

PTI unveils manifesto
ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has unveiled its manifesto for general elections 2024. In a press conference, PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan presented the party's manifesto, saying that PTI will bring reforms in the education sector and prioritize skill-based education after coming into power. He said that PTI will propagate independent foreign policy and relations with all countries will be based on Pakistan's interests.



HUB: Former President of the country and President of Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Asif Ali Zardari while addressing an election rally in Hub district of Balochistan

Nawaz promises to contain inflation, unemployment after coming to power

SIALKOT (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Sunday promised to contain inflation and unemployment after coming to power.

Addressing a massive public gathering at Jinnah Stadium Sialkot, the PML-N supremo said that his party would put the country back on the path to development and prosperity and re-move the darkness forever if people voted it to power .

The ex-prime minister said that his party would make an all-out effort to get the country out of crises. He asked the people to compare his tenure as a prime minister with the situation after his ouster. "My government was toppled without any reason. We our-selves dragged our country to the quagmire. If the develop-ment and policy of our era had con-tinued, the country's economy would not have been in this condition today," he added. Nawaz Sharif expressed empathy for the youth, stating that he loved them and was saddened that they were unemployed. He attributed this unemployment to the former PTI government and said if Nawaz Sharif's government had continued, no youth would have been unem-

Feb-8 to be victory day for PML-N, says Shehbaz

SIALKOT (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz President Shehbaz Sharif, addressing a public meeting at Jinnah Stadium here on Sunday, said February 8 would be the victory day for the PML-N.

He said the business community of Sialkot was appreciable which was earning billions of dollars for Pakistan. He said a successful public gathering in Sialkot was a testimony that PML-N's political opponents would be defeated on Feb 8, and the party would restart a journey of national development and prosperity from where it was stopped in the past. Shehbaz Sharif said that while casting his vote, everyone would remember the brilliant era of Nawaz Sharif. He said that in 1999, Nawaz Sharif made Pakistan's defence invincible by conducting six nuclear explosions against India's five blasts.

ployed today. The PML-N supremo blasted the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government for plunging the country into an inflation and unem-

ployment ditch after his ouster. "I loved the young generation and will take steps for their betterment," he maintained.

The former prime minister said that the PML-N government would provide laptops to youths because it was important to uplift the young generation to put Pakistan back on the prosperity track. "We will provide loans to our youths for a period of 20 years so that they can stand on their own feet and earn respectable employment.

To make the youth skilled, providing them with better employment opportunities, attracting the younger generation to the field of information technology, providing them with lap-tops like the past are all part of our manifesto, which will be implement-ed," he added.

Nawaz Sharif said that with the support of the people, his party would make Pakistan prosperous, with employment in every house. Nawaz Sharif said that in 2017 roti (bread) was available at Rs4 and now it costs Rs. 25, petrol was available at Rs. 65 per liter which is now Rs. 260 per litre, similarly sugar was available at Rs.50 per kg which now costs Rs.150 per kg.

Zardari terms democracy crucial to address country's problems

F.P. Report

HUB: Former President of the country and President of Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Asif Ali Zardari has reiterated that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) will give the people of Balochistan and the province their due both share and dignity, and stressed that only "genuine political parties" can solve the problems facing the country.

According to the press release issued by Media Cell Bilawal House, the former President while addressing an election rally in Hub district of Balochistan said that PPP is a federal party and serving the people is worship for its leadership. He said that all the problems facing the country can be solved through democracy, saying: "What can be done with democracy, cannot be done in the war." He said that despite being a victim of grave injustices, the PPP never spoke of taking up arms. "Yes, [we] talked about fighting on the streets, holding

rallies, (and) fighting for democracy around the world, including Pakistan," he added. He said Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto raised the flag of democracy and was elected prime minister twice. "I also followed in her (Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's) footsteps and elected my prime minister and became president myself," he added.

President Asif Ali Zardari said that although there is no perfect democracy in the country even now, but it gradually strengthens.

Describing Balochistan's progress in democracy, he said that those who take up arms need to be explained. He pointed out that during his tenure, the Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan Program was introduced. "I gave Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan, apologised to Balochistan, took as many steps as I could. I got people released from jails, and tried to be our friends and come back considering Pakistan as their country," he

added.

Talking about the unanimous NFC Award introduced during his tenure, the former President said that due to that initiative, the budget of Balochistan increased, and continued: "It has been 15 years since I gave the 18th Amendment. Your budget has been increased four times, but that budget (growth as a result of that budget) is not visible here." He reiterated that he would solve the problems of entire Balochistan including Hub, saying: "We promise that we will take you forward, and take care of you. The Hub should also be like Karachi, Hub should also have hospitals, water facilities and universities." He said that if the law and order improves, the investors of Karachi will invest in Hub too. He said that he always called Balochistan the heart of the country, so the Hub can also play the role of "mind".

President Asif Ali Zardari said that only political forces can solve the problems of Pakistan.

‘Malicious campaign’ against top judiciary being probed as per law’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Sunday said the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) was investigating the "malicious campaign" against the top judiciary on social media in accordance with the law. Addressing a news conference along with officials of the FIA, PTA and other relevant institutions, the minister said the JIT was formed on January 16 to probe into the anti-judiciary campaign on the social media networking sites.

He said the JIT's first meeting held was on January 17 while the second one convened on January 23. The process to probe into the drive was still underway, he added.

So far, 600 social media accounts were investigated, he said, adding as many as 100 inquiries were registered. The minister said notices were served on 110 individuals that included 32 journalists and 22 politicians

and political workers.

The notices to the identified individuals were served in accordance with the law, Solangi said while brushing aside the reports regarding the harassment of journalists in the matter related to a "malicious campaign" against top judges. The minister said it was imperative to bring forth the facts in this regard. So far no First Investigation Report was lodged against anybody, nor anyone was arrested for this matter.

Solangi said the law would take its courts and actions against those who were involved in running the campaign against the judiciary would be taken in accordance with the law.

To a query, he said there were reasonable restrictions on the freedom of expression and the law of the land prohibited from running campaigns against the judiciary and armed forces. "This is not about criticism rather it is related to character assassination and ridiculing [of the judiciary]," he said in response to another

query. "What has been done against the judges of the apex court during the last couple of days on social media, it does not come under the pretext of criticism," he said while clarifying that there should be a fine line between the criticism and ridiculing someone. To another query, he sathe caretaker government could only take measures in accordance with its mandate. However, the legislation on any issue was the job of the Parliament whose lower house did not exist as of now.

"Nobody has been picked up since the JIT is formed," he said while dispelling the impression of a witch-hunt under the garb of the JIT. He said the intensity of the malicious campaign had decreased significantly since the formation of the JIT. FIA Director General Ishaq Jahangir said notices were served to give an opportunity to the identified individuals to give their side of version on the issue.

The Frontier Post

ISLAMABAD (INP): Iran has offered condolences to Pakistan over the killing of nine of its labourers on its soil. Iranian envoy to Pakistan in his statement condemned the killings of Pakistani labourers in Iran and said Tehran and Islamabad will not tolerate affliction of damage to the countries' relations. "Iran and Pakistan will not allow enemies to cause damage to the countries' brotherly relations," the Iranian envoy said in his statement.

US says its Israel policy unchanged after report on leveraging weapon sales

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The White House said on Sunday there was no change in its Israel policy after NBC News reported the United States was discussing using weapon sales to Israel as leverage to convince the Israeli government to scale back its military assault in Gaza.

"Israel has a right and obligation to defend themselves against the threat of Hamas, while abiding by international humanitarian law and protecting civilian lives, and we remain committed to support Israel in its fight against Hamas," a spokesperson for the White House National Security Council said. "We have done so since Oct. 7, and will continue to. There has not been a change in our policy." NBC News reported earlier on Sunday that at the direction of the White House, the Pentagon has been reviewing what weaponry Israel has requested that could be used as leverage. The report cited sources and said no final decisions were made.

The report added that the U.S. is considering slowing or pausing the deliveries in hopes that doing so will make the Israelis take actions such as opening humanitarian corridors to provide more aid to Palestinian civilians.

"There has been no request from the White House for DoD (Department of Defense) to slow down weapons deliveries to Israel," a White House official said when asked about the NBC News report. "And not aware of any request to review weapons to potentially slow walk deliveries either."

Bilawal asks PTI workers to vote for “Arrow”

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a gathering of the Jiyalas in Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi said that he is in the same city where Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto were martyred.

Chairman Bilawal said that he has come to this city once again because the country is in danger. On one hand, we are facing an economic crisis and on the other, a societal crisis as well. Simultaneously, the same terrorists we had defeated after rendering great sacrifices are again trying to raise their heads. This soil is yearning for us once again as it is in danger, and we have to answer its call as only the PPP can save it. Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam gave us the slogan of 'Roti, Kapra Aur Makaaan', which was extended by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in her last campaign, through the addition of 'Ilm, Sehat, Sab Ko Kaam, Dehshat Se Mahfooz Awaam, Ooncha Ho Jamhoor Ka Naam'.

The PPP has curated its 2024 manifesto with the same philosophy in mind, along with the 10-point economic charter which will combat the most vital problems faced by the people. The PPP is the sole political party that can help the country emerge from

the economic, societal and security crises. The society is plagued with the politics of hatred and division, and the PPP is the only party that aims to bury it forever.

The PPP resolves to establish a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' to help unify the country so that we can progress and prosper. The PPP is the only party that can take everyone along for the sake of the nation. As far as terrorism is concerned, it is imperative that we tackle it today. It has been a trend for us to make excuses and procrastinate on this matter, as we only act when our citizens are made targets of heinous attacks. The time has come for us to decide that there is no good or bad Taliban, and we should combat terrorism in all forms. We should only consider the Constitution given by Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto supreme, and should have the courage to give a befitting response in case the security of our people is compromised.

Chairman Bilawal said that the elections are set to take place on February 8, and a political party has adopted the same attitude it had sworn to discontinue after the Charter of Democracy. The same party is not staying true to its slogan of 'Vote Ko Izzat Do'. It wishes to divide the people through encouraging the politics of hate. They want to misguide the people. Hence, the citizens of

the country should make a wise decision after thorough deliberation. By stamping the symbol of the arrow, the people can render this great conspiracy against the country redundant. The Jiyalas need to apprise the people that this is not the time to let our emotions get the best of us, we should not waste away our votes. The workers of PML-N should be told that their party is not protecting the sanctity of the vote, rather it is destroying it.

The workers of PTI need to be apprised of the PPP's struggle that it has been doing since three generations. They need to realise that Imran Khan is not in the elections, and he will not become the PM. All the office bearers of their party are planted, and them not getting their election symbol was a doing of their own people. Their office bearers are shedding crocodile tears. Instead of wasting away their vote on the independent candidates, the people should make a wise choice and opt for the arrows. The majority of the country does not wish to see this person becoming the PM for the fourth time. The people are not willing to accept him as their PM at all.

Chairman Bilawal said that the Jiyalas need to work hard for the sake of the country till February 8. The PPP has the experience to combat the plethora of problems faced by the people.

Three US troops killed, up to 34 injured in Jordan drone strike linked to Iran

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Three U.S. service members were killed and dozens wounded during an unmanned aerial drone attack on U.S. forces stationed in northeastern Jordan near the Syrian border, President Joe Biden and U.S. officials said on Sunday.

Biden blamed Iran-backed groups for the attack, the first deadly strike against U.S. forces since the Israel-Hamas war erupted in October, sending shock waves throughout the Middle East.

"While we are still gathering the facts of this attack, we know it was carried out by radical Iran-backed militant groups operating in Syria and Iraq," Biden said in a statement.

At least 34 personnel were being evaluated for possible traumatic brain injury, a U.S. official told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity. Two different officials said some wounded U.S. forces were medically evacuated from the base for further treatment. A fourth official said the drone struck near the barracks, which, if confirmed, could explain the high number of casualties.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group of hardline Iran-backed militant groups, claimed attacks on three bases, including one on the Jordan-Syria border.

The attack is a major escalation of the already tense situation in the

Middle East, where war broke out in Gaza after Palestinian Islamist group Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7 which killed 1,200. Israel's subsequent assault on Gaza has killed over 26,000 Palestinians, according to the local health ministry.

While the United States has thus far maintained an official line that Washington is not at war in the region, it has made strikes against targets of Yemen's Houthi groups that have been attacking commercial vessels in the Red Sea.

"We will carry on their commitment to fight terrorism. And have no doubt - we will hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner of our choosing," Biden said in his statement released by the White House.

Republican opponents of Biden seized on the attack as evidence of the Democratic president's failure to confront Iran as its proxies strike against U.S. forces across the region. "The only answer to these attacks must be devastating military retaliation against Iran's terrorist forces ... Anything less will confirm Joe Biden as a coward," said Republican Senator Tom Cotton in a statement.

A senior official with the Iran-backed Palestinian militant group Hamas, Sami Abu Zuhri, directly tied the attack to Israel's campaign

in Gaza. "The killing of three American soldiers is a message to the U.S. administration that unless the killing of innocents in Gaza stops, it must confront the entire nation," he told Reuters.

"The continued American-Zionist aggression on Gaza is capable of exploding the situation in the region."

The U.S. military said the attack occurred at a base in northeastern Jordan, near the Syrian border. It did not name the base. U.S. military activity in Jordan can be a sensitive issue, particularly at a time of heightened tensions of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

A Jordanian government spokesman told state TV that the militants targeted a different base, outside Jordanian territory.

Washington has given Jordan around \$1 billion to bolster border security since Syria's civil war began in 2011, and has recently sent more military aid to that end, Western intelligence sources say.

It is unclear which Iran-backed group may have carried out the attack but several U.S. officials said they did not believe that Iranian military forces themselves launched the one-way attack drone.

"While we're still gathering facts, this is most assuredly the work of an Iranian-backed militia group," another U.S. official said.



