatting with fellow skiers around the finish area.

Mowinckel won a race missing American skiing icon Mikaela Shiffrin and reigning downhill Olympic champion Corinne Suter after both suffered painful crashes on Friday.

Suter was ruled out of the rest of the season after suffering serious ligament damage to her left knee during the first of two downhill races in Cortina.

Shiffrin meanwhile will take part neither in Sunday's super-G, again at Cortina, nor the giant slalom at Kronplatz on Tuesday.

However Shiffrin remains top of the overall standings on 1,209 points, 295 ahead of Lara Gut-Behrami, who finished joined fifth on Saturday alongside Austria's Venier.

PCB Board of Governors formed

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board Saturday announces the composition of the Board of Governors (BoG) by Paragraph 10 of the PCB Constitution 2014. The Board of Governors now stands as follows:

Mr Mustafa Ramday (PCB Patron's nominee) Mr Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi (PCB Patron's nominee)

Mr Sajjad Ali Khokhar, President of Regional Cricket Association AJK

Mr Zafarullah Jadalgal, President Regional Cricket Association Dera Murad Jamali

Mr Tanveer Ahmed, President of Regional Cricket Association Larkana Mr Tariq Sarwar, President of Regional Cricket Association Bahawalpur

Representative of Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL) Representative of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)

Representative of Ghani Glass Limited

Representative of Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV)

Secretary to the Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination, or any other officer nominated by him as an ex-officio member (Non-voting member).

City Girls College Gulbahar wins Women Kabaddi Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): City Girls College Gulbahar clinched the trophy of the Higher Education Department Inter-College Girls Kabaddi Championship played here at its premises on Saturday.

The Championship was aimed at to give farewell to the Principal of the Govt Girls City College Gulbahar who is going to retire from her services besides inviting all college teams to be part of the event wherein a total of eight colleges took part.

Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Kabaddi Association and international referee Syed Sultan Shah Bacha, recently attended international Zirkhaneh, Koshti and Kabaddi Coaching and Referee Course in Iran Miss Sumayyah, Director Sports Najma Qazi, Director Sports Frontier College for Women Miss Gulsanobar Jamshed, Miss Huma, Miss Roheena, Miss Salma Faiz, Miss Hejab, Miss Sadia, Miss Sadaf, Miss Shazia Ayub, and Miss Afsheen, officials, players and large number of students spectators were also present during the thrill-packed matches.

HED Inter-College Girls Kabaddi Championship was won by Govt City

College Gulbahar and won the title by defeating Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University in the final match, organized by the Director of Sports Higher Education at City Girls College Gulbahar Peshawar.

The organized Inter-College Kabaddi Championship has come to an end, in which the students of City Gulbahar Girls College managed to win the gold medal by showing an excellent game, the second position went to Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, while the third position went to Government Frontier College.

Girls College City Gulbahar defeated Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University by 34-32 in a thrilling battle wherein both the teams gave each other a tough fight for a single point but both played excellent games and got thundering applause from the sitting spectators.

In the third position match Frontier College for Women defeated strong Govt Girls Degree College Nahaqi by 41-39 points. In the other matches Govt Girls Degree College Nahaqi defeated City District Girls College by 37-22 points, while Shaheed

Benazir Bhutto Women University beat Govt Girls Degree College Gulshan Rehman by 31-28 and Frontier College for Women recorded victory against Govt Girls Degree College Zaryab by 45-34.

The chief guest of the closing ceremony was City Girls College Gulbahar Principal Professor Tahira Dar who distributed the prizes to the students. In her speech, she thanked all the staff members and students for honoring her with the great farewell. She wished the students success in every field of life. She advised the students to keep on working hard and also gave good concentration to their sporting activities. She said sports activities are very vital for women and women should take active part in sports activities which help them both mentally and physically.

Earlier, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University defeated Govt Girls Degree College Nahaqi in the first semi-final and in the second semi-final, Government City Gulbahar Girls College qualified for the final by defeating Frontier College for Women. A total of 8 colleges of Peshawar Region participated in the Championship.

Bangladesh Women U19 beat Pakistan Women U19 by 36 runs



COX'S BAZAR (Monitoring Desk): Bangladesh Women U19 beat Pakistan Women U19 by 36 runs in the third match of the Women's U19 Tri-Nation T20 Series, at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

This was Pakistan's first defeat in the tournament as their first match in the tournament against Sri Lanka on 25 January was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to rain.

Bangladesh Women U19 won the toss and opted to bat first. Anosha Nasir landed an early blow as she caught and bowled Eva Khatun for just six runs.

Wicketkeeper-batter Sumaiya Suborna (24, 33b, 2x4s) and Arbin Tani stitched a 42-run partnership for the second wicket, until Pakistan captain

Mahnoor Aftab struck to dismiss the former.

Tani (31, 30b, 3x4s) fell to Maham Anees shortly after. Captain Sumaiya Akhtar's bat produced a quick-fire 32 from 24, including four boundaries. Anosha removed Akhtar in the last over as the side ended with 136-4 in 20 overs.

Rabeya Khan also contributed an unbeaten run-a-ball 23, with three fours.

Anosha picked up two wickets while Maham and Mahnoor had one each.

In reply, Pakistan Women U19 could only manage to score 100 for the loss of seven wickets in 20 overs. Eymen Fatima hit 39 from 43, including a notable tally of five boundaries and a maximum, until she was removed by Rabeya.

Samia Afsar scored 25 from 30, on the back of three fours and Komal

Khan added 14 on 12, including two fours.

Vice-captain Laiba Nasir contributed an unbeaten 10 off 12, including one four.

Afia Asima Era returned with two wickets, while Faria Akhtar and Khan dismissed a batter each.

The Mahnoor Aftab-led side will now face Sri Lanka Women U19 in their next match, to be played on 30 January 2024.

Scores in brief: Bangladesh Women U19 beat Pakistan Women U19 by 36 runs

Bangladesh Women U19 136-4, 20 overs (Sumaiya Akhtar 32, Arbin Tani 31; Anosha Nasir 2-22)

Pakistan Women U19 100-7, 20 overs (Eymen Fatima 39, Samiya Afsar 25; Afia Asima 2-12)

Player of the match – Rabeya Khan (Bangladesh Women U19).



In brief

CTD foiled smuggling attempt

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Intelligence Wing Sindh on Saturday detained an accused person on Saturday during an operation on Hub Rover Road. According to the private news channel, the said person arrived heading towards Karachi with a large number of arms from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the CTD officials, eight 9mm pistols, four thirty-bore rifles, and hundreds of rounds of ammunition were recovered from the accused. CTD arrested the accused and started further investigation.

Police saves passengers, vehicle

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) on Saturday saved a vehicle from burning and rescued passengers near Chakdara Toll Plaza. According to the Spokesperson, the Motorway Police displayed a heroic feat when a fire broke out due to a short circuit in a Barat's vehicle near Chakdara Toll Plaza which was travelling from Swabi to Swat. The patrolling officers showed bravery and pulled out the passengers from the vehicle in time and also saved the vehicle from burning with fire extinguishers. The grooms and baratis appreciated the courage and bravery of the Motorway Police.

Fire breaks out at cotton box factory

ISLAMABAD (APP): Fire broke out at a cotton box factory in the Site Area of Karachi on Saturday. According to rescue officials, the fire brigade is currently engaged in efforts to extinguish the flames, utilizing six fire trucks. However, the intensity of the fire is reportedly increasing and additional fire trucks may be requested. Workers are attempting to extract paper rolls from inside the factory to prevent the further spread of the fire, a private news channel reported.

17 gamblers held during raid

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 17 gamblers and recovered bet amount Rs 60,000, 10 mobile phones, 2 rickshaws, 4 wrist watches, and 6 batteries from their possession during crackdown here on Saturday. According to police spokesman, Rata Amral police conducted raid and held gamblers include Mewa Gul, Gul Muhammad, Ghaffar, Bahadur, Ilyas, Arbaz, Arshad, Mujahid, Wahab, Zakirullah, Shahid, Rafiq, Abdul Jabbar, Umar, Ziarat Gul, Gul Wali, and Shah Masood. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. SP Faisal Saleem appreciated the performance of police team and stated that gambling is root of other crimes, and strict action against gamblers will be continued without any discrimination.

Telecom sector witnessed steady growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): China's telecommunication industry logged steady expansion in 2023, driven by emerging businesses, official data showed. The combined business revenue of firms in the sector totaled 1.68 trillion yuan (about 236 billion U.S. dollars) last year, rising 6.2 percent year on year, according to the China Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. Emerging sectors such as big data, cloud computing and the Internet of Things continued to post strong performances, with total revenue climbing 19.1 percent year on year in 2023, China.org reported.



ISLAMABAD: CDA workers busy installing pedestrian bridge with the help of cranes at Srinagar Highway in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

ANF busts 14 traffickers, recovers 133 kg drugs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) during 16 different major operations on Saturday arrested 14 accused and recovered more than 133 kilogram of drugs.

According to the private news channel, the ANF team recovered drugs from 5 parcels sent to United Kingdom (UK) from the courier office in Rawalpindi and arrested 2 suspects.

According to the details given by the ANF officials, during separate operations, the ANF seized 54 kilogram hashish near Kala Shah

Kaku Toll Plaza, 20 kilograms of hashish from the accused in Muzaffargarh, 18 kilograms of hashish near Muhammad Zai village in Kohat, 12 kilograms of hashish and 4 kilograms of ice from Malsham in Hub, and 10 kilograms of hashish from the accused near Burhan Interchange Attock.

In another operation 4 kilogram heroin and 1 kilogram ice from four suspects, including three ladies, in Lakpass Toll Plaza Quetta. 4 kilogram hashish from the accused near Hayat Abad Peshawar,

2 kilogram heroin from the accused near Chamkani GT Road Peshawar, and Iqbal Shaheed Toll Plaza GT Road 2 kilograms of hashish from the accused near Road Attock, 500 grams of opium and 1 kg of hashish from a woman near No. 26 Chungi, and 630 grams of ice from Zero line torckham were recovered.

ANF teams apprehended all the accused and recovered the drugs whereas the cases were also registered under the Anti-Narcotics Act against the arrested accused.

SAPM lays foundation stone of Academic Block

ISLAMABAD (PPI) Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Jawad Sohrab Malik has reiterated the Government's unwavering commitment to providing quality education to the children of overseas Pakistanis.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of a new Academic Block at OPF Girls Higher Secondary School, Rawalpindi, the SAPM emphasized that this initiative reflects the government's dedication to meeting the educational needs of both the overseas community and the general public.

Sohrab Malik underscored the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development's relentless efforts to extend maximum facilities and assistance to Pakistani expatriates. Recognizing the invaluable contributions of overseas Pakistanis to the national economy, he affirmed the government's commitment to exploring all avenues to facilitate them comprehensively.

Zia Sarhadi remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned film director and screenwriter Zia Sarhadi was remembered on the occasion of his death anniversary on Saturday.

Born in 1914 in Peshawar his real name was Fazl-e-Qadir Sethi whose career spanned what is widely considered the Golden Age of the sub-continent film industry.

As a director, he was best known for his films Humlog (1951), Footpath (1953) and Tahguzar (1960). As a screenplay writer, his famous films include Ladies Only, Elan, Beti, and Lakhon Men Aik. Described as an "unaffiliated Marxist", his films were known for dealing with social issues of the period.

His film Footpath, for instance, dealt with issues of moral guilt in the 1950s in India. He died on January 27, 1997 in Karachi. He was the father of renowned television actor Khayyam Sarhadi and grandfather of actress Zhalay Sarhadi.

Monitoring Officer Upper Dir, Malik Shahuddin,

Chairman of Village Council Nishanbanda Upper Dir, is required to pay a fine of Rs 5,000 and submit the challan by January 29.

District Monitoring Officer Kurram has fined Chairman Tehsil Council Central Karam Ehsanullah Rs 25,000, while independent candidate Karam Ali Hadi of PK-96 has been fined Rs 15,000.

Similarly, Independent candidate Aftab Jamali of PS-82 was fined Rs 20,000 by Ghulam Fatima Ilyas Komal, the District Monitoring Officer in Dadu District, for violating rules.

Court sets Feb 10 as date for filing charge sheet against Fawad

ISLAMABAD (INP): In the financial fraud case involving Fawad Chaudhry, the District and Sessions Courts in Islamabad have slated February 10 as the date for filing the charge sheet. The proceedings unfolded in the District Court, with Judge Dr. Muhammad Sohail presiding over the hearing.