SIALKOT: PML-N Quaid, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif is addressing a public gathering during election campaign.

Fire at Karachi's Korangi Area extinguished

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a swift response, the Fire Brigade successfully controlled the fire at a cloth warehouse located in Korangi Zia Colony, Karachi. The Fire Brigade officials disclosed that the fire broke out on Sunday morning was contained with the assistance of three fire trucks dispatched to the site. The coordinated efforts of the rescue teams prevented the flames from spreading further, according to private news channel.

Rescue authorities revealed that the fire, which originated within the cloth warehouse, resulted in substantial quantities of cloth turning into ashes. The extent of the damage to the warehouse is currently being assessed. Fortunately, no casualty has been reported in the incident. However, investigations are underway to determine the cause of the fire.

Dr Khalid Iraqi distributes laptops among students

KARACHI (APP): The Vice Chancellor of the University of Karachi, Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi, said that we need to get out of fiction and myths and adopt the reality of science and technology so that we can also compete with the rest of the world.

He mentioned that one of the major reasons we are still backwards is that we did not adopt changes around the world on time, and similarly, Muslims were too late to take advantage of science and research in the modern days. He informed the audience that when the printing press was introduced, the West had started printing books, and distribution of those books was easily increased, but Muslims took 300 years to realize how important it would be for them as well.

The KU VC Professor, Dr Khalid Iraqi, was addressing the PM's National Laptop Scheme distribution ceremony. The KU Registrar, Professor Dr Imran Ahmad Siddiqui, deans of various faculties, chairpersons of departments, students, and others attended the event.

He shared that the value of digital knowledge has increased a lot in this era, and that is why these laptops are being distributed among the students so that they can remain updated about the technology and changing trends of the world and prepare themselves according to them.

Addressing the students, KU VC Professor Dr Khalid Iraqi said that if you decide to achieve your goals, nothing can stop you from achieving your dreams, and you should thank your parents who made it possible for you to access higher education. He hoped students would make the most use of the laptops to improve their academic and professional skills. Earlier, the audience was informed that around 2800 students had been selected for the laptops after a long procedure, and in the first phase, approximately 200 students have received the laptops, while others will get their laptops in the coming days.

PPP representative of labourers, workers: Aseefa

KARACHI (APP): Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, the daughter of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, has said that the Pakistan Peoples Party is the representative of the labourers and workers of the country.

She expressed this while addressing a gathering of the Party workers in Karachi's Kemari and West districts, on Saturday night. She arrived at Shireen Jinnah Colony, where a mammoth gathering of the people welcomed her. A large number of women were eager to catch a glimpse of Aseefa Bhutto Zardari.

Aseefa Bhutto Zardari was accompanied by PPP Karachi Division President Saeed Ghani, former MNA Abdul Qadir Patel, Javed Naguri, Khalil Hoth, Humayun Khan, Liaquat Askani, Asif Khan and Abdul Qadir Mandokhel.

While addressing the public on this occasion, she said that she, along with Chairman PPP, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will be the voice of the people. The PPP resolves to regularise temporary housing

and give their residents ownership on February 8. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is to be made the Prime Minister of Pakistan by stamping the symbol of the arrow. The Benazir Mazdoor Card and Benazir Kissan Card will bring a revolutionary change in your lives, Bibi Aseefa said. Aseefa Bhutto Zardari further said that PPP's passion is to serve the nation. The arrow is the symbol of the people and should triumph on February 8. The PPP is the only party in this country that gives power to the people. When Bilawal Bhutto becomes the Prime Minister, he will provide 300 units of electricity free of cost and build 3 million houses for the poor throughout the country.

Aseefa Bhutto Zardari visited the areas of Hub River Road, Maripur, Younusabad, and different other places in Baldia and addressed the public. Candidates of the PPP from their respective constituencies accompanied Aseefa Bhutto Zardari as she campaigned for them.



KARACHI: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Leader Aseefa Bhutto Zardari election campaign rally passing through various areas of Lyari.

Governor announces to send people over 75 years to Hajj and Umrah

KARACHI (APP): Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori has announced to bear expanses of Hajj and Umrah for persons above 75 years, who have not performed the holy pilgrimage in their life. This he announced while talking with media after visiting Sindh Government Hospital Liaquatabad (SGHL).

"Such persons should register themselves with Governor House and they would be sent to holy mosques after balloting", he further announced. Governor Sindh also announced to bear expanses of such students, whose parents are unable to afford heavy expenditure of fees and books. "Such parents can also approach 1366" he added.

He said that the emergency of

Sindh Government Hospital Liaquatabad is like the emergency of Jinnah, Civil and Abbasi Shaheed Hospitals and needs improvement "My main purpose of visiting city hospitals is to personally know the state of affairs of health care institutions to ensure betterment of the same", he added.

Governor Sindh pledged that he would continue to visit hospitals and shopping centres to listen to the grievances of the common man."In addition to hospitals and shopping centres I will start visits of government schools and parks along with media to expose inefficiency and wrongdoings there also", he added and said that media is showing everything, wherever I am going.

He said that since the establish-

ment of this hospital in 1982, hundreds of plazas have been erected in Karachi but no improvement has been made in this important health-care facility. He asked the aged people present on occasion to come to the Governor's House and have a discussion over a cup of tea to improve the situation. Governor Sindh further said that any person requiring ration bags can contact helpline 1366. Earlier, Governor Sindh visited the emergency of Sindh Government Hospital Liaquatabad where Medical Superintendent Dr Ateeq-ur-Rehman Qureshi briefed him about the working of the hospital. Governor Sindh enquired about the facility being provided to patients there.

Training workshop on concept note development for coping with natural disasters

F.P. Report

QANDEEL: The Community Resilience Activity - North (CRA-North) organized a 3-day Concept Note Development Workshop on Disaster Resilience in Qandeel, Tehsil Bahrain Swat.

The main objective of the workshop was to discuss and develop concept notes that focus on restoring flood-affected infrastructure and building resilience. Participants included local community members, including elders and youth from three different villages - Gulabad, Panjigram, and Dugiya. A total of 45 male and 15 female participants attended the workshop from Panjigram, Gulabad, and Dugiya villages in Bahrain.

The workshop empowered participants to develop project concept notes that address problems caused by natural disasters and aim to build a resilient community. They were provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to craft concept notes and proposals that align with the specific needs and issues of their local community, particularly those related to floods and other natural disasters.

The closing ceremony was graced by Mr. Muhammad Sikandar Khan, Assistant Commissioner of Bahrain, as the chief guest. He attentively listened to the participants' suggestions and reviewed their concept notes developed during the workshop. He also commended the efforts of CRA-North and presented certificates to the participating individuals as a gesture of appreciation. The community resilience activities organized by CRA-North include training workshops and rehabilitation activities. These aim to better prepare and effectively respond to natural disasters and overcome their effects.

LESCO detects 406 power pilferers in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 406 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) on the 141st day of grand anti-power theft campaign.

The LESCO spokesman told media here Sunday that the company has also submitted FIR applications against 405 electricity thieves, out of which 173 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while two accused have been arrested. Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations. The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft. The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them are also being brought to justice.

On the 141st consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units. Among the seized connections 13 were commercial, 02 agricultural, 01 industrial and 390 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 330,607 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 9.423 million.

Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he explained that LESCO charged Rs 200,000 detection to an electricity pilferer in Johar Town; Rs 175,000 fine in the form of detection bill to a customer stealing electricity in Alahabad; Rs

170,000 and Rs 130,000 detection bills respectively to two power thieves in Shahdara Town. During the 141 days of grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned, the LESCO detected pilferage on 48,900 power connections and submitted 48,434 FIR applications against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations out of which 45,563 FIRs have been registered, while 17,421 accused have so far been arrested by the police. The LESCO has so far charged a total of 69,414,387 detection units worth Rs 2,680,563,479 to all the power pilferers.

Industrial defaulter attacks LESCO team: A LESCO (Lahore Electric Supply Company) industrial defaulter ganged up his employees and attacked the company's recovery team in front of the policemen and threatened the officials of dire consequences in an area of Begum Kot Sub-Division.

According to LESCO spokesman here on Sunday, Begum Kot Sub-Division SDO Faizan Azam, along with his staff, was performing recovery duty and found that a defaulter of Rs 1.8 million against two power meters of industrial category, which were disconnected a few days back, has illegally reconnected the power supply from LESCO through a transformer. Noticing the power pilferage, the LESCO team once again disconnected the 'Ds' of the transformer, but the factory owner took Meter Reader Adnan hostage in the factory and snatched his mobile phone. Soon after the situation got worse, the LESCO team called on 15, and four policemen reached the spot and took out two employees out of the factory but the factory owner ganged up around 20 employees and subjected the LESCO officials to severe torture in front of the policemen, and threatened them of dire consequences.



HEADQUARTERS NORTHERN AIR COMMAND, PAF PESHAWAR

PRE-QUALIFICATION AND REGISTRATION OF LOCAL SUPPLIERS / CONTRACTORS FOR SUPPLY OF RATION ITEMS FY 2024-25

Applications are invited for pre-qualification / registration of reputable, well-experienced, financially-sound and Income Tax - registered firms / contractors with Directorate of Ration, Air Headquarters, Islamabad for supply of Ration items (Dry Ration like Sugar, Atta, Lentil Seeds, Rice, Milk Powder, Cooking Oil, Tea Leaves, Green Tea, Condiments whole and Fresh Ration like Meat, Fruit & Vegetables etc). Both Dry / Fresh supplies would be delivered to PAF Bases at Peshawar, Kohat, Mianwali, Kamra, Murid, Kalar Kahar, Skardu and (Risalpur).

Interested parties may apply on Company / Firm's letterhead from **01 February, 2024 to 15 February, 2024** during working hours (0830 Hrs to 1300 Hrs) along with the following information:-

- Owners / Partners Name, Address, Telephone, Mobile numbers and Fax number of the company. The properties / Owner / partners should be Pakistani National.
- Six months summary of their Bank accounts.
- Profile of the company. Status of the Firm, whether proprietorship / partnership / public or Private Limited Company. Partnership deed in case the contractors are other than proprietary/ limited / General order suppliers.
- Proof of property in case of partnership / proprietary.
- Memorandum and articles of association in case of Ltd concern.
- Attested copies of CNIC of owner / partners / witnesses of the company are to be attached with the application.
- Details of registration with major organizations along with details of agreements / contracts.
- Financial status duly verified / name of bankers and certificate of financial stability.
- Sales Tax and Income Tax registration certificate, details of Income Tax Returns and copy of assessment / payment of Income Tax.
- Legal action details, if any.
- Any additional information related to the subject.
- Affidavit regarding correctness of documents and information therein.

Applications duly marked with "Pre-qualification / registration" of Local supplies contractors for ration items" in sealed envelope are to be submitted to the undermentioned offices for the concerned ration items by **15 February, 2024**. Applications received after last submission date will not be entertained.

S No	Base / Unit	Ration Group	Contact No
(a)	Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF Peshawar (SO Support)	All commodities of Dry Ration	Tel: 091-9210777 Ext: 2061 / 2069 Cell # 0323-9410711
(b)	PAF Base, Peshawar (O i/c Catering Flight)	Fresh Ration	Tel: 091-9210777 Ext: 3843 / 3845 Cell # 0320-9229411
(c)	PAF Base, Kohat (O i/c Catering Flight)	Fresh Ration	Tel: 0922-9260092-97 Ext: 5219 / 5221 Cell # 0317-9957939
(d)	PAF Base, MM Alam (Mianwali) (O i/c Catering Flight)	Fresh Ration	Tel: 0459-232051 - 56 Ext: 5219 / 5221 Cell # 0304-4333703
(e)	PAF Base, Minhas (Kamra) (O i/c Catering Flight)	Fresh Ration	Tel: 0572-9316215 Ext: 3847 / 3849 Cell # 0303-5855206
(f)	PAF Academy, Asghar Khan (Risalpur) (O i/c Catering Flight)	Fresh Ration	Tel: 0923-631391-97 EXT: 3843 / 3845 Cell # 0333-9329000
(g)	PAF Base, Murid (O i/c Catering Flight)	Fresh Ration	Tel: 0543-553994 Ext: 3861 / 5221 Cell # 0323-9412721
(h)	PAF Base, Kallar Kahar (O i/c Catering Flight)	Fresh Ration	Tel: 0543-5883089 Ext: 2271 / 3845 Cell # 0323-9419721
(i)	PAF Qadri (Skardu) (O i/c Catering Flight)	Fresh Ration	Tel: 05815923078 Ext: 3881 / 3849 Cell # 0320-8837755

Note:

- Any information, if found incomplete / false at any stage, will result in immediate rejection of the application.
- The Staff Officer (Support) Headquarters Northern Air Command and O i/c Catering Flight of respective PAF Bases may ask for any further information / details, if required and reserves the right to accept or reject the applications on technical grounds.
- The Selected / shortlisted parties / Firms would be required to fill up registration forms with complete details, within 7 days of confirmation.

SSO (Support & AD)
Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF
66 - The Mall, Peshawar - Cantt.

Pakistan unveils its tourism potential at the travel and adventure show

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) in collaboration with Provincial tourism departments, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (T-DAP), Pakistan Counsel General at New York and private sector companies, showcased the nation's diverse tourism potential at the 'Travel and Adventure Show New York,' held from January 27 to January 28.

A 60 members' delegation having representatives of PTDC, TDAP, and 24 private sector companies represented Pakistan at the Travel and Adventure Show, New York. The Pakistan Pavilion at Travel and Adventure Show New York, was formally inaugurated by the Pakistani Ambassador to the USA, Ambassador Masood Khan while Tourism Minister of



Gilgit Baltistan, Ghulam Muhammad and former Minister for Tourism Gilgit Baltistan, Raja Nasir Ali Khan were also present at the inauguration ceremony.