During the court session, Fawad Chaudhry, the

accused in the financial fraud case accused of misappropriating 50 lakh rupees from a citizen, was presented before Judge Dr. Muhammad Sohail. The defense counsel for Chaudhry requested the court to remove the handcuffs in the courtroom. In response, the judge instructed that the handcuffs could be opened if there were no objections.

Fawad Chaudhry, in his plea to the court, expressed a desire to meet with family and lawyers. The court granted permission for the requested meeting. Subsequent to the completion of the hearing, the court adjourned the case and scheduled the date for the filing of the charge sheet against Fawad Chaudhry in the financial fraud case for February 10.

ECP issues notices, imposes fines for violations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) monitoring teams have issued notices and fines to various candidates for violations of the code of conduct in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to details, independent candidates Humayun Khan (PK-15 Lower Dir) and Mehboob Shah (PK-7 Lower Dir) fined Rs 50,000 each by District Monitoring Officer in Lower Dir for election code violations.

Chairman of village council Gul Abad in Lower Dir, Murad Rehman, fined Rs 30,000. The candidates have been instructed to pay fines and submit the challan by

January 29. Jalal Khan, a Muslim League (N) candidate from PK-79 Peshawar, was imposed a fine of Rs 5,000 from the District Monitoring Officer Peshawar.

Arbab Waseem Hayat, PTI candidate from PK-73 Peshawar, and Abdul Haseeb, JUIF candidate from the same constituency, were each fined Rs 5,000.1 for violating rules. Haji Muhammad Ismail, Chairman of Bihari Colony Neighborhood Council, faced a fine of Rs 50,000. The candidates are directed to settle the fines by January 29 and submit the challan.

According to District

Monitoring Officer Upper Dir, Malik Shahuddin, Chairman of Village Council Nishanbanda Upper Dir, is required to pay a fine of Rs 5,000 and submit the challan by January 29.

District Monitoring Officer Kurram has fined Chairman Tehsil Council Central Karam Ehsanullah Rs 25,000, while independent candidate Karam Ali Hadi of PK-96 has been fined Rs 15,000.

Similarly, Independent candidate Aftab Jamali of PS-82 was fined Rs 20,000 by Ghulam Fatima Ilyas Komal, the District Monitoring Officer in Dadu District, for violating rules.

PMD forecast rain in most parts of country from today

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a recent update, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Saturday issued a weather forecast predicting rain and snowfall at isolated places across several regions of the country.

According to Met Office, the affected areas include Islamabad, the Pothohar region, Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and coastal areas of Balochistan, with the anticipated weather

conditions lasting from January 27-31.

It said, "A continental air mass is prevailing over most parts of country, with a shallow westerly wave expected to impact the upper regions."

"As a result, predominantly cold weather is forecast for most areas, with upper districts experiencing very cold temperatures."

"Additionally, dense fog is expected to persist in the plain areas of Punjab, Khyber-

Pakhtunkhwa, and upper Sindh. The continuous low daytime temperatures are likely to contribute to very cold weather in fog-affected regions, it added.

The PMD has issued alerts to the relevant authorities, urging them to be prepared for the potential impacts of the forecast rain and snowfall over the next four days.

Multiple sections of motorway temporarily closed due to dense fog: The National Highways

Judge Bashir withdraws leave application after ministry snub

RAWALPINDI (INP): Judge of Islamabad Accountability Court Muhammad Bashir, who had applied for leave from January 24 to March 14 (the date of his retirement) on health grounds, on Saturday took his application back after the Ministry of Law and Justice refused to approve it, reported a private TV News channel, quoting its sources.

Judge Bashir is currently hearing two references against the PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi.

The judge is set to retire on March 14, 2024 after the completion of his term of employment.

On January 20, judge Muhammad Bashir had sought medical leave until retirement. Judge Bashir wrote a letter to the Islamabad High Court and the Ministry of Law and Justice and asked for medical leave from January 24 to March 14, 2024.

Sources said that Judge Bashir had written in his letter that he could not perform his duties due to his physical condition.

It should be remembered that Judge Bashir was appointed in the accountability court by the then prime minister of Pakistan Peoples Party Yousuf Raza Gilani in the year 2012 and he is still working in the NAB court.

According to the judicial law, NAB judges are appointed for a period of three years, but Judge Bashir has been performing his duties in NAB Islamabad court for the past 11 years.

He was first appointed in 2012 for three years, then former premier Nawaz Sharif reappointed him in 2018 and he was again appointed as accountability court judge by then prime minister Imran Khan in 2021.

He is the only judge in whose court four prime ministers including Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan appeared.

ECP tells WAPDA to avoid load shedding on election day

ISLAMABAD (DNA): As the polling day for general elections draws near, the authorities concerned have issued orders to ensure smooth, uninterrupted power supply across the country on February 8.

According to sources, the orders have been issued over fears that the polling process is likely to be affected due to the ongoing electricity load-shedding in the country.

Therefore, orders have

been issued to ensure there is no loadshedding in the country on February 8 when the nation goes to polls for the general elections, the sources added.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued directions to the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) in this regard. The authority has been told to provide uninterrupted electricity on election day, the

sources say.

The authorities say that they need a seamless power supply at the polling booths to allow voters, especially the elderly, to post their ballots for the party of their choice clearly and without any hindrance. Moreover, the CCTV cameras installed at the polling stations and laptops needs to function all the time, for which smooth electricity supply was imperative.

APHC leaders pay glowing tributes to victims of Kupwara massacre

ISLAMABAD (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leaders paying glowing tributes to the victims of Kupwara massacre on their anniversary have demanded an impartial international probe into all incidents of mass killings in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) to punish the involved Indian troops.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Indian troops had mercilessly killed twenty-seven innocent Kashmiris by resorting to indiscriminate firing in Kupwara town on this day in 1994. The mass killing was carried out by the troops to punish people for observing shutdown on Indian Republic Day, a day ago in that year.

The APHC leaders and organizations including Ghulam Muhammad Khan Sopori, Abdul Ahad, Abdul Samad Inqilabi, Fayaz

Hussain Jafari, Syed Sibt-e-Shabbir Qumi, Ghulam Nabi Waseem, Maulana Musab Nadvi, Tehreek-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir, Democratic Freedom Movement and human rights activist Muhammad Ahsan Untoo in their statements issued in Srinagar said the Kupwara carnage was the worst example of Indian state terrorism in IIOJK.