Building on the success of the previous year, where the Pakistan Pavilion received the prestigious "Best New Exhibitor Award" for 2023, Pakistan also received best stall of the year award for 2024 from the organizers of the event. The event aims to provide a platform to exhibit

the immense potential of Pakistan's tourism industry. The Travel and Adventure Show will feature live performances by artisans specializing in lacquer woodwork and doll making. The delegation seeks to establish valuable connections with leading international players in the tourism sector, fostering collaboration to attract a greater number of tourists.

In his message on this occasion, Wasi Shah, State Minister for Tourism and Chairman PTDC congratulated the team of PTDC for making all the arrangements to put up a nice pavilion of Pakistan in this international travel fair and ensuring presence of all regions of Pakistan through joint marketing strategy. He hoped that all these effects will greatly contribute to attract more foreign visitors to Pakistan which will not only improve foreign exchange earnings from tourism in Pakistan but will also greatly help in the image building of Pakistan in the western world. "The event will provide an opportunity to showcase the great potential of Pakistan's tourism industry and create linkages with the leading international players of the tourism industry, which will greatly help attract more tourists," said Aftab Rana, MD PTDC.



PESHAWAR: Students busy in attempting the Centralized Admission Make-Up Test to facilitate admissions to undergraduate programs.

Governor hails sacrifices of tribal people for country

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali Sunday said that the sacrifices of the tribal people for the country and the nation are not hidden from anyone.

The safety of the nation is our responsibility, everyone has to play a joint role in the development and prosperity of the country, the federal and provincial governments are taking comprehensive measures to end the deprivations of the merged districts and very soon the tribal areas will be brought on par with other developed areas of the province.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a 60-member delegation of Baizai Hassan Khel's elders, elders and youth under the leadership of Amanullah Mohmand from Mohmand District. On this occasion, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali was also present, the public

delegation included Malik Muhammad Hasan, Abdul Wadud Mohmand, Muhammad Nabi, Sheikh Fazl Hameed, Malik Mir Salam, Qari Muhammad Ishaq and others.

Informing the governor about other regional issues including the issuance of identity cards, he said that the people of the region were forced to go through a painful process in the issuance of identity cards by the NADRA office.

The problem will be raised and it will be ensured that the people of the area get rid of the difficulties in obtaining identity cards. While talking to the delegation, the governor said that the development and prosperity of the merged districts is the priority, steps will be taken to ensure the provision of basic facilities to the tribal people are being taken up, the promises made to the people of the merged districts will be fulfilled and

their deprivations will be ended.

Peace is indispensable for the development and prosperity of any society, we all have to play our role to protect the country and establish peace and order, the governor said.

The governor appreciated the efforts and sacrifices of the tribal people for peace and stability in the country. He emphasized that the state and state institutions must be supported and we all must play our role to maintain peace and law and order, and especially the leaders have the responsibility that they should play their role in the best way for the elimination of hatreds and the promotion of love and brotherhood.

On this occasion, the tribal delegation thanked the governor for listening to the problems and ensuring their solution and asked the governor to follow the tribal traditions.

Fog continues to disrupt flight operations

PESHAWAR (INP): Dense fog in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) continued to disrupt flight operations in Peshawar on Sunday, CAA sources said.

As per details, four domestic flights were cancelled and four others were diverted from Peshawar to Islamabad for landing due to dense fog.

Several Peshawar-bound flights including PK 286 from Doha, PK 218 from Abu Dhabi, PK 260 from Muscat and PK 284 from Dubai were diverted to Islamabad amid dense fog.

Where flight operation was completely restored in Islamabad, Lahore, Multan and Faisalabad and the flights are operating as per routine in these cities.

The dense fog has blanketed parts of Pakistan especially Punjab, disrupting air, rail and road traffic and resulted in loss of life in several road accidents as well.

Earlier, at least three people lost their lives after a poultry supply truck rammed into the trailer truck parked on the roadside near New Kacheri Road, Multan, due to the dense fog and low visibility.

A traffic accident was reported from Multan in which three people were killed, while two others sustained injuries.

The rescue officials shifted the injured individuals to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital for medical assistance.

Last week, two passenger vans and a trailer truck met with an accident on the national highway due to dense fog, resulting in the loss of two lives, including a woman.

According to the details, more than 15 individuals, including women and children got injured while two others died in a tragic accident on the national highway.

KMU conducts centralized Make-Up Test

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar on Sunday organized the Centralized Admission Make-Up Test (KMU CAT MAKE-UP) at its Main Campus, facilitating admissions to undergraduate programs including DPT, BS Nursing, and other allied health sciences.

The initiative also extends its support to students seeking admission in affiliated and constituent institutions including KMU-IHS Islamabad and second-shift KMU-IHS Hazara Abbottabad.

A total of 1317 candidates participated in this test, marking a significant turnout. The purpose of the make-up test was to accommodate candidates who missed previous KMU CAT tests due to various reasons.

VC KMU Prof Dr. Zia ul Haq said that participation of 1317 candidates in this test not only underscores their confidence in KMU but also reflects the merit and quality of Allied Health Sciences education.

This initiative is poised to further enhance the standards of healthcare education and practice in the province.

He said that healthcare is a multifaceted system wherein doctors, as well as departments of pharmacy, physiotherapy, nursing, and allied health sciences, play pivotal roles.

The conduct of centralized make-up entrance tests for admissions in allied health sciences aims to provide talented students with opportunities to excel in these fields while contributing to the overall enhancement of the healthcare system in the region.

The results of the test will be declared within two days and made available on the official website of KMU (<http://cat.kmu.edu.pk>).

FC Teaching Hospital operationalized

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Frontier Corps Teaching Hospital KPK (FCTH) has become fully operational for treating patients. Frontier Corps Teaching Hospital KPK (Shakas, Khyber District) as a reflection of modern healthcare engineering, is a 200 bedded hospital, housed in a multi-story building, equipped with state of art machinery and other medical & administrative facilities.

It has Modular OT Complex, ICUs, Specialist Clinics, Gynae, Dermatology, Rehab, Eye, ENT & Dental departments. Effective medical care for its large clientele of over 1200 daily patients.

A modern Radiology Department is equipped with advanced diagnostic tools.

The Pathology lab is



equipped with the latest equipment for basic and advanced laboratory tests. FCTH KPK offers a range of wards linked with different speciality departments including Family Ward & facilities for advanced facilities, is an exceptional addition to healthcare facilities around Peshawar & will surely provide highest quality of medical care to huge population of KPK.

With its highly

Annual science warts exhibition at The Knowledge School held



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Knowledge School Gulbahar Campus in Peshawar hosted its annual science warts exhibition, showcasing an array of innovative projects by students from various classes. The event was inaugurated by Javed Khan and Abrar Khan, the directors of The Knowledge School Gulbahar Campus. Prizes were awarded to students who excelled in presenting their projects during the exhibition. Among the distinguished guests were the Principals of The Knowledge School

Gulbahar Campus, including Maleeha Rafi, Urooj Afraz, Noorul Ain, and Kainat Arshad.

The exhibition drew participation from not only students but also numerous dignitaries from Peshawar. During the inauguration, the directors emphasized the importance of recognizing and appreciating the hard work of children in the current times.

They highlighted the school's commitment to fostering not only academic excellence but also shaping students into responsible Muslims

and exemplary human beings. The directors stressed the significance of engaging in co-curricular activities as a crucial aspect of holistic education. The directors further emphasized that co-curricular activities are essential for unveiling the hidden talents of children and providing them with a platform to showcase their creativity.

They expressed gratitude for the active participation of students in extracurricular endeavors and credited these activities for the students' success in both academic and non-academic spheres. Speaking about the achievements of The Knowledge School Gulbahar Campus, the directors proudly announced that their students consistently secure top positions in class 9th and matriculation exams, showcasing a well-rounded development that includes active involvement in extracurricular pursuits.

The annual science warts exhibition not only served as a platform for students to exhibit their scientific prowess but also highlighted the school's commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals equipped to tackle the challenges of society. The event concluded with a sense of achievement and enthusiasm, leaving a positive impact on both students and attendees.

Chief Secy stresses capacity building of public servants

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry has said that building capacity of public servants is imperative for good governance.

He was addressing the graduation ceremony of 34th Senior Management Course at National Institute of Management, Peshawar. He said 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.

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/PPSA Captain (R) Usman Gul also addressed the gradu-

ating 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.

Traditional Attanr: Exploring cultural kaleidoscope of KP

PESHAWAR (APP): In the heartland of Pakistan lies Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), a region where ancient tribes and communities of diverse mores live together signifying its rich cultural and edifying diversity.

Amidst the rugged landscapes, folklores and historical landmarks besides a home to Ghandara civilization, the unique traditions of Pakhtuns tribes including Wazir, Mehsud, Dawar, Khattak, Marwat, Bettani, and Bannu communities coupled with captivating traditional Attanr (Dance) on joyous occasions, paint a vibrant picture of unity and cultural diversification.

The rhythmic beats of dhol reverberate through the air as the youth of said communities and tribes gather for traditional Attanr during marriages, birthday parties and Eid. Rooted in centuries-old traditions, this dance is a captivating display of agility and strength of the performers and continued even today in the present era of social media.

"Attanr is a unique dance mostly performed on the occasion of marriages, birthday parties, welcoming of VIPs and joyous festivals like Eid," said noted singer and Pride of Performance, Gulzar Alam while talking to APP.



"Whenever I have visited southern districts of KP for live performance in my 20 years professional singing career, the people demands Attanr songs that add colours to their festivities," he said. Men clad in vibrant attire execute intricate footwork, creating a mesmerizing spectacle that transcends time and bridges generations. "I have visited many countries for cultural shows but hardly seen the unique cultural diversity being found in KP," said Gulzar Alam.

"The traditional dance serves not only as a form of entertainment for youth but also as a means of preserving the cultural identity of KP," he said. In spite of mushroom

growth of digital and social media in Pakistan, the cultural dances including Attanr, Wardage, Balbala, Zazai, Narawale, Garande Attanr, Topo Attanr, Khanawai, Khattak and Mehsud dances are still being performed on joyous occasions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"Venturing further into the cultural mosaic of KP, the community and tribes of Wazir, Mehsud, Yousafzai and Kaslash Chitral passed art of these dances from one generation to another," he said. "The people dances are a celebration of life, echoing the resilience of a community that has weathered challenges. With graceful movements and colorful

embellishments, people bring to life stories passed down through generations, preserving their heritage with every twirl and spin," said Bakht Muhammad, senior research officers of KP Museum and Archeology Department while talking to APP.

"In a world where diversity is often seen as a source of division, KP stands as a testament to the beauty that emerges when different cultural threads are woven together. The Khattak and Mehsud dances, showcased in the lively Attans, offer a glimpse into the cultural wealth of a region where traditions are not merely relics of the past but living, breathing entities that evolve with time while retaining their essence."

Bakhat said Mehsud, Khattak and Yousafzai attans were used in the past to warm up tribesmen ahead of a battle or war and get psychological advantage upon the warring tribe or external aggressor.

"Mehsud dance, is believed to be originated from South Waziristan centuries ago was mostly used by Mehsud tribe in a bid to bring the warring tribe under pressure before start of a battle in a bid to ensure their independence, protect lands, mines caves or settle disputes

in case of unsuccessful negotiations by the peace jirga" said Bakht Muhammad.

In Mehsud dance, the active members of Mehsud tribe equipped with guns gather and the loud gunfire by them create an echo in the area that adds to the fierce and proud energy to the dance besides creating an inerascable imprints on the minds of the spectators.

The practice of Mehsud dance continued even in the colonial era in Waziristan where Mehsud, Ahmadzai, Wazir, Bhattani and others tribes known for their bravery had never allowed the British to establish their rule in erstwhile Fata.

Sir Olaf Caroe, who acted as the former Governor of the British Indian Frontier said, "The Masud tribe are a people who can never even think of submitting to a foreign power. From 1860 to 1937, the English forces had repeatedly attacked Mehsud positions, but never got a foothold in the area."

Like Mehsud dance, the subcontinent's oldest and most popular Khattak dance was also being practiced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "Being the national dance of Pakistan, Khattak dance introduced by Pashtun's Khattak tribe in the

14th century, is still performed mostly on the occasions of weddings, births and welcoming functions of VIPs in the province including merged tribal districts," he said.

He said Khattak dance had given birth to many dances including braghoni, shahdola, bangra, balballah, chatrali etc."The dance was very popular during Mughal and British eras, who recruited Khattaks in their respective armies for their heroic warfare skills in battlefields. The Mughals rulers were highly impressed with the bravery of Khattaks including freedom fighter Khushal Khan Khattak, who stood for the freedom and unity of Pakhtoons", he said.

"In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, cultural diversity is not just celebrated; it is embraced, nurtured, and passed on, ensuring that the tapestry of traditions continue to flourish for generations to come," said noted TV actor and Pride of Performance, Javed Babar.

Abdullah Bettani, resident of Tank who sustained an accidental bullet wound on leg during an aerial firing in a function, continued to perform his favorite Attanr dance despite disability. "Despite the injuries that made it hard for me to move my legs to perform

Attanr in festivals, he still performs it for a few moments with school friends on happy occasions especially on Eid," he said.

Local dancer Z. Usman Khattak, resident of Karak, told APP that Attanr, Khattak and Mehsud dances in southern districts is more than a dance as it is considered a culture and tradition and become part of happy occasions at every village and town. "If we talk about Khattak dance it's a mixture of traditional Attanr and other traditional dances and it requires super fitness to perform."

Caretaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Information, Culture and Tourism, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel said that promotion of culture and tourism was being promoted to enhance the country's soft image worldwide.

Besides holding painting and art exhibitions, he said the Govt was providing excellent opportunities to arts, poets, musicians and singers to showcase their work. Highlighting the cultural diversity of KP, including merged districts, the minister said tourists and art lovers are being welcomed to explore the province's rich cultural diversity.



In brief

Independent candidate held

WAZIRABAD (INP): Police on Sunday arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidate from PP-35 Chaudhry Muhammad Yousaf along with his sons in connection with the May 9 riots case. Chaudhry Muhammad Yousaf and his brother-in-law were arrested from DC Colony of Gujranwala. Police said Yousaf and his sons were wanted in the May 9 riots case. The countrywide protest broke out on May 9 after the former prime minister was taken into custody on the premises of the Islamabad High Court in the Al-Qadir Trust "corruption" case. The violent protestors also attacked Corps Commander House in Lahore and other military installations. Separately on January 15, Lahore police arrested another suspect involved in the May 9 riots. Nageebullah, a resident of Bajaur district, was wanted by Sarwar Road police in a case related to vandalism on May 9 riots, that were triggered across the country after the arrest of the former prime minister in the Al-Qadir Trust case. The police said the presence of Nageebullah was confirmed at Jinnah House during vandalism with the help of geofencing.

Wanted criminal arrested

SWABI (APP): Paramoli Police arrested the wanted accused in murder and attempted murder case along with the murder weapon, a Kalashnikov used in the crime, said an official of the Swabi Police on Sunday. The intention was to kill and fire, as a result of which one Mukhtiar Gul, resident of Qamar Dhand, killed on the spot while his wife miraculously survived. During the patrol, SHO Fawad Khan arrested the accused Javed Khan because of the enmity a few days ago the killer had a verbal altercation with the victim. The accused was detained in custody and further investigation was started. Meanwhile, in another operation, Imad Ali, accused of murder, was arrested with a pistol.

Nawaz Sharif to visit Swat

DIR LOWER (APP): PML-N has initiated and completed most of the developmental work in Adenzai and in future more such developmental projects would be launched if elected in the forthcoming general election. These views were expressed by Muslim League-N KP-15 nominee Zaidullah Khan, Provincial Vice-President Barrister Ataullah Khan, Executive Committee Chairman Faizullah Khan, Tehsil President Dawood Khan and NA-7 candidate of National Assembly Yasir Khan in workers' convention in Ataullah Khan's Hujra Chakdara. He said that PK-15 and NA-7 seats will be won by PML-N with a huge majority. He said that in Lower Dir the workers of the PML-N held such a big meeting. He said that success will be achieved by taking the smallest worker forward on the agenda that the leaders of the Muslim League have put forward. He praised the services of the people and their big projects like CPEC and Motorways and criticized other parties for not having clean gas. He said that the leadership of Pakistan Muslim League-N had provided services and facilities for the people of the area along with two WAPDA offices and a NADRA office in Tehsil Adenzai and also provided hundreds of electricity poles and transformers in abundance while in the matter of needle gas, Pakistan Muslim League-N is ahead in public service as compared to other parties.



MANSEHRA: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretake Chief Minister Justice (retd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah offering fateha on the demise of Mufti Ayaz

UoH Hosts National Agri-Tech Expo

F.P. Report

HARIPUR: In a significant stride towards the modernization of Pakistan's agricultural sector, The University of Haripur proudly hosted the inaugural National Agri-Tech Expo in collaboration with Metrix Pakistan and the esteemed Youth Affairs Department of KP Government. This prestigious two-day event, held under the patronage of industry luminaries and government officials, symbolized a collective commitment to fostering innovation and sustainable development in agritech.

Against the backdrop of evolving global agricultural landscapes, this expo emerged as a beacon of progress, attracting over 10,000 students and featuring the participation of more than 50 distinguished companies. From cutting-edge technologies to visionary solutions, the exhibition floor buzzed with the excitement of discovery and the promise of

transformative advancements in agricultural practices.

At the helm of this monumental occasion stood Professor Dr. Attaullah Shah, Vice-Chancellor of Karakoram International University, whose presence underscored the gravity of the event. Dr. Shah's profound appreciation for the scale and significance of the expo echoed throughout the halls, as he emphasized the pivotal role of collaborative endeavors between academia and industry in propelling technological innovation and economic prosperity.

In parallel, Professor Dr. Shafiq ur Rehman, the esteemed Vice-Chancellor of The University of Haripur, articulated the institution's unwavering dedication to forging strategic partnerships with leading enterprises. Dr. Rehman's visionary outlook emphasized the transformative potential of such alliances in nurturing a fertile ground for research, entrepreneurship, and soci-

etal impact, thereby laying the foundations for a vibrant agritech ecosystem.

The resounding support from the Youth Affairs Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa further underscored the government's proactive stance in championing innovation-driven growth initiatives. This endorsement reaffirmed the strategic alignment between public policy imperatives and the aspirations of stakeholders, cementing the expo's status as a catalyst for positive change.

Integral to the fabric of this momentous occasion was the esteemed presence of Mr. Hassan Nisar, Founder and CEO of Metrix Pakistan. Mr. Nisar's visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to driving socio-economic progress through technological innovation resonated profoundly, as he underscored the indispensable role of Information Technology, including agritech, in shaping a prosperous future for the nation.

Four of family axed to death

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): At least four members of a family were axed to death on Sunday in Sheikhpura.

As per details, the brutal incident occurred in Saddar police station area of Sheikhpura where four members of family were allegedly murdered while one sustained injuries.

The deceased who were killed with a sharp tool include 80-year-old Shah Muhammad, his 62-year-old wife Ushra, 18-year-old daughter Kiran and 8-year-old grandson.

Moreover, the police officials arrived at the spot of incident immediately after receiving the information and further investigation is underway.

Earlier, at least five persons were killed in armed men's attack on a village in Ghotki. Police said that unidentified armed men attacked Jam Bajar village leaving at least five persons dead and two injured in the shooting incident.

The deadly incident is result of an ongoing feud between two clans, according to police. "The accused had attacked on a Bethak (meeting place) of the village," police said.

Lawlessness prevails in Ghotki and other districts of upper Sindh owing to geographic proximity with the katcha area (riverine forests) infamous for criminal activities of bandit gangs patronized by tribal chieftains and influentials.

The riverine forests in Sindh and southern belt of Punjab have historically remained a hotbed of bandit gangs involved in kidnappings for ransom and other crimes on both banks of the Indus River.

Famous political family joins PML-N

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: The entire family of Shangla's famous political family Khurshid Babu Sahib Sunila and late Amir Syab Khan along with thousands of their colleagues resigned from PTI and joined Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz.

President Pakistan Muslim League-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engineer Amir Maqam said that the position of PML-N is most stable now and everyone has understood that the ability to solve the country's problems lies only with the PML-N under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

He said that every day large number of people were joining the party which was an ample proof of its growing popularity.

Engineer Amir Maqam welcomed and congratulated those who joined the party. He said that I always did public politics and considered the purpose of politics as worship. Support PML-N.

Engineer Amir Maqam said that I have always stood with my people in every difficulty, I have not cared about life or property, whether it is earthquakes, terrorism or floods, I will not disappoint the people in the future even where there is a sign of 'lion'.

Snowfall delights tourists in KP

CHITRAL (APP): The first snowfall of the winter season in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has transformed the region into a picturesque wonderland, captivating tourists and locals alike.

Popular destinations including Kalam, Chitral, Malamjappa, Naran Kaghan, and Galyat are now blanketed in snow, creating a breathtaking scene. Muhammad Saad, Spokesman for the Tourism Authority, on Sunday announced the onset of winter tourism in these upper regions.

In preparation for the

influx of tourists, Tourism Police have appointed young personnel to ensure the provision of excellent facilities, Muhammad Saad, said.

The Tourism Authority emphasized the importance of travelers taking precautionary measures before heading to snow-covered areas, encouraging responsible tourism.

To stay informed about the current conditions at tourist destinations, travelers can contact the Tourism Help Line at 1422 to provide assistance and information to travelers, ensuring a safe and enjoyable

experience. The Authority advised tourists to use vehicles equipped for snowy conditions when traveling to snowfall-prone areas.

Cautioning drivers in mountainous terrains, stressed the importance of safe driving practices during the snowy season.

As the snowfall transforms Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into a winter wonderland, the tourism authorities are geared up to provide a memorable and safe experience for visitors, urging them to enjoy the natural beauty responsibly.

Drive again power pilferage expedited

Ghulam Mursalin Marwat

LAKKI MARWAT: Peshawar Electric Supply Company chief engineer (Operation and Maintenance) Akhtar Hameed has asked the local authorities to expedite anti-power pilferage drive and ensure recoveries from industrial and commercial consumers by the mid of next month.

Chairing a high level meeting in Bannu on Sunday, he said that recovery of arrears from defaulters must be made up to Feb 15.

He said that slackness and negligence on part of

local officials during the operation against power thieves and defaulters would not be tolerated at all.

Among others deputy commercial manager Younas Khan, assistant manager Haidar Ali Khan, Bannu, Lakki and Karak executive engineers-Imran Khan Gandapur, Saeedur Rehman, Hizbullah Mehsud and Shahid Farooq were in attendance.

The chief engineer asked the anti-power pilferage teams to eliminate illegal electricity connection from commercial areas in Bannu city and Naurang town of Lakki Marwat district.

"The removal of illegal connections will help to improve the power supply system and ensure provision of uninterrupted electricity to the business hubs in both districts", he maintained.

He appreciated sub divisional officers of Bannu (urban) and Naurang sub divisions for result oriented actions against electricity stealers. Later he inspected the PESCO circle offices' buildings and vehicles.

On the occasion, the employees' leaders demanded construction of a new building for offices and replacement of old vehicles with new ones.

Young man, girl killed for 'honor' in Swat

SWAT (INP): A young man and a girl were killed in the name of honor in Matta tehsil of Swat on Sunday.

Police reached the site and after completing the legal formalities shifted the dead bodies to Swat Hospital.

Police said an unknown

shooter opened fire at Rafi Ullah, a resident of nearby village Darshkehla, and Rabia and killed them on the spot. Police arrested a suspect and further investigations continued.

According to a non-governmental organization's report, more than 229 peo-

ple were killed in the name of 'honour' in Swat in the last seven years. 211 women and 18 men are among the dead. Most of the men and women who get killed in the name of honor are poisoned, later such incidents are given the color of suicide.

DC urges finalizing arrangement for polls

Hafiz Muhammad Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: District Returning Officer/DC Hafizabad Madam Sundas Irshad has directed the officers of all concerned departments to finalise necessary arrangements to ensure holding of free, fair and transparent election in the district.

He issued these views while addressing the meeting of District Emergency Board Hafizabad. ADCG Hamadullah, District Emergency Officer 1122 Hafizabad Muhammad Adnan Nawaz and other officers of different departments attended the meeting.

He directed the officers of District Council and Municipal Committees to remove all kind of encroachments on the ways of polling stations and ensure cleanliness of roads and streets leading to polling stations before polling day.

He directed the officers of health department to ensure availability of medicines, doctors and other staff in DHQ, THQ and all other government hospitals of the district.

She also directed the officers of Civil Defence to complete searching and sweeping of all polling stations accompanied by special branch and police.

She further directed the district heads of different departments to nominated focal persons for election and provided list of focal persons who would be perform duty at election control room.

Meanwhile, Election Commission have established 619 polling stations and 1910 polling booths for casting votes for 8 lakh 10 thousand and 723 male and female registered voters whereas 78 polling stations have been declared sensitive. Official sources told that 194 polling stations for male, 191 for female and 234 combined polling stations have been setup for 4 lakh 39 thousand and 770 male and 3 lakh 70 thousand and 953 voters in the district.

Election Commission have established one National Assembly (NA-67) while three Provincial Assembly constituencies PP-37, PP-38 and PP-39 in the district Hafizabad.

There are two lakh forty

four and 99 registered voters in the constituency PP-37 Hafizabad-I and 201 polling stations have been established in this constituency, in constituency PP-38 Hafizabad 2, 210 polling stations have been established for two lakh eighty six thousand and five hundred registered voters whereas in constituency PP-39, 208 polling stations have been setup for two lakh sixty thousand and 732 registered voters.

On polling day, officers of Army and Rangers accompanied by police will be perform duty for holding of election in peaceful atmosphere while a special control room have also been established DC Office and CCTV Cameras would also be installed at sensitive polling stations for monitoring law and order situation.

Moreover, lawyers of District Bar Association Hafizabad have demanded the rule of law and respect of vote and took a rally in this connection led by President District Bar Umar Khizar Hanjra and General Secretary Rai Waqar, Saturday. The rally was started from Judicial Complex and concluded at Jinnah Chowk.



HYDERABAD: Former Chief Minister Sindh Murad Ali Shah addressing media at Rizvi House.

Outbreaks of measles in Kohistan carefully monitored

KOHOSTAN (APP): Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir Sunday said that the government has taken all out measures in the areas wherein the breaking of Measles including Upper Kohistan area.

Responding to the questions of the media men, Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir said that so far not deaths from measles as highlighted on the social media.

"We are dealing with any kind of outbreak of measles, the deaths and epidemic in Upper Kohistan as a result of Measles," he added.

He said quick response

health teams have reached Upper Kohistan to deal with the measles epidemic wherein Emergency Control Room has been established in DHO Office Upper Hospita, Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir said.

The response team includes public health experts and immunization staff, Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam Wazir said. He said that due to the measles outbreak the health team has started its work in the affected area and five Union Councils of Upper Kohistan, which was affected by measles, Director EPI Dr. Arif said.

He said, All EPI staff of

the district have been directed to reach the emergency control room, Dr. Arif added.

The increase in pneumonia cases due to the cold wave may also be the cause of the epidemic: Director EPI Dr. Arif said.

He said, confirmation of deaths due to measles will be premature at present, Director EPI Dr. Arif said, adding, "Measles response is going on in Upper Kohistan for the last six days," Director EPI Dr. Arif said.

The cause of death of children will be confirmed only after the initial report is received, Director EPI Dr. Arif said.