They said that due to the sacrifices of Kashmiri martyrs the Kashmir dispute had become a focus of attention at the international level. The leaders and organizations deplored that Indian troops involved in Kupwara massacre and other bloodbaths in IIOJK have not been punished till date.

They maintained that the Kashmiri people will not allow the sacrifices of their martyrs to go waste and will accomplish their mission at all costs. They appealed to

the international community to hold India accountable for its crimes in occupied Kashmir and force it to settle the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the Kashmiris' aspirations.

Meanwhile, APHC-AJK Convener, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, and other leaders including Sheikh Abdul Mateen, Imtiyaz Wani, Altaf Hussain Wani, Syed Gulshan Ahmed, Manzoor Ahmed Shah and Muhammad Sultan Butt in their statements issued in Islamabad reminded the world community of its negligence by not putting pressure on India to punish the perpetrators of mass killings in occupied Kashmir. They said despite using every brutal method, India has failed to intimidate the Kashmiris into submission and they are committed to achieve freedom from its illegal occupation.

CDA unveils ambitious green initiatives for Islamabad's Eco-friendly future

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant step towards enhancing the environmental sustainability of the federal capital, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has announced a groundbreaking series of initiatives aimed at transforming Islamabad into a model city for climate-friendly e-mobility.

The CDA spokesperson, Nauman Khalid, highlighted key projects, including the implementation of an automated car parking system, the introduction of electric buses, citywide tree-plantation drives, and the establishment of an extensive bicycle route network. These initiatives collectively aim to promote a greener, more sustainable transportation system while minimizing the city's carbon footprint.

Speaking to a private news channel, the spokesperson emphasized the strategic measures being taken to combat climate change and reduce

carbon emissions. The focal point of these efforts is the imminent launch of over 200 electric buses that are set to revolutionize transportation in Islamabad, providing citizens with an eco-friendly alternative for their daily commute.

The introduction of electric buses not only signifies a shift towards environmentally conscious travel but also promises to contribute to reduced traffic congestion. Additionally, citizens can anticipate the unveiling of new routes, enhancing connectivity, and further improving the overall climate of the capital.

Addressing the cycling project, the spokesperson outlined an ambitious plan to create a secure and extensive citywide bicycle route network. This initiative, aimed at promoting safe and accessible cycling throughout Islamabad, offers citizens an equitable and sustainable commuting option.

In a move to address longstanding parking issues in the federal capital, the CDA spokesperson announced a collaboration with banks to introduce an automated car parking system. This innovative step is expected to streamline parking facilities and enhance the overall urban experience for residents.

Responding to a query about tree planting, the spokesperson highlighted a collaborative effort with universities to launch a mega tree planting drive. This initiative not only aims to increase the city's green cover but also involves citizens, particularly educational institutions, in preserving the natural beauty of Islamabad.

The unveiled initiatives represent a holistic approach by the CDA to create a more environmentally conscious and sustainable urban environment, positioning Islamabad as a beacon for green initiatives in the region.

Kabul to host regional contact group meeting
KABUL (Khaama Press): The Afghanistan Embassy in China has announced that the inaugural meeting of the regional contact group on Afghanistan is scheduled to take place in Kabul on Monday. In a statement issued by the embassy on Friday, it was revealed that Asadullah Bilal Karimi, Afghanistan's acting ambassador to China, held discussions with Mao Ning, the deputy director of the Department of Asian Affairs.

Flight route linking Khost to UAE opens
KHOST (Xinhua): The first-ever commercial flight opened from the Khost International Airport to Al Ain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on Friday, the local television Tolonews reported on Saturday. Two flights are scheduled to take off from the airport every week. Residents and passengers were asking for more flights, Tolonews said. Flydubai, a UAE-based airline, resumed flights from Dubai to Kabul last November.

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

Nearly 100 dams are planned for construction: MoEW



KABUL (TOLO News): The acting Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW), Abdul Latif Mansoor, said that for the prevention of vulnerability to drought in the country, nearly 100 water small dams have been planned to be constructed to strengthen the underground water. Abdul Latif Mansoor said that several dams have been inaugurated and some more are being constructed. "We have con-

about the lack of water and cannot continue farming, they said. They believe that the reduction of water and consecutive droughts has increased the unemployment rate in the country. "Since the past three years, drought has put a lot of pressure on the people, especially in the farming of potato and wheat," said Mohammad Sarwar, a farmer. "The land does not grow anything, in these years, people have become vulnerable and they suffered a lot" Jumma Khan, another farmer. The acting Minister also said that with the construction of these projects, the lack of water will be addressed. Before this, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development announced the commencement of 426 Af's worth of projects involving small dams in 13 provinces.

Representatives of Afghan Women, civil society invited to Doha meeting

KABUL (Tolo News): The UN Secretary General's spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said that in the Doha meeting there will be collective meetings with special envoys on Afghanistan, including with Afghan women representatives and civil society representatives. Addressing a press briefing, Dujarric said that the meeting will be held in Doha on February 18 and 19. "It's a follow-up meeting of all the Afghan envoys from Member States and regional organizations. I mean, it's people coming together. We obviously have an important role in organiz-

ing it. And it'll be in Doha, 18th to 19th February. Well, as part of the event, there will be collective meetings with the special envoys, including with Afghan women representatives, civil society representatives. But as we get closer to the date, I will share more details," Stephane Dujarric said. Political analysts said the presence of Afghan women in this meeting is important, and that there should be a discussion on the fundamental issues of Afghanistan in this meeting. "The representatives of Afghan women have also been invited, this is a good thing because

Afghanistan mourns loss of renowned Quran Qari, Barakatullah Saleem

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Islamic community of Afghanistan and Afghans around the world are mourning the loss of Barakatullah Saleem, a revered figure in Quranic recitation and scholarship, who passed away at the age of 73 after a prolonged illness. Born in 1950 in Nangarhar province, Barakatullah's journey was marked by resilience and dedication to the Quran from an early age. Despite losing his eyesight at 14 months, Barakatullah Saleem found his calling in Quranic studies, guided by his father, Molavi Ghalajani. By age nine, he achieved the remarkable feat of memorizing the entire Quran. His quest for deeper knowledge led him to Egypt in 1964, where he studied under eminent qaris such as Sheikh Mahmoud Khalil al-Hussary and Abul Ainain Shuaisha. Over six years, Barakatullah mastered ten recitation styles, a testament to his exceptional talent and unwavering commitment. Returning to Afghanistan, he revolutionized Quran memorization techniques and established himself



Afghanistan. Despite the changing political landscape, he remained in Kabul, committed to his spiritual calling, away from the realm of politics. His concerns about the state of Quranic education in Afghanistan, particularly the lack of qualified qaris, led him to record the Quran in 14 styles for television and author 13 books, some now part of educational curriculums. The news of Qari Barakatullah's death has resonated deeply within the Afghan community, sparking an outpouring of grief and tributes on social media globally. His death is not just a loss for Afghanistan but for the entire Islamic world, leaving behind a rich legacy in Quranic scholarship and education. Qari Barakatullah Saleem will be remembered as a beacon of hope and enlightenment, whose life's work contributed immensely to the spiritual and educational richness of Afghanistan and beyond. His teachings, recordings, and writings will continue to inspire future generations, keeping his memory alive in the hearts of many.