Bid to smuggle 397,000 liters Iranian diesel foiled

QUETTA (INP): Frontier Constabulary Balochistan North region foiled Iranian diesel smuggling bid near Balochistan and Sindh border.

According to a report, smugglers were bringing 379,000 liters Iranian diesel in at least 9 trucks.

FC Baloshitan took the intime action and thwarted smugglers' bid to shift the illegal diesel into Pakistan.

The confiscated oil has been handed over to the customs department after legal formalities.

Up to 35pc of diesel sold in Pakistan arrived

illegally from Iran, the Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) said.

The association said that in the past, the smuggling of fuel was limited to Balochistan, but that it has now spread to the rest of the country.



SARGODHA: Farmers busy making traditional sweet item (Gurr) on his roadside setup at Kote Fareed Road. — APP photo



Suspected pirates hijack trawler off Somalia: Sri Lanka navy

COLOMBO (AFP/APP): Suspected Somali pirates have boarded and hijacked a Sri Lankan fishing trawler with six crew in the latest attack against shipping in the Indian Ocean, Colombo's navy said Sunday.

"Our information is that they were captured by Somali pirates," said Sri Lankan navy spokesman Gayan Wickramasuriya, adding that the Lorenzo Putha-4 had been seized on Saturday some 840 nautical miles southeast of the Somali capital Mogadishu.

Yemen's Iran-backed Huthis have launched scores of attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden targeting Israeli-linked vessels in response to Israel's war against the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

International naval forces have been diverted north from the Gulf of Aden into the Red Sea, sparking fears of resurgent pirates exploiting the gap, with the first successful case of Somali piracy since 2017 recorded in December. "Sri Lanka has alerted the Combined Maritime Forces," Wickramasuriya told AFP, referring to the international anti-piracy coalition. He said the navy of neighbouring India had already sent a warship to investigate, while the Sri Lankan navy was also preparing a vessel to travel to the area.



Pirate attacks off the Somali coast peaked in 2011 -- with the gunmen launching attacks as far as 3,655 kilometres (2,270 miles) from the Somali coast in the Indian Ocean -- before falling off sharply in recent years.

Last month Somali pirates hijacked the bulk carrier MV Ruen.

The Bulgaria-owned and Malta-flagged vessel was seized by Somali pirates 380 nautical miles east of the Yemeni island of Socotra on December 16. The pirates, who released one injured sailor into the

care of the Indian navy, took the MV Ruen and its remaining 17 crew members to Somalia's semi-autonomous state of Puntland. Earlier this month, Sri Lanka announced it was joining a US-led maritime task-force in the Red Sea to protect international shipping against attacks by Huthi rebels. However, the cash-strapped island is yet to send a vessel.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe has said that Huthi attacks had raised freight costs and were impacting Sri Lanka's exports of garments and tea.

Finland elects president amid tensions with Russia

HELSINKI (AFP/APP): Finns head to the polls Sunday to elect a new president, an office whose importance has grown following increased tensions with neighbouring Russia since the invasion of Ukraine.

While the president's powers are limited, the head of state -- who also acts as supreme commander of Finland's armed forces -- helps direct foreign policy in collaboration with the government, meaning the changing geopolitical landscape in Europe will be the main concern for the winner. Two top politicians lead the pack of nine candidates: former conservative prime minister Alexander Stubb, and ex-foreign minister Pekka Haavisto of the Green Party who is running as an independent.

Just behind the frontrunners are far-right Finns Party candidate Jussi Halla-aho, who experts believe could also make it to the second round.

Polls open at 9:00 am (0700 GMT) and close at 8:00 pm.

Relations between Moscow and Helsinki deteriorated following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, prompting Finland to drop decades of military non-alignment and join NATO in April 2023.

Russia, with whom Finland shares a 1,340-kilometre (830-mile) border, swiftly warned of "countermeasures".

Several months later, in August 2023, Finland observed an influx of migrants entering through its eastern border without visas.

Helsinki claimed Moscow was pushing the migrants in a hybrid attack to destabilise it, and Finland closed its eastern border in November. "We are in a situation now where Russia and especially Vladimir Putin is using humans as a weapon," Stubb said Thursday evening during the final televised debate.

"It's a migrant issue, it's a ruthless, cynical measure. And in that case we have to put Finland's security first," he added. Main rival Haavisto stressed that Finland had to "send Russia a very clear message that this can't go on."

In the post-Cold War period, Helsinki maintained a good relationship with Moscow.

Incumbent President Sauli Niinisto -- who is stepping down after serving two six-year terms -- once prided himself on his close ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin before becoming one of his most trenchant critics. Against this backdrop, all the presidential candidates champion both Finland's independence and its new role as a NATO member, said Hanna Wass, vice dean at the Faculty of Social Science at the University of Helsinki. "They all seem to have a strong idea emphasising self-sufficiency, in that in the future Finland should be in charge of its defence independently and also be an active contributor in building a shared European defence and Nordic cooperation," Wass told AFP.

With similar stances, the election will be more about the personalities of the candidates, according to Tuomas Forsberg, professor of foreign policy at the University of Tampere. "This will be more about electing an individual, where you look at the person's credibility and reliability and perceived qualities as a leader of foreign policy," Forsberg said. A poll published by public broadcaster Yle puts Stubb in the lead in the first round with 27 percent of the vote, Haavisto in second place with 23 percent and Halla-aho with 18 percent. Stubb was prime minister of Finland between 2014 and 2015, while Pekka Haavisto has held several ministerial posts. "They both have broad experience in both domestic and foreign politics, which voters seem to value the most," Wass said.

While sharing similar political views, Haavisto and Stubb represent different backgrounds, Forsberg noted. "Their background and values... are seen as quite different because Alex is more a representative of the right and Haavisto of the left," he said. "Even if Haavisto has tried to underline that there is nothing red about him, that he has taken the middle road as a Green," Forsberg added.

In a second voting round between the two -- which will be held on February 11 unless a candidate receives more than 50 percent -- the election debates could be decisive, said Forsberg.

Wildfire ravages Argentina's national park

BUENOS AIRES (Xinhua/APP): A forest fire that remained out of control Saturday has so far destroyed 577 hectares of the Los Alerces National Park, local media reported.

The fire affects an area near the Centinela stream inside Los Alerces National Park in Argentina's southern province of Chubut, the official news agency Telam reported, quoting Mario Cardenas, head of the park's fire, communications

and emergency department.

Cardenas said that fire risk is at an "extreme level" and weather conditions are "adverse" for firefighting due to wind and high temperatures. Los Alerces National Park, home to thousand-year-old larch forests, was created in 1937 and was declared a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site in 2017.

Argentine gov't confirms resignation of infrastructure minister: The

Argentine government said that Infrastructure Minister Guillermo Ferraro will resign in the coming days for "personal reasons."

"Progress will be made in the original plan to merge the infrastructure area within the Ministry of Economy," the president's office said on the social media platform X, formerly Twitter. The president's office said that such a merger "will generate greater coherence in the

economic policy of the national government, and will allow for further adjustment of the budget to the current crisis context." Ferraro's resignation will be the first at the ministerial level since President Javier Milei assumed the Argentine presidency on Dec. 10, 2023. With the cabinet reshuffle, the Argentine government will soon have eight ministries instead of nine.

Marcos, Duterte supporters rally in Philippines as family rift deepens

MANILA (AFP/APP): Supporters of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos and his predecessor Rodrigo Duterte gathered for rival rallies on Sunday, as a battle over the country's constitution highlighted a deepening rift between the powerful clans.

In the nearly two years since Marcos was swept to victory with the help of his vice presidential running mate Sara Duterte -- the former president's daughter -- their so-called "Unity Team" has fractured.

As thousands massed at a seaside park in the capital Manila hours ahead of an early evening rally headlined by the president, his predecessor's youngest son Sebastian Duterte was openly calling for Marcos to step down.

"If you don't show love and aspiration for the country, better resign," city mayor Duterte, speaking in the Cebuano language in the family's southern bailiwick of Davao, told supporters, blaming Marcos for the drug and communist insurgency problems in the region.

Relations between the families have deteriorated as they seek to shore up their respective support bases and secure key positions ahead of next year's mid-term elections and the

2028 presidential race, which Sara Duterte is widely expected to contest.

In the latest rift, Marcos has backed a campaign for the 1987 constitution, introduced after his dictator father and namesake was ousted from power, to be changed to allow in more foreign investment -- something both Dutertes have publicly opposed.

Critics warn the effort could pave the way for Marcos to get another six-year term, which is currently prohibited.

That would potentially put him on a collision course with Sara Duterte.

"Our constitution is fine... why do we give ourselves a headache when we know all along that this is in order to, you know, you want to stay in power," ex-president Duterte said in a recent interview.

Marcos has said the constitution's political provisions, including term limits for public officials, should be tackled later.

Marcos will launch his "Bagong Pilipinas" (New Philippines) campaign at the Manila rally "to usher the nation towards change and development".

The Duterte patriarch, meanwhile, is expected to attend a separate rally in Davao city that has been organised by opponents of constitutional change.

Left-wing political party Akbayan branded the rallies as a "dynastic war among ruling elites" that did not serve the interests of regular Filipinos.

Both events are expected to draw tens of thousands of supporters.

"This would be the most public and deliberate way of letting the people know that the Unity Team is no more," University of the Philippines political science professor Jean Franco told AFP.

In Manila, some members of the crowd told AFP they believed in Marcos even though they admitted they knew next to nothing about the constitution controversy.

"If he runs again why not, for as long as he is doing a good job for the country," Manila resident Dennis Ardea, 53, told AFP.

"The Dutertes belong to the past. We should go with another (leader)," Ardea added.

Remelyn Zuniga, 39, said: "We're here to listen to any help he can offer us. I'm a single mother and it would be good to get cash assistance."

Police said around 4,000 people arrived early for the Manila rally, listening to a free concert at the site.

The alliance between the two families began to

unravel soon after the 2022 election, with Marcos giving Duterte the problem-plagued education portfolio instead of her preferred post of defence secretary.

It has gathered pace since then with the powerful House of Representatives Speaker Martin Romualdez, who is Marcos's cousin and also widely expected to seek the presidency in 2028, demoting influential congresswoman Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, a former president and close ally of Sara Duterte.

Romualdez also spearheaded efforts to strip the vice presidency and the education department of millions of dollars in special confidential funds.

And the House, where Marcos has a majority of support, has pushed for a pro-Duterte radio and television broadcaster to be stripped of its licence after one of its hosts made accusations against Romualdez over his travel budget.

House committees also approved resolutions calling on the Marcos administration to cooperate with the International Criminal Court's investigation into Duterte's drug war.

Marcos has said he will not "lift a finger" to help the ICC probe, which he described as "a threat to our sovereignty".

Fear, uncertainty and grief year after Turkey's quake

ISTANBUL (AFP/APP): Over 65 nightmarish seconds of the pre-dawn hours of February 6, 2023, the ground swallowed swathes of entire cities across Turkey's southeast, resulting in more than 50,000 deaths. The initial 7.8-magnitude earthquake shook the ground as far away as Egypt.

Bridges collapsed, roads and airport tarmacs cracked, and millions of lives across 11 Turkish provinces were upturned by the time the rest of the country woke up, stunned. A year later, hundreds of thousands remain displaced, many of them living in container cities, while the rest of the quake-prone country waits in fear for the next big shake.

"I had 3,700 registered voters. Only 1,300 are left," said Ali Karatosun, a mukhtar (village chief) in Kahramanmaraş province, not far from the epicentre of Turkey's worst disaster of modern times.

More than 850,000 buildings crumbled in the initial quake and the thousands of aftershocks that followed, including a 7.5-magnitude one that afternoon. In the Syrian border province of Hatay, where the ancient city of Antioch -

- now called Antakya -- formed the cradle of Muslim and Christian civilisations, just 250,000 of the original 1.7 million inhabitants remain.

"Our Hatay is gone. Completely gone," said Mevlude Aydin, 41, who lost her daughter, husband and a dozen relatives.

The disaster put enormous political pressure on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who faced re-election later that year.

Responding to criticism that rescuers were too slow to react, leaving many initial survivors trapped under rubble in the freezing cold, the veteran leader promised to build 650,000 housing units within a year.

Eleven months later, the construction of 307,000 housing units has been launched, of which 46,000 have been delivered, according to environment and urbanisation ministry data. In the meantime, families that chose to stay in the disaster zone and were unable to find accommodation have been housed in metal container homes the size of small studios.

The containers have access to free running water and power, offering safety and warmth. But families

have few surviving possessions and their immediate prospects are unclear.

The Hatay region lost the same number of buildings in seconds as it usually takes a decade to build, an Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) report found.

In Adiyaman province, at the opposite end of the quake zone, 40 percent of the buildings collapsed.

"The earthquake will create a financing need of approximately \$150 billion over a five-year period," the economic policy institute said in a comprehensive report.

"The cost of reconstruction and rehabilitation will have a significant and long-term negative impact on the Turkish economy."

The affected region was already under intense economic strain, being home to half of the 3.7 million refugees who fled civil war in neighbouring Syria.

"No money. No jobs. We are far from returning to normal," said Kadir Yeniceci, a 70-year-old in Kahramanmaraş, echoing the worries of many across the disaster zone.

"People don't know what to do." The instant collapse of so many buildings in one

of the world's most earthquake-prone regions points to the greed of unscrupulous property developers and corruption among bureaucrats who signed off on unsafe building projects, experts say.

In two of the more egregious examples, nearly all 22 buildings in one high-rise complex collapsed in Kahramanmaraş, claiming 1,400 lives, and hundreds more died when their luxurious Renaissance residence crumbled in Antakya. The handful of wilful negligence cases opened so far have avoided prosecuting officials, focusing on contracts instead. Meanwhile, Turkey is no better prepared for another earthquake than it was one year ago, experts say.

"There is still much to be done," said Mihai Kadioglu, a disaster management professor at Istanbul Technical University. "Measures should go beyond mere band-aid solutions, and require a real and more fundamental reform." While it caused temporary panic, particularly in quake-prone cities such as Istanbul, the disaster "did not lead to a change in behaviour among the public or officials", Kadioglu said.

'The sun didn't sting so much before': fires stun Colombia's Andes

NEMOCON (AFP/APP): The once bright green Andean forest where Maria Yadiria Jimenez worked as a tour guide has been reduced to ashes.

Since Monday, forest fires have been advancing on Nemocon, a rural area with beautiful landscapes about 60 kilometers (37 miles) outside the Colombian capital Bogota. Though usually cool, the mountains surrounding the town have become a

hellscape, with the blazes driving out residents and wildlife.

Distraught, Jimenez joined volunteers who -- along with firefighters, rescuers, police and the military -- are fighting to extinguish one of the 34 fires that the government has detected in Colombia, which has declared a "natural disaster" amid hot, dry conditions due to the El Nino climate phenomenon.

Fires have razed more than 17,000 hectares (42,000 acres) across Colombia since November, when the drought started and temperatures started to rise, authorities say.

With no experience in emergency response or any fireproof clothing, the volunteers follow in the footsteps of firefighters and use jugs of water to cool areas that have been brought under control.

With picks, shovels and machetes, they stir up the

smoldering earth to make sure the fires don't spark back up.

"This is a disaster that is going to bring very serious consequences. Birds were burned, native species were lost and everything was affected," the 46-year-old Jimenez tells AFP.

The area's environmental authority rescued a disoriented fox and an owl from the smoke, but other animals were not so lucky, perishing in the flames.

Venezuela opposition urges reinstatement of presidential hopeful

CARACAS (AFP/APP): Venezuela's political opposition demanded Saturday that the Supreme Court reinstate the electoral eligibility of one of its leaders, as anxiety swirled around this year's still unscheduled vote. The court, loyal to President Nicolas Maduro, on Friday upheld a 15-year ban on Maria Corina Machado from holding public office, and also confirmed the ineligibility of a possible opposition stand-in -- two-time presidential candidate Henrique Capriles.

The head of the opposition delegation in a dialogue with the government, Gerardo Blyde, alleged at a news conference that the process against Machado was rife with irregularities.

There was a "violation of the due process and viola-

tion of the right to defense," Blyde said.

Machado's disqualification follows a deal between Maduro's government and the opposition, reached in Barbados last year, to hold a free and fair vote in 2024 with international observers present.

That agreement also saw the United States ease sanctions against Venezuela, allowing US-based Chevron to resume limited oil extraction and leading the way to a prisoner swap.

Blyde called Machado's disqualification "a violation of the agreement."

Machado overwhelmingly won support in a primary vote last October.

But she was disqualified from holding office by authorities for alleged corruption and for backing sanctions against Caracas.

Washington on Saturday warned that it could restore sanctions on Venezuela in response to Friday's Supreme Court decision -- a move criticized by Venezuelan government spokesman Hector Rodriguez.

Sanctions "are not the answer, the answer is dialogue," he said.

Neighboring South American countries also criticized Machado's disqualification Saturday, with the Uruguayan foreign ministry saying it was "contrary to the Barbados Agreement."

Ecuador's foreign ministry said it "rejects" the Supreme Court ruling, while Argentina said its government was following "the political situation in Venezuela with concern" and "regrets" the court

decision.

In its ruling, the Supreme Court said Machado would remain disqualified "for being involved... in the corruption plot orchestrated" by opposition leader Juan Guaido.

Guaido, now in exile, was recognized for a time by dozens of countries as the legitimate president of Venezuela after a 2018 election that saw Maduro inaugurated for a second successive term despite widespread fraud claims.

Maduro has not confirmed that he will seek a third term, but is widely expected to do so.

Earlier this week, Maduro said the Barbados agreement was "mortally wounded" after government authorities claimed to have foiled numerous plots to assassinate him.

French farmers unions vow Paris 'siege' in pay, conditions battle

PARIS (AFP/APP): Farmers' leaders in the Paris region on Saturday promised to mount a "siege" on the French capital next week to pressure the government into meeting their demands on pay, tax and regulations.

On Monday afternoon farmers from all the regions around Paris belonging to the FNSEA farmers' union or the Jeunes Agriculteurs ("Young Farmers"), "will begin an indefinite siege of the capital," they announced.

The two unions represent most farmers throughout the country.

"All the major roads leading to the capital will be occupied by farmers", they added.

Farmers from the Lot-et-Garonne, one of the

hotspots of the protest movement in southern France, had already announced their intention to "go to Paris" on Monday.

They intend to blockade the massive Rungis wholesale food market south of the capital.

French farmers are furious at what they say is a squeeze on purchase prices for produce by supermarket and industrial buyers, as well as complex environmental regulations.

But the last straw for many was the phasing out of a tax break on diesel for farm equipment.

Saturday's announcement came the day after French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal announced a number of concessions after farmers blockaded major routes into Paris and

in the south of the country. "You wanted to send a message, and I've received it loud and clear," said Attal, who is facing his first major crisis as prime minister. Attal said the government would "put an end" to the rising cost of diesel fuel used for farming machinery, a consequence of tax breaks on the fuel having been phased out.

There would also be an emergency fund to help cattle farmers battle illnesses among their livestock.

Early on Saturday, some road blocks were being lifted and traffic began running normally on motorways. But the latest union announcement puts the pressure back on Attal.

Attal's announcement Friday "has not calmed the anger, we need to go further", said FNSEA President Arnaud Rousseau. "We have a government that doesn't care about its farmers," said Lucie Delbarre, general secretary of the Pas-de-Calais FDSEA branch.

"As you can see, it's a pressure cooker ready to explode." The demonstrators have also attacked free trade agreements between the European Union and food exporters, especially a deal with the South American bloc Mercosur that is still in the works.

But farmers appeared to be divided over whether Attal's concessions were enough. Farmers across France, the European Union's leading agricultural power, have expressed a mixture of anger and despair.

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's

Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

CDA's Transition from Municipality to Auto Operator

An official press release of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) pronounced that the authority has planned a groundbreaking series of initiatives aimed at transforming Islamabad into a model city for climate-friendly e-mobility. The CDA spokesperson highlighted the 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. As said, the CDA will construct an automated car parking system in collaboration with local banks to address long-standing parking issues in the federal capital.

Islamabad, the capital and model city of the country was once a symbol of beauty, cleanliness, civic life, and discipline city in South Asia. The Capital Development Authority (CDA) was raised as the autonomous authority empowered to architect, build, and maintain capital territory. Massive funds were funneled into the authority to facilitate its operations while the sale/purchase of government land was another source of income for the institution. Unfortunately, the federal capital fell prey to traditional bureaucratic corruption and social biases that not only shaped grave administrative issues but practically turned the city into a navel of problems and crimes like other backward towns and cities in the country. Today's Islamabad faces chronic problems of encroachment, car parking, cleanliness, misuse of government resources, street crimes, and corruption of government employees that seriously spoil the quality of life and weaken the writ of the state.

Unfortunately, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has detracted from its actual role and task, while gradually getting involved in greed-driven corrupt practices that primarily do not fall into its domain but cunning bureaucrats intentionally pushed the institution into that haphazard because financial dividends attached to them. Previously, CDA authorities brought the idea of construction of a new state-of-the-art residential scheme for overseas Pakistanis at Mauza Kuri in the Federal Capital. The CDA high-ups told the nation that bulk dollars would be earned through the sale of plots to foreigners and the national exchequer would be filled with dearly needed foreign currency. Presently, the institution come up with another project consisting of a huge fleet of over 200 electric buses whose operation and maintenance would require billions of rupees of investment along with the induction of hundreds of staff that would surely offer enormous opportunities for kickbacks along with mobilizing bulk money with least contribution to the public fund.

Historically, all state-owned mass transit systems including Rawalpindi/Islamabad Metro, Lahore's Orange, and Green Lines along with Peshawar BRT and Karachi Pink Transport services are not self-sufficient and profit-generating institutions but each of them needs billions of rupees in funding from the government on an annual basis to continue their operations. Amid such bitter realities and ongoing fiscal challenges faced by the country, the Capital Development Authority and its top brass must review the plan for the launch of the e-bus service which would be a disastrous project for the institution as well as the government. The department must focus on the provision of essential services to the citizens whilst, automated car parking, construction of cycle routes, and tree plantation are genuine needs of the city. If the anti-corruption watchdog has no concern over the misconduct of government institutions and servants, the media will play the role of a whistle-blower and regulator through timely reporting, scholarly work, and sensation.

A Question to British Lawmakers

A group of British Parliamentarians has initiated an inquiry titled Gender Apartheid Investigations, to determine the status of women and girls in Afghanistan and Iran. According to the details, the parliamentary group led by British lawmaker Ms Helena Kennedy QC is currently gathering evidence and documents regarding the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and Iran. As claimed, 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.

British lawmakers are very concerned about the human rights situation and the ongoing gender-based suppression of both cleric regimes in Afghanistan and Iran. This issue is globally recognized by human rights organizations and much has been said and done against it at the global level. Interestingly, the human rights situation is not more promising in the UK today where the Sonik government approved the anti-migrant bill which contradicts the global human rights charter and the European Union Human Rights Declaration. Ironically, British Tories are mulling over several unconstitutional and immoral measures to deceive the UK's constitution, the British Judiciary, and the global community as well. Meanwhile, the predecessors of British Tories had sewed the seeds of illegal occupation and hostilities in their former colonies including Kashmir and Palestine through their biased and politically motivated policies and conduct which caused two worse humanitarian crises in Muslim-majority territories along with giving birth to unceasing conflicts in those regions.

As the British lawmakers have already started volunteer work to ascertain gender apartheid in Iran and Afghanistan, they should also look into the cases of Israeli-occupied Palestinian and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) to ascertain the legality of the rule of occupying forces and the state of human and religious rights there. Palestine and Kashmir disputes are the two long-held unresolved disputes on the agenda of the United Nations. The ICJ and the ICC can provide bulk evidence on them. It is a big question on the morality and conscious of the British Parliamentarians if their investigations are not biased and impaired.

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



In this era of disorder, clinging to bipolarity helps no one

Hafed Al-Ghwel

In the muddled mess that is contemporary geopolitics, the once-dominant paradigm of a world neatly divided between a collective “West” and some indeterminate “Rest” is slowly unraveling.

The West, long seen as the crucible of global order, is now scrambling to keep pace with a new reality which manifested itself a little more than two decades ago, when the first “coalition” missiles rained down on Baghdad. Much to the shock and awe of incredulous millions across the Arab world since 2003, the West is itself now slowly waking up to an untreated consequence of its self-inflicted wound.

For the first time in nearly eight decades, the “voice” of the West, once commanding and singular, is resonating less around a world in which diverse players — new and old, state and nonstate — are increasingly asserting their agency. This phenomenon can no longer be dismissed as a restive world merely capitalizing on a disengaged West that is far too preoccupied with navigating divisive politics at home rather than policing every conflagration abroad.

Instead, it is a growing testament of the dwindling relevance of the West, evinced in part by its traditional thinkers and writers no longer holding sway over the captive audiences as they once did.

More worryingly, the custodians of our global “order” have failed to produce a succession of distinguished elder statesperson — at least in the past few decades — capable of cleverly utilizing the West’s enduring monopoly on convening power to advance an equitable, collaborative and consensus-driven global agenda. In the past few years, developments on the world stage, and the bumbled responses to them, have been the final signs of an irreversible transition that is likely to accelerate in the coming months. The Global South, a collective previously often relegated

to the periphery of global affairs, has emerged with a newfound assertiveness in trying to reshape the international order through pragmatic realism, by prioritizing national interests over stubborn alignment with distinct ideological poles. The stark dichotomy of the West versus the Rest is giving way to a more nuanced, multipolar world in which each state seeks partners based on specific interests, rather than wholesale allegiance to a single bloc.

In a way, it is “geopolitics a la carte,” underscored by the reluctance of many countries in the Global South, for instance, to join the regime of sanctions against Russia. They are exhibiting a strategic autonomy that challenges the once-unquestioned influence of the West.

More recently, the war in Gaza and the escalations in the Red Sea have further illustrated the limitations of a Western-centric worldview, which demands status quo absolutism, even though the rules of diplomatic engagement have changed dramatically.

Such a confounding stance is incongruous with the appetite of the Rest for malleable approaches to managing the planet’s crises. Untethered from the nebulous idealism of Western designs for the global order, the Rest can make serious headway in addressing complex issues that always expose the West’s hypocrisy by subverting the very values we profess we want to uphold.

The response of the Rest to the situation in Gaza reveals a perception of those double standards at play, wherein the inaction of the West in response to the actions of Israel contrasts sharply with its vehement stance in opposition to Russian aggression.

This hypocrisy erodes the West’s moral high ground and undermines its claims to be upholding the principles of international law while also seeking to transform inalienable rights

and liberties into universal principles.

It is hardly surprising to see muted, non-committal responses around the globe to the escalations in the Red Sea by Houthi militants, even if they represent a serious challenge to the international order that could escalate into a broader conflict with significant global economic repercussions. The calculus has shifted away from blindly taking cues from the West, toward individual countries among the Rest only expending enough diplomatic capital and effort to mitigate the threats such situations pose to their own national interests, if there are any.

This shift also applies to reactions to other critical hot spots across the Arab region, from the horrors in Gaza and the civil war in Sudan to even the absurd tolerance for Libya’s corrosive political stalemate. Gone are the days of top-down approaches dictated in the polished corridors of far-off Western capitals; efforts to resolve some of the world’s most pressing crises now demand coordinated international responses that transcend traditional alliances and underscore the need for a more inclusive approach to global governance.