Some Jawzjan residents demand improvement in telecom service



S H E B E R G H A N (Pajhwok): Some residents of Khumab and Khwaja Du Koh districts in northern Jawzjan province have complained low quality of telecommunication service and urged the authorities to address the problem. Qurban Shah, the resident of Khumad district told Pajhwok Afghan News: "The services of none of the mobile companies are efficient, the signal is very weak while some areas are not under the coverage of the telecom service." If they want to call some relatives in some emer-

gency cases in other areas, they needed to walk long distances to establish contact with their relatives and inform them, he said. Demanding the authorities to address this serious problem, he said that the signal of internet is also very weak. Noorullah is another resident of Khumab district, he talked about similar problem and said that they have been experiencing this problem since years, this problem has never been solved yet. He said: "The telephone companies do not work

properly since long time, but recently the issue turned worse and we even cannot make a call, we want from relevant authorities to address this issue." Nagibullah a resident of Khwaja Du Koh has also complained about the quality of telecom services in this district he added, the internet connection is very weak too. He added: "The telecom signal is uncatchable in most of the parts of this district, when we make a phone call, the call disconnects often or we cannot hear the voice clearly." Shah Nazar of Khwaja Du Koh district complained about a similar issue, he asked the government to solve this problem. The authorities said that they are trying to find a solution for the improvement of the telecom services of telecommunication companies, some local officials said. P r o v i n c i a l Telecommunication and

Information Technology Director Maulvi Sanauallah Masoom somehow admitted the existence of problems in the services of mobile companies. He said that they are working on a plan that will solve the problems of telecommunication networks in the provincial capital and districts of Jawzjan province. He said: "In most of the districts of Jawzjan province, telecommunication networks do not work as they should. Since the beginning of this year, 9 new sites have been activated in the districts and in Sheberghan city, we are trying to create more sites to solve this problem completely." The officials have also talked to private telecommunication companies about this problem, efforts are underway to address the existing problems of telecommunication networks according to a plan in all districts of Jawzjan province.

Afghanistan does not have formal border with Pakistan: officials

KABUL (Tolo News): The acting Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs, Noorullah Noori, said that Afghanistan does not have a definite border with Pakistan. Noori added that the border between Islamabad and Kabul is still unclear and that the two countries have imaginary lines. He said this while visiting Torkham crossing in Nangarhar province. The acting Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs said that regarding the tensions that arise from time to time on the imaginary lines between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Islamic Emirate is trying to resolve these tensions in a proper way. "We do not have a formal border with Pakistan and do not have a zero point with Pakistan. This [Durand Line] is an imaginary line between us," Noorullah Noori said. Some analysts have different views regarding the right way to end the border tensions with Pakistan. "This issue should be resolved through a referendum between the people of the two country under the framework of the United Nations," said Nisar Ahmad Shirzai, a military analyst. "There might be political reasons for not accepting this border, but there are no legal reasons for it," said Shaker Hayat, a political analyst. This comes as all common crossings between Afghanistan and Pakistan were blocked for eleven days, as a result of which huge losses were caused to traders and investors.

China-Afghanistan relations to improve: Officials



KABUL (Tolo News): The Deputy Director of the Asian Department at China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mao Ming, in a meeting with the Ambassador of the Islamic Emirate to China, Bilal Karimi, discussed several issues between Afghanistan and China. The Afghanistan Embassy in Beijing wrote on X that in the meeting Mao Ming pledged the strengthening of diplomatic relations of China with Afghanistan. "The China-Afghanistan relations were generally discussed in the meeting, commerce, investment, Chinese projects in Afghanistan and also the

permanent connection of China-Afghanistan were discussed," said Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate. Bilal Karimi, along with discussing Kabul-Beijing relations, emphasized the creation of opportunities of bilateral cooperation with Afghanistan in the first initiative meeting of the Regional Contact Group member countries. Meanwhile, several political analysts said the strengthening of relations with the neighboring and regional countries are important for Afghanistan and will mitigate the political challenges of Afghanistan with the international community, they said.

"Having relations with many big countries is beneficial for the Islamic Emirate and the people of Afghanistan," said Bilal Fatimi, a political analyst. "It should have been done last year or two years ago because the agreements that we had many times on the issues of drugs, terrorism, and Afghanistan's internal issues with the world need local and regional consensus," said Salim Paygir, a political analyst China is one of the countries that has good relations with the caretaker government since the return of the Islamic Emirate but it has yet to be recognized the Islamic Emirate.

British Parliament to Investigate ‘Gender Apartheid’ in Afghanistan and Iran

KABUL (Khaama Press): A group of British Parliament members has initiated an inquiry into the status of women and girls in Afghanistan and Iran, titled "Gender Apartheid Investigations." This parliamentary group is currently gathering evidence and documents regarding the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and Iran. Forbes magazine reported on Tuesday that this investigation marks the world's first comprehensive examination of the status of women and girls in Afghanistan and Iran, evaluating it against existing international legal definitions of international crimes. The investigation is led by Helena Kennedy QC, a member of the House of Lords in Britain, and the group is examining the concept of "gender apartheid" and its compatibility with the existing international legal framework. These representatives argue that gender apartheid



UN experts warn that the Taliban's treatment of Afghan women and girls may constitute crimes against humanity. They call for an investigation and prosecution of these limitations as sexual harassment under international law. Meanwhile, Joanna Cherry, a representative of the Scottish National Party, stated in an article some time ago that the situation of women in Afghanistan and Iran is a clear case of gender apartheid and should be officially recognized in these two countries. She emphasized that Britain should take a leading role in addressing this issue. Over the past two years, the Taliban has imposed extensive restrictions on women in Afghanistan. They have closed girls' schools beyond the sixth grade and prohibited women from attending universities, working, engaging in recreational activities, traveling, participating in sports, and dining at restaurants.