Changing realities shine a glaring spotlight on the uncomfortable truth that the West’s seemingly profound proclamations about universal values, along with the burden of defending them, were never really an impassioned dialogue between equals but tedious soliloquies, uninterrupted yet also unheeded, their orators consistently mistaking the echoes in empty rooms for grand endorsements, even as the world busied itself with finding a “new normal.”

This absence of engagement from the Rest was not acquiescence but quiet disregard. The West need not view the growing assertiveness of other nations as a zero-sum game but rather as an opportunity to forge

new partnerships based on mutual interests and shared responsibilities. The multiplicity of voices in the international community does not diminish the contributions of the West but enriches the global dialogue. A consensus-driven order is not about uniformity but about the harmonization of diverse perspectives, where the burden of leadership and the responsibilities of maintaining global stability are shared among a wider array of actors. As we navigate this ever-shifting global landscape, the West must reckon with the fact that its influence is contingent on its ability to adapt to a world that favors flexibility over rigid polarization. This new era of a la carte diplomacy is not an aberration but a natural progression toward a global order that better reflects the multiplicity of voices and interests that make up the international community.

The inevitable changes are not inherently a threat to the West but rather an opportunity for evolution and adaptation. After all, the West’s influence has always been dynamic, and in this era of flexibility and inclusivity, its ability to adapt will determine its continuing relevance within an emergent global order that is better suited to the complexities of our changing world.

As we become increasingly interconnected, yet more geopolitically fluid, the West must come to terms with a new reality. The future of international relations will not be shaped by a singular cultural entity but by a chorus of diverse perspectives, each asserting their sovereignty and playing a role in shaping the global narrative.

The success of the West in this new era will depend on its willingness to listen, engage and co-create with the rest of the world, rather than impose a monolithic worldview that is increasingly at odds with the varied and dynamic nature of global geopolitics.

Arab News

How small businesses can set their defences against today’s cyber threats

Hans-Peter Bauer

What is the most dangerous trait of a cyberattacker?

Some use complex social manipulation to spear phish individuals. Others deploy weaponised artificial intelligence (AI) and sophisticated malware programmes to gain access and create chaos. In my experience, however, the most dangerous aspect of many attacks is their relentlessness.

According to the UAE government head of cybersecurity, Dr Mohamed Al Kuwaiti, the country prevents around 50,000 attacks each day. A growing proportion of these will be novel malware – new threats, or new variations of known ones as per a new industry report. This indicates the diversification and intensification of attacks by malicious actors, who are working harder than ever to penetrate lucrative targets.

Increasingly, their sights are set on small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs) who may be more likely to pay ransoms to resume operations and minimise losses, or have invested less in comprehensive cybersecurity protection.

With the UAE’s Digital Economy Strategy in effect and working to double the digital economy’s contribution to the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2032, the urgency to protect all businesses growing their online presence and reliance is paramount. For large businesses, injecting funding into their cyber defences can be an effective solution, adding comprehensive security software, and specialist skills and resources to bolster the Security Operations Centre (SOC). For smaller businesses, the answer is not as straightforward – and the consequences can be extreme. According to an industry study, the UAE suffered losses exceeding \$32 million due to cyberattacks and data breaches between 2018 and 2022. Understanding the nature of the threat is the first step towards organisations prioritising actions to increase protection in today’s threat landscape.

The news cycle is littered with sophisticated cyberattacks from across the world. Seeing this, small businesses may anticipate highly technical attacks on their infrastructure. However, this is rarely the case. Cybercriminals are relying on older techniques to target smaller business with high volume, scattergun outreach. Whilst this may be surprising, it is proving to be incredibly effective.

The most common attacks are the simplest ones, and older techniques such as phishing, social engineering and so-called “watering hole” attacks to infiltrate internal organisational teams, have been popularised by the proliferation of unsecured channels for work purposes. These include

digital channels such as SMS, mobile phone apps like WhatsApp, and collaboration apps such as Slack.

Even the messiest threat actors are succeeding, despite lacking the flair of big ransomware groups. In multiple incidents, threat actors left behind playbook text files containing IP addresses and more. Despite being less technically advanced, cyber criminals were able to infiltrate organisations’ barriers due to small businesses continually using older technologies and infrastructure for protection. SMBs will remain prime and easy targets, even for the simplest of attacks, if they fail to upgrade and boost their security. Last year was a testament to this with an overabundance of attacks on SMB targets. So how can we guard against this?

Before even thinking about the right cybersecurity solution, many SMB leaders will be thinking about how much employing a whole team will cost. Luckily, it’s possible to outsource help and secure a level of protection that few organisations can otherwise afford on their own.

There are three elements that small businesses should consider:

1. People. Many SMBs around the world are seeing a digital skills gap, meaning teams are either thinly stretched or non-existent. To avoid the struggle of finding excess staff, businesses can engage a Managed Security Service Provider (MSSP) at a cost-effective solution at the right scale.

2. Processes. No outsourced services or sophisticated technologies can prevent human error but it’s possible to reduce it by fostering positive security attitudes and cultures. A Zero Trust security model reinforces processes with technology, by assuming every user, endpoint, and network are potentially hostile.

3. Solutions. Many SMBs fear that they don’t have the visibility or power to stop cyber threats. By collecting and analysing data from multiple sources, Extended Detection and Response (XDR) gives businesses a complete view of all potential network and endpoint vulnerabilities, and enterprise security personnel can more effectively prevent cyberthreats.

Given the existing threat landscape, the need for visibility across the entire security function is a necessity. Furthermore, there are a wealth of solutions available to enable SMBs to be proactive in building the right defence strategy. A future in which SMBs are confident to use the tools and resources around them will see far more not just survive but actively shield against the growing ingenuity and volume of potential cyberattacks for many years to come.

Khaleej Times

How to enforce climate deals with trade measures

Scott Barrett, Noah Kaufman and Joseph e Stiglitz

of policies (which includes carbon prices). In a world of urgent challenges, policymakers and the public have limited attention for climate change. Rather than focusing so much on international conferences that require unanimous support, entail no accountability, and ultimately have little effect on emissions, we should be directing our energies toward negotiating agreements that can achieve transformational progress in narrow, but crucial, economic sectors.

We already know that this more targeted approach works. Consider the Montreal Protocol, which protects the stratospheric ozone layer, or the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). Unlike the voluntary commitments made at each climate-change COP, these two treaties established binding obligations that can be enforced through international trade markets. The Montreal Protocol bars participating countries from trading in chlorofluorocarbons (ozone-depleting

chemicals) with non-participating countries; and under MARPOL, access to ports is restricted to ships that meet certain technical standards. These two treaties have worked because they create positive feedback effects: the more countries that agree to participate, the higher the pressure on others to join. As a result, the ozone layer will return to its pre-1980 level in a few decades, and over 99% of oil is now shipped according to MARPOL specifications, virtually eliminating a major source of marine pollution.

The same approach has already worked for climate agreements. The Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol phases down hydrofluorocarbons, a powerful greenhouse gas. Like the examples above, the amendment incorporates a trade measure designed to create a positive feedback effect once a critical threshold of participation has been met. Owing to this structure, ratification is in every country’s interest. Even in polarised America, it received strong

bipartisan support in the US Senate last year. We should now do the same for other major emissions sources. Aluminium production, for example, is responsible for about 2% of global GHG emissions each year. Yet by replacing carbon anodes with inert anodes, the industry could dramatically reduce its emissions. An aluminium treaty might require that parties both switch to inert anodes and import aluminium only from other participating parties.

In contrast to unilateral threats of trade measures, this approach to international climate agreements is fundamentally cooperative and multilateral. It differs from unilaterally imposing domestic regulations on foreign production, as the European Union is doing, or from imposing carbon-based tariffs on certain imports without any corresponding domestic regulations, as some in the US have proposed. These methods may only invite retaliation. To succeed, international climate agreements must be compatible with countries’ economic strategies, not least those

of lower-income countries like India, where most future emissions will occur. That is why the Montreal Protocol and Kigali Amendment include provisions whereby richer countries agree to help poorer countries pay the costs of compliance. The international community took the wrong lesson from the Kyoto Protocol. It should be obvious by now that relying on voluntary commitments and aspirational targets does not work. The problem with Kyoto was that it did not get the incentives right.

By focusing climate agreements on individual sectors, linking obligations to trade access, and addressing the “common but differentiated” roles of rich and poor countries in international negotiations, the world will have a better chance to achieve the goals outlined in the Dubai agreement: a rapid and equitable transition to net-zero emissions. Then, future climate-change COPs can focus on other consequential issues, rather than on crafting the right mix of hollow words that everyone can agree on.

EU faces challenges as it doubles down on its economic security agenda

Andrew Hammond

While economic security has long been a key narrative for the US government, its central role in European politics is of a much more recent vintage. The latest signal of this new political emphasis in the EU came last Wednesday with the unveiling of five new initiatives designed to deepen the bloc's policy of "de-risking" from China.

This package, which aligns with the June 2023 European Economic Security Strategy, doubles down on a potentially significant shift in the EU's political economy in recent years. The continent has long had a reputation for its open approach to trade, investment and research, and a key question moving forward is to what degree that might now be eroded in a new geopolitical landscape.

The five initiatives are: a legislative proposal to strengthen foreign investment screening; more-effective EU control over exports of dual-use goods; options to support research and development in technologies with dual-use potential; enhanced research security across the EU; and better monitoring and assessment of outbound investment risks. The fifth initiative, for outbound investment, is currently subject to consultation during a three-month review period.

While no countries are cited as specific targets of these new economic security measures, China is the main source of concern in Europe, especially after Beijing's economic blockade of Lithuania over the EU member country's deepening ties with Taiwan. The Baltic nation was subjected to a Chinese ban on exports after Lithuania allowed Taiwan to open a representative office in the capital, Vilnius, in 2021.

Therefore, the wider context

to Wednesday's announcement includes a broader chill in relations with China that dates back at least to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, plus Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Against this backdrop, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has made significant moves to develop and implement this new economic security and de-risking policy paradigm. The unveiling of the five new initiatives is significant because one of the key criticisms of the European policy shift is that it lacks the de-risking tools required to make it a reality. Prior to this week's announcement, the biggest single measure revealed by Brussels was an anti-coercion measure announced late last year.

That tool is intended to act as a deterrent but will also enable the EU to impose countermeasures on any country that attempts to exercise economic coercion over one or more member states. Such countermeasures include increased customs duties, intellectual property restrictions and export controls, all under a time-bound procedure lasting no more than a year. The European Council will have significant involvement in the decision-making process used to determine whether economic coercion is taking place. Meanwhile, the European Commission will be given implementation powers in decisions about the EU's response measures, while also ensuring the increased involvement of member states in these decisions.

This instrument can be triggered by a wide range of coercive economic practices through which a country applies, or threatens to apply, measures that affect trade or investment in an

attempt to prevent, or achieve the cessation, modification or adoption of a particular action by the EU or one of its member states. Input from external stakeholders will be taken into account when considering the activation of this tool, and businesses will be encouraged to come forward with any relevant information.

This new EU regulation, which came into force in December, is potentially a major milestone in the bloc's shift toward economic security. It proposes to carry out a thorough assessment of the risks in four areas: risks to the resilience of supply chains, including energy security; risks to the physical and cyber security of critical infrastructure; risks related to technology security and leakage; and the risk of weaponization of economic dependencies or economic coercion. Building on this, the package of measures revealed on Wednesday aims to further strengthen the protection of the EU's economic security through proposals that include: improved screening of foreign investment coming into the EU; enhanced European coordination of export controls, in alignment with existing multilateral regimes; identification of potential risks arising from outbound investments in a narrow set of technologies; the promotion of better support for research and development involving technologies with dual-use potential; and the enhancement of research security at national and sector levels. The new measures are likely to be welcomed by many of the 27 EU member states, especially those in Eastern Europe which tend, with the exception of Hungary, to have more hawkish attitudes toward China. However, a key question remains about whether,

even with the new measures, this emerging toolkit can truly deliver on the de-risking goal set out by von der Leyen.

For instance, a study by the European Council on Foreign Relations proposed that the EU also develop a comprehensive resilience architecture that includes a strong agenda for improving economic strength and trade links, establishes a Resilience Office, and implements a reformed blocking statute that can counter secondary sanctions. It is proposed that a Resilience Office could provide strategic coordination of the EU's response to, and evaluate the costs of, economic coercion, while a blocking statute could facilitate targeted countermeasures against companies based in third-party countries.

The significant challenges that exist in implementing these types of economic security frameworks are underlined by the experience of the UK in the past two years.

Late last year, UK Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden announced plans to make British powers to screen foreign direct investment more business friendly. He has launched a review with the aim of "narrowing and refining" the National Security and Investment Act, which allows the government to potentially veto any takeovers it has concerns about. The legislation was introduced in an attempt to address security concerns related to the acquisition of UK companies by foreign counterparts, including those in China.

Taking all of this together, as much as the political momentum is growing behind the EU's de-risking agenda, the actual implementation might turn out to be rather challenging, as highlighted by the recent UK experience with its own economic security initiative.

One needs to be realistic to unravel the Rohingya crisis

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

Political realism, the roots of which stretch as far back as ancient Greece, through to the likes of Machiavelli and Hobbes, provides a lens through which to examine international relations, with an emphasis on power and self-interest.

Some political realists acknowledge the role of ethical norms in global affairs and this perspective becomes particularly relevant when assessing the complex Rohingya crisis. In the Western context, legal frameworks, a free press, and democratic electoral systems often ensure politics and politicians operate within the rules of international law.