IFJ condemns continued detentions of Afghan media workers

KABUL (Khaama Press): The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) condemned the detentions of Afghan media workers and called them a "crackdown" on media. The IFJ in a press release called on Afghanistan's Media Complaints and Rights Violations Commission to investigate these incidents immediately. "Continuing its crackdown on independent media in 2024, three journalists were detained by the Taliban's intelligence agency over two days in Kabul. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its affiliate, the Afghan Independent Journalists Union (AIJU), condemn the continued summoning and detentions of Afghan media workers and call for all cases to be swiftly investigated," the press release reads. However, Ziaulhaq Haqmal, the head of the Ministry of Information and Culture's Publications section, said that media outlets and institutions supporting the media should operate in accordance with national legal laws of the country. Haqmal added that the Ministry is attempting to address the issues that media workers and organizations that support the nation's media face. "If those institutions that have permits in Afghanistan and are operating here, have problems, they



should come here and we will address their problems," Ziaulhaq Haqmal added. Meanwhile, the arrests of media workers concern some journalists in the country. Journalists said that the media and its workers need more support from media supporting institutions. "Media activities in Afghanistan definitely need the support of organizations supporting media and journalists. Media and journalists need more support of the institutions supporting media in Afghanistan," said Mustafa Shahriyar, a journalist.

"We hope that the current government of Afghanistan knows these values and ends the issue of restricting media and arresting journalists," said Mohammad Raqib Fayaz, another journalist. This comes as earlier, Mujeeb Khelwatgar, the head of NAI (a group that supports open media in Afghanistan) in a video message announced the temporary suspension of this organization's activities in Afghanistan. Khelwatgar stressed that no representative will be representing the organization in Afghanistan anymore.



KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the 31st convocation ceremony of University of Karachi.

Maryam asks KP to vote carefully

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: PML-N Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz on Saturday asked the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to exercise their right to vote judiciously, saying their ballot would decide the province's future.

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif shared the party manifesto with the nation earlier in the day and he had never any claim that he could not fulfil, she said. The three-time prime minister had already planned how to reduce the electricity prices, she said, as people in Pakistan are facing an unprecedented cost of living crisis amid a persistent inflation.

She was addressing a rally in Abbottabad – the main town in the Hazara region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the PML-N aims at a strong showing to boost its chances of forming government in the province. Maryam said manifesto wasn't just a piece of paper and represented a firm commitment with the people. But the party, which ruled Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for 10 years, didn't deliver, she added.

Their manifesto was to give petrol bombs to the youth and stealing the watches, she remarked and compared the PTI with the PML-N, saying that Nawaz had provided laptops to the youngsters and uprooted terrorism from Pakistan. Everyone knows what is written in their manifesto, Maryam remarked and reminded the charged crowd about the attacks carried out on military installations on May 9.

The PML-N has seen its number of seats dwindling both at the provincial and national level in Khyber

Shahbaz outlines development plans for Rawalpindi

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Former PM and President of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Shahbaz Sharif laid out the party's plans for major development projects under the leadership of Mian Nawaz Sharif if the PML-N comes into power in the upcoming general election on February 8, 2024.

Shahbaz Sharif was addressing a public gathering at Liaquat Bagh here on Saturday. He also announced ambitious initiatives for Rawalpindi, including the introduction of a blue train and electric buses to enhance public transportation and improve local road infrastructure.

Shahbaz Sharif said that Rawalpindi would be developed like Lahore. He highlighted the importance of the metro bus project and credited Nawaz Sharif for inaugurating the metro bus service from Islamabad to Rawalpindi. He said that an endowment fund was established, and laptops were distributed among the students.

Shahbaz Sharif emphasized their role in providing medical treatment at the Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology (RIC) to residents of Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Emphasizing the PML-N's dedication to progress, Shahbaz Sharif recalled their focus on building hospitals, providing free medical facilities, and supporting education during Nawaz Sharif's leadership.

He said that the multi-billion-dollar project of Ring Road would be completed soon, which would be a game changer and would bring prosperity, he added. Shahbaz Sharif also announced a potable water project for Rawalpindi, involving an investment of 30 billion rupees, with a commitment to swift completion once the party assumes power. He criticized the current PTI government for allegedly leading the country toward destruction and failing to deliver tangible benefits to the public. He emphasized the significance of election day by urging members of the public to vote for the party's lion symbol, which represents its dedication to reducing poverty and inflation. Tight security arrangements with the police were made on the occasion, whereas the City Traffic Police CTP made a traffic plan to maintain traffic flow.

Pakhtunkhwa after forming the provincial government in 1997 for a variety reasons as it previously remained unable to regain the lost ground. However, the PML-N wants to revive its fortunes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa so enhance its stature at the national level and get rid of the Punjab-centric label.

Maryam said the projects completed by Nawaz were on the right and left of

those criticised him, as she asked the people whether modern transport system like Orange Line and health services were not a right of those living in Abbottabad and other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The rally in Abbottabad was not originally part of her schedule, but they received a message that the people in the city were waiting for her, she told the charged crowd.

India, France to jointly produce defence equipment

NEW DELHI (Reuters): India has signed an agreement with France to jointly produce defence equipment including helicopters and submarines for the Indian Armed Forces and friendly countries, Reuters reported Saturday.

The deal between the two countries was struck during French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to India where he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and attended a state banquet hosted by President Draupadi Murmu, said New Delhi.

Macron and Modi agreed to expand bilateral ties in defence production, nuclear energy, space research and the use of artificial intelligence for public services like climate change, health and agriculture, the statement said. It did not specify the value of any deals. After Russia, France is the largest arms supplier to India, which has relied on its fighter jets for four decades.

The leaders welcomed the setting up of maintenance, repair and overhaul services by France's Safran for leading-edge aviation propulsion (LEAP) engines in India and adding such services for Rafale engines, and a helicopter partnership. The bilateral summit during Macron's 40-hour visit was the fifth Macron-Modi meeting since May.

India's Tata Group and France's Airbus have signed an agreement to manufacture civilian helicopters together, Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said. French jet engine maker CFM International also announced an agreement with India's Akasa Air to buy more than 300 of its LEAP-1B engines to power 150 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft.

Akasa Air previously ordered 76 aircraft powered by the engine, of which 22 are in use. India and France agreed to intensify cooperation in the southwest Indian Ocean, building on joint surveillance missions carried out from the French island territory of La Reunion in 2020 and 2022, the government statement said. Macron also said France would create conditions to attract up to 30,000 Indian students a year for higher education.

FIA registers 155 inquiries

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Saturday swung into action as it has formally registered 115 inquiries and issued notices to 65 persons for spreading false information about the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) and the state institution.

According to reports, notices have also been issued to 47 vloggers and TV talk shows' hosts. In this connection, first two hearings will be held on January 30 and January 31. The recent steps show that the Authority is taking the matter seriously.

Drawing attention towards what he called an organized and malicious campaign against the Supreme Court judges being run on social media, from within the country as well as abroad, Caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi on Monday showed the resolve that he would not spare a single person involved in it.

reaching Islamabad. There, they staged a sit-in in front of the National Press Club, advocating for an end to enforced disappearances of students, political workers, and human rights defenders.

They called for the establishment of a judicial commission to investigate the killing of missing persons. The protesters had on Tuesday announced to call off their sit-in outside the NPC and move to Quetta.

Gaza battles rage as Israel vows to shut out UN agency

GAZA (AFP): Intense fighting raged Saturday in the Gaza city of Khan Yunis, the main theater of conflict where the Israeli army is targeting the Palestinian Islamist militant group Hamas. The unabated hostilities came a day after the UN's International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled Israel must prevent possible acts of genocide in the conflict but stopped short of calling for a ceasefire.

Tensions rose between Israel and the UN agency for Palestinian refugees after Israel alleged several UNRWA staff were involved in the Hamas attack of October 7, leading some key donor countries to suspend funding. Foreign Minister Israel Katz said Saturday that Israel wants to ensure the UN agency, with tens of thousands of staff in the territory, "will not be a part of the day after," the bloodiest ever Gaza war. The US, Australia and Canada had already paused funding to the aid agency after the allegations. The agency has opened an investigation into several employees severed ties with them. Britain, Italy and Finland on Saturday became the latest countries to pause funding for the agency.

Alarm has grown over the plight of civilians in Khan Yunis, the southern hometown of Hamas's Gaza chief Yahya Sinwar, the suspected mastermind of the October 7 attack. AFP TV images showed thousands of civilians, among them women and children, fleeing the city on foot as an Israeli tank loomed behind them. "They besieged us, so we fled," said Tahani Al-Najjar, who left Khan Yunis with her daughter. "We call on the UN to intervene, to stop the war. Enough of fear and terror!"

Gaza civil defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal said the displaced endured incessant cold rain and warned of the "spread of contagious diseases." The Israeli army said its "troops continued to kill numerous armed terrorists from close range" and raided a weapons storage facility in Khan Yunis. The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said at least 135 people were killed in Khan Yunis overnight.

The Hamas government said "massive tank bombardment" targeted a refugee camp in the city and its

Nasser hospital. Issuing a highly anticipated ruling on Friday, the UN's top court said Israel must prevent genocidal acts in Gaza and allow humanitarian aid into the narrow strip of land which has been under relentless bombardment and siege for almost four months. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the case as "outrageous" while Gaza's Hamas rulers hailed the ruling, saying it "contributes to isolating Israel and exposing its crimes in Gaza."

The decision was based on an urgent application brought by South Africa, long a supporter of the Palestinian cause, but a broader judgment on whether genocide has been committed could take years. "This is the first time the world has told Israel that it is out of line," said Maha Yasin, a 42-year-old displaced Gaza woman. "What Israel did to us in Gaza for four months has never happened in history."

Israel's military campaign began soon after Hamas's October 7 attack that resulted in about 1,140 deaths in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of official Israeli figures. Militants also seized about 230 hostages and Israel says around 152 of them remain in Gaza, including the bodies of at least 28 dead captives. Israel has vowed to crush Hamas, and Gaza's health ministry says the Israeli military offensive has killed at least 26,257 people, about 70 percent of them women and children.

The army says at least 220 soldiers have been killed since Israel launched its Gaza ground operations. With Gaza's humanitarian crisis growing, the UN says most of the estimated 1.7 million Palestinians displaced by the war are crowded into Rafah on the southern border with Egypt. At Khan Yunis's Nasser Hospital, the largest in the besieged city, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said surgical capacity was "virtually non-existent."

The charity said the hospital's services had "collapsed" and the few staff who remained "must contend with very low supplies that are insufficient to handle mass casualty events." World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said 350 patients and 5,000 displaced

people remained at the hospital as fighting continued nearby.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said Israeli tanks targeted the Al-Amal hospital, another of the city's few remaining medical facilities, and that it was "under siege with heavy gunfire." "There is no longer a health care system in Gaza," MSF said. There were 300 to 500 patients trapped at the Nasser hospital with "war-related injuries such as open wounds, lacerations from explosions, fractures and burns."

The Israeli military accuses Hamas of operating from tunnels under Gaza hospitals and of using the medical facilities as command centers. Meirav Eilon Shahar, Israel's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, accused the WHO this week of collusion with Hamas by ignoring Israeli evidence of Hamas's "military use" of Gaza hospitals.

Tedros rejected the accusation, saying it could "endanger our staff who are risking their lives to serve the vulnerable." Relations between Israel and UNRWA soured further after the UN body said tanks had shelled one of its shelters in Khan Yunis on Wednesday, killing 13 people. UNRWA said on Friday it had sacked several employees accused by Israel of involvement in the October 7 attack.

The allegations have prompted the United States, Canada, Australia and Italy to suspend funding to the agency. Israel said it would seek to stop UNRWA from operating in Gaza after the war. Hamas urged the international community to ignore Israel's "threats," while the Palestinian Authority said the agency needed "maximum support" from donors.

Diplomatic efforts have sought scaled-up aid deliveries for Gaza and a truce, after a week-long cessation of hostilities in November saw Hamas release dozens of hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. CIA chief William Burns is to meet with his Israeli and Egyptian counterparts, as well as Qatar's prime minister, in the coming days in Paris to seek a ceasefire, a security source told AFP. The UN Security Council will meet to discuss the ICJ's ruling on Wednesday.

PPP urges people to vote for transformational change

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Senator Sherry Rehman, the Vice President of the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP), on Saturday officially launched the party's manifesto ahead of the 2024 general elections, lauded Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for unveiling a visionary and people-centric pledge, and urged the masses to rally behind the youth leader for transformative change, steering away from the politics of hatred and divisiveness.

The manifesto, titled "Chuno Nai Soch Ko," outlines a comprehensive plan for inclusive development and transformative change, centering on economic gains anchored in social justice. She said: "After extensive consultations with all regions of the country as well as civil society stakeholders and experts, the PPP has launched its manifesto for 2024 with a clear message for inclusion and transformational change based on prioritizing economic gains premised on social justice, the creation of employment opportunities, and a strong focus on providing both growth and relief to the most vulnerable sections of the population."

Senator Rehman stressed that given the situation of the country, business as usual is no longer an option, nor could the country wait for trickle-down, supply-side economic policies for any transformative change. "We cannot wait for the rich to get far, far richer before they allow their wealth to filter down to the landless, the poor, the unemployed, and the unempowered." "While we will incentivize entrepreneurs and encourage public-private partnerships for creating and governing substantive health and education initiatives for quality services that reach all, we will seek to burden share with those who can afford it. It's time for strategic re-sets, and we are ready to harness the clean energy of local solar parks, divert wasteful spending, and create a Pakistan that grows and adds value to change the lives of our citizens."

In discussing the imperative of inclusive economic growth, Senator Rehman emphasized that investments must be encouraged and enabled to ensure the benefits of growth reach every stratum of society. "Resources have to be mobilized to give way for distribution that is fair, for the labor and women and farmers that turn the wheels

of our country to earn a decent, living wage and not just become destitute or victims of health traumas and climate disasters overnight to eke out a subsistence living that leaves children malnourished, with a high prevalence still prey to disease and stunting," she said.

She added that, as mentioned in the manifesto, the party will ensure that all Pakistanis can send their children to good local schools, and make sure that healthcare is available to all for free. "The focus on young people, women, and the socially disadvantaged, with incentives, support, and an enabling environment for change, has been a core theme for creating prosperity in Pakistan by flattening social pyramids and empowering the growing numbers of the vulnerable and the poor in the country," she said.

"We are clearly seeking to address the growing food and water insecurity challenges in our country, the lack of jobs and vertical growth opportunities for our young, underemployed workforce, while seeking viable solutions for chronic and systemic issues that hamper our public social

services as well as addressing those emerging global issues that look likely to pose risks to our economy and social fabric."

The senator further said that the PPP aims to roll out a diverse range of programs addressing issues such as food insecurity, healthcare accessibility, social safety net expansion, and initiatives like the youth card (Jawan Mustaqbil), along with comprehensive offerings to support farmers (Khushal Kisan) and laborers (Mazdoor ko Mehmat ka Sila), ensuring sustainable livelihoods for the people.

"By giving them resilient homes and ownership of those homes, as has already begun in Sindh post-flood areas, we will change them into home and small land owners, with women as the actual title holders of these new assets. We will provide social protections under the BISP, expand the existent projects, and empower young people by providing financial support and training, as well as creating youth centers in every district." She said that along with diversifying Pakistan's manufacturing base to spur value-added exports while putting

agriculture, technology, and green energy at the forefront, the PPP will bring the country back to the food surplus it had done under its previous tenures.

"We believe in speaking to all kinds of voters, including people who have previously voted for other parties or young people who have never voted. We don't want to govern only for PPP supporters, we want to help all Pakistanis. Economic Agenda, launched in the early part of the campaign by Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, had formed the heart of its new thinking on creating a social contract with the people of Pakistan, who have been struggling with soaring inflation and climate and social distress on the ground. "None of the points have been just thrown together to create a manifesto without a plan to implement the cross-cutting themes, but instead bolstered by thought leadership on how the economic space to fund the people's agenda for strategic re-sets of our human capital and resources to grow and add value to change the lives of our citizens," she said.

Nation has potential to put country on development path

F.P. Report

KARACHI: President Dr Arif Alvi said on Saturday that the nation had the potential to put the country on the path to prosperity and development. While addressing the 31st Convocation of the University of Karachi here, he said that the country could be rehabilitated in five to ten years.

He said that humanity is reaching the skies through science and technology these days. Congratulating the graduating students and scholars, Dr Arif Alvi said that around two crore and 62 thousand children were out of school. He said that the elite segment of society should come forward and

play its role in bringing these children to the schools.

Stressing the need for creating an environment of moral and ethical thinking and values, he said that education did not become only the base of morality and ethics. The president said that moral and ethical values were promoted by parents, teachers, and the environment of society. He urged the graduating students to play a specific role in the promotion of moral values.

Speaking on Israeli brutalities in Gaza, he said that the intellectual battles had turned into western interests in the world. Dr Alvi said that he was emphasizing morality merely

because, these days, educated people have committed more brutalities in the world. He said that the circulation of video and audio clips on social media had created an environment of out-of-context conversations and stressed the need for learning communication skills to cope with these challenges.

Earlier, the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Dr Mukhtar Ahmed, and Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Iraqi also addressed the convocation. The President, who is also the Chancellor of the public universities, put medals on the graduating students and scholars on the occasion.

Mahrang Baloch bemoans enforcement of section 144

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Activist Dr Mahrang Baloch on Saturday lambasted the imposition of Section 144 in Quetta by the provincial government, calling it "an attempt to disrupt and disturb our right to peaceful assembly."

After conducting a month-long protest sit-in in Islamabad, the participants of the Turbat long march, led by Dr Baloch, had on Thursday arrived in Quetta

with a plan to stage a rally in the provincial capital today. The protest march had originated in Turbat following the alleged extrajudicial killing of Balaach Mola Bakhsh, attributed to the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD). The participants had demanded the registration of an FIR against the officials involved.

Starting their march from Turbat, the participants travelled through various areas, ultimately

reaching Islamabad. There, they staged a sit-in in front of the National Press Club, advocating for an end to enforced disappearances of students, political workers, and human rights defenders.

They called for the establishment of a judicial commission to investigate the killing of missing persons. The protesters had on Tuesday announced to call off their sit-in outside the NPC and move to Quetta.



سولہ گیس سروسز
SNGPL Official



4hm³ 3hm³ 2hm³ 0.9hm³ 0.6hm³ 0.3hm³

بل کو پروٹیکٹڈ بنانے کا راز جانیں!

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- واشنگ مین یا کھانا کھانے کے بعد گیس کا استعمال کریں