In Myanmar, however, a dysfunctional domestic legal system challenges the efficacy of the nation's commitments to international conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As a recent report by the Arab News Research and Studies Unit think tank points out, despite the endorsement of human rights treaties by authorities in Myanmar, real humanitarian protections are lacking in practice. This is illustrated by the regime blocking medical care, and the perpetration of mass killings. The traditional legal framework has proven insufficient in its ability to prevent powerful figures from disregarding the rules, thereby hindering international accountability. The challenge lies in ensuring dialogue and compliance with international obligations are more attractive options than violating the rules. The Arab News report explores some of the feasible solutions, not solely from a bleak political realist perspective, but also drawing on liberal political goals such as cooperation, justice, and moral discourse. It notes that 1.6 million people displaced since the 1970s live in dire conditions in refugee camps. The statelessness of the Rohingya, a situation deliberately orchestrated by Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law, denies them the full privileges citizens enjoy, leading to ethnic and religious discrimination. The crisis culminated in a campaign of mass murders and forced deportations in 2017 that has been recognized as genocide by the International Human Rights Clinic.

The internal politics and power struggles within refugee camps exacerbate the plight of the Rohingya, with dominant gangs hindering proper political organization. ARSA, a Rohingya insurgent group, organizes military counterattacks, complicating efforts to address the crisis. Prominent Rohingya figures, such as the late

peace activist Mohib Ullah, faced threats and have even been killed in response to their calls for international justice, which exposes the challenges that exist within the camps.

The role of Bangladesh adds complexity to the crisis, through the nation's focus on the repatriation of Rohingya refugees, which is driven by questionable motives. As evictions, crime and strained resources create tensions between Bangladesh nationals and Rohingya, Bangladesh's policies, including attacks on refugees and the withholding of basic supplies, raise ethical concerns.

In the West, despite the initial charitable concern about the plight of the Rohingya, support for aid has declined. Increased political attention and scrutiny can help to redirect resources and leverage Western influence to address the crisis. Historical precedents, such as the international pressure that motivated authorities in Myanmar to engage with the Kofi Annan Foundation illustrate the potentially powerful effect of active Western involvement.

An improved role for Bangladesh will require policy adjustments to improve conditions for the Rohingya and put an emphasis on their human rights, security and economic opportunities. Western nations must exert diplomatic pressure on Bangladesh, while promoting cooperative solutions and helping to ease domestic political pressures. The influence of China complicates the diplomatic landscape, through its use of its veto power on the UN Security Council to protect authorities in Myanmar and oppose Western intervention. But a reinvigorated Western political will could provide the motivation for a more realistic approach to refugee repatriation, through the provision of funding and the application of soft power to alleviate concerns on both sides.

The Rohingya, considered one of the most marginalized groups in the world, have endured a prolonged period of persecution. Despite attempts to provide them with humanitarian assistance, the response from aid agencies falls short of what is needed. Systematically deprived of basic human rights by governmental and societal authorities, the Rohingya face a world in which security is paramount, yet they grapple with a lack of safety and any prospect of this situation improving. They remain exposed to considerable risks posed by violence, criminal recruitment and militancy.

The limited interven-

tion by the international community has transformed the issue of Rohingya refugees into a significant concern for Bangladesh. While the country makes considerable efforts to assist the refugees, there is a hesitancy to offer any form of support that might imply a more permanent presence is welcome, which results in avoidable suffering.

The obstructions put in the path of aid organizations and the denial of economic rights further compound the challenges faced by Rohingya refugees.

Myanmar, too, must respond to the global call to action to resolve this crisis. Sustained international pressure is an essential element in efforts to persuade authorities to address the root causes of the issue, recognize the Rohingya as citizens, and establish safeguards to guarantee their safety in their homeland. Overcoming racial and religious hostility will require a considerable display of leadership in Myanmar but there are precedents for success through ambitious international efforts.

Politics holds the potential in each faction to deescalate racial tensions. In the case of the Rohingya, political representation offers a platform for self-expression, organization and mobilization behind preferred solutions.

While bad politics plunged the Rohingya into crisis, effective politics at both the community and international levels will ultimately provide the solution to their plight. The Rohingya need encouragement to raise their voices, which in turn requires serious attention to be paid to conditions in refugee camps, including security and the actions of disruptive groups such as ARSA.

Active funding and support for community organizations within the camps are crucial. International actors can take steps, including media advocacy and public support, to redirect humanitarian resources and shine the sterilizing light of international scrutiny on the crisis to raise its profile.

As Madeleine Albright, a former US secretary of state, famously said: "A lot of people think international relations is like a game of chess. But it is not a game of chess, where people sit quietly, thinking out their strategy, taking their time between moves. It is more like a game of billiards, with a bunch of balls clustered together."

Politics is the key process through which we can soften stances, advocate for better conditions and seek justice for victims.

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 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 intelligence, applications of quantum physics, biotechnology and neu-

rosience. 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, coordinate 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.

China Daily

Human rights an inspiring and simple goal

Jin Ding

Since 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of the inclusion of "The state shall respect and protect human rights" in the Constitution of China, this is an appropriate time to review the development of human rights in the country.

Human rights are rooted in human dignity, and the cause of human rights is rooted in people's lives. In his New Year's message, President Xi Jinping said: "Our goal is both inspiring and simple. Ultimately, it is about delivering a better life for the people. Our children should be well taken care of and receive a good education. Our young people should have the opportunities to pursue their careers and succeed. And our elderly people should have adequate access to medical services and elderly care. These issues matter to every family, and they are also a top priority of the government. We must work together to deliver on these issues."

Ensuring a life of dignity for people

We protect and promote human rights because they are an "inspiring yet simple goal". Human rights are protected and promoted in China to ensure the Chinese people lead a life of dignity, while governance is improved to achieve that goal. Over the past few years China has made tremendous achievements in human rights thanks to the intensifying modernization drive.

China eradicated absolute poverty and built a moderately prosperous society in all respects by the end of 2020. It improved "whole-process people's democracy", and promoted the rule of law in order to

better protect and promote human rights. China follows a people-first development philosophy, which was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when it made the safety of the people its top priority.

The report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2022 vowed to "follow a Chinese path of human rights development, actively participate in global human rights governance, and promote all-around advancement of human rights". In line with that, China's development is the development of a huge population, including its material, cultural and ethical development, as well as the harmonious development of human beings and nature.

As China's modernization advances, the cause of human rights also advances.

In the course of its long-term promotion of human rights, China has developed a unique human rights philosophy, which aligns with the contemporary Chinese concept of human rights. The contemporary concept combines the Marxist concept of human rights with China's concrete reality. The "free and comprehensive development of human beings" as per Marxism is the conceptual basis of China's human rights endeavors.

The contemporary concept of human rights also combines the Marxist concept of human rights with the traditional Chinese culture. Mencius said: "The one who wins people for the sake of the world is called benevolence", with benevolence (Ren) being the love

for others, for society, for the country, and for the world, which reflects the broadmindedness of China's human rights cause. China's development relies on the people, and it shares the fruits of development with the people while protecting and promoting human rights. On the global front, China carries forward the common values of humankind, such as peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom, while upholding multilateralism and helping build a community with a shared future.

Over the past four years, China has enacted 51 new laws and amended 113 old ones to promote human rights through legislation. It has signed a number of international human rights instruments, engaged in international human rights cooperation, and implemented the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to fulfill its international human rights obligations. It has also been protecting and promoting human rights in its political and judicial systems, implemented the National Human Rights Action Plan (2021-25), and invited civil society to participate in human rights governance, thus building a strong human rights protection system.

People's happiness is greatest human rights

"The happiness of the people is the greatest human right." In terms of protecting human rights, China does not limit itself to just repeating abstract concepts, but makes efforts to understand the aspirations of the people. First, in terms of economic, social and cultural

rights, China has achieved fruitful results in food production, poverty alleviation and economic development, which means it is protecting people's rights to subsistence, development, equal employment opportunities, fair wages and healthy working conditions, and preventing the violation of labor laws and workers' rights.

China has built the world's largest social security system, meaning it protects individuals' right to social security, and ensures "houses are for living in, not speculation" while improving the housing system — both home purchase and rental housing, meaning China protects individuals' right to housing. Also, China's education system ranks first in the world in terms of scale, with the government subsidizing student loans and thus effectively protecting people's right to education.

The government continues to upgrade the cultural service system and attaches great importance to the protection of minority cultures, and improve the healthcare system by, among other things, strengthening the grassroots healthcare institutions and widening the coverage of basic medical insurance. China also has been promoting the concept of "clear waters and green mountains are as valuable as mountains of gold and silver", and has made remarkable achievements on the environmental protection front, while reducing air and water pollution and soil contamination, thus protecting individuals' right to a healthy environment.

Second, in the field of civil and political rights, China has taken measures to combat and prevent

terrorism, punish those involved in extremist activities in accordance with the law, while making those who engage in minor criminal acts aware that their actions are detrimental to the country's development and it is the duty of every individual to work for the betterment of society. The country has also taken measures to combat drug and human trafficking. As such, the government is safeguarding people's safety and security.

Also, the government is developing whole-process people's democracy, making sure the people are in charge of their own affairs, and launching a hotline which people can call to avail of government services, and seek redressal for their grievances. The government guarantees citizens' rights to freedom of religion in accordance with the law. The government also protects freedom of speech.

And third, with regard to the rights of specific groups, China's adherence to the basic policy of equality between men and women, which penalizes domestic violence and encourages women to participate in economic and social fields as equals. China has also taken measures to eradicate crimes against minors and guarantee children get good education and medical care.

Measures have also been taken to ensure the elderly people share the fruits of economic development and lead a happy life in their twilight years. To that end, it has improved the eldercare system. China believes that people with disabilities, too, can lead a fulfilling life, and thus provided them with living subsidies and nursing care

subsidies, and built public facilities that are easily accessible for people with disabilities.

China guarantees, in accordance with the law, equal rights to all ethnic groups, and the increase in the populations of ethnic minority groups and the preservation of ethnic cultures mean the rights of ethnic minorities are protected.

To quote Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of former US president Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home — so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world".

It is true that beyond the broader dimensions of human rights, people lead a simple life. Looking back, China has not only promoted the development of human rights but also introduced human rights in every aspect of social life. Looking ahead, we should keep in mind that human rights are both an inspiring and a simple goal, and we should not only pursue the ultimate realization of universal human rights, but also adopt a down-to-earth attitude when it comes to improving the daily life of individuals.



Inflation rate reaches 43.79% as prices fluctuate

ISLAMABAD (INP): The overall inflation rate in the country has witnessed a decline, settling at 43.79%, with prices of 15 items increasing and 13 items decreasing within a week, according to data released by the Federal Bureau of Statistics.

The weekly inflation report indicates a 0.14% decrease in the inflation rate over the past week. In this period, 15 items, including sugar, pulses, and eggs, experienced a price

hike, while the prices of 13 items, such as tomatoes, potatoes, and onions, decreased. Prices of 23 items remained stable.

In the recent week, sugar, pulses, and eggs saw an increase in prices, with live chicken becoming costlier by Rs. Additionally, the price of chicken rose by 3.31%, jaggery by 1%, tea by 0.92%, dal mung by 0.80%, and eggs by 0.43%.

Moreover, a domestic

LPG cylinder's price surged by Rs. 10, and a 20 kg flour bag became costlier by Rs. 5, reaching Rs. 2,817. Conversely, tomato prices witnessed a decline of 14.14%, potatoes by 5%, onions by 1.64%, and tea leaf by 1.2%. Stable prices were reported for 23 commodities, including rice, milk powder, curd, and salt.

Meanwhile, the international fluctuations in gold prices impacted the local market, resulting in a sig-

nificant decrease. The new price for one tola of gold stands at Rs. 2,13,900, following a decrease of 12 dollars per ounce in the world market. The price for ten grams of gold has decreased by Rs. 257, reaching Rs. 1,83,385.

This shift comes after a previous increase in the price of gold per tola by Rs. 400, reaching Rs. 2,14,200. Similarly, the price for ten grams of gold had increased by Rs. 342, reaching Rs. 1,83,642.

Sustainable policies needed to strengthen economy: PCMEA

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) has stressed the need for formulating and implementing sustainable policies with facilities and various incentives are indispensable to boost exports, attract foreign investment and to steer the country out of present day economic challenges.

The PCMEA Senior Vice Chairman Usman Ashraf stated this while briefing the association members after participating in the international exhibition held in Germany, here at PCMEA office on Sunday. Carpet Training Institute (CTI) Chairman Ijazur Rehman, Senior Central Leader

Abdul Latif Malik, Senior Member Riaz Ahmed, Major (Retd.) Akhtar Nazir, Saeed Khan and others were also present.

He added that political stability is also a prerequisite to economic development, citing that many countries have gained a place in the economies of the world by ensuring political stability and sustainable policies. "The government should take viable steps for effective representation of Pakistan in international exhibitions like 'Domotex' so that the aspirants can participate in the exhibitions," he maintained.

Usman Ashraf said that Pakistan would have to increase its exports to attain the economic tar-

gets to fulfill the needs of huge population. "In the past, Pakistan's handwoven carpets industry has played a key role in achieving exports, but today the industry is suffering from unfavorable conditions and the government should provide facilities to the manufacturers and exporters in such a way as to reduce our cost of production, and support should also be given at government level for effective marketing," he added.

Usman Ashraf said that the government should ensure representation of Pakistan in international exhibitions like "Domotex" so that the difficulties of those who wish to participate can be

reduced. The intending local exporters and businessmen should be provided with all due facilities because unnecessary conditions are imposed regarding participation in international exhibitions due to which Pakistan will not be represented in these exhibitions in the way that it should be for increasing exports, he argued.

PCMEA Vice Chairman suggested the government to explore new global markets and latest trends, besides taking steps to create facilities for the exporters. He asserted, "Commercial attachés which are performing duties in Pakistani embassies abroad should be given the task in this regard."



ISLAMABAD: A vendor selling fruits at weekly Sunday bazar Aabpara in the Federal Capital.

Plastic material export increases 46.60% to \$178m

ISLAMABAD (APP): The export of plastic materials from the country witnessed an increase of 46.60 per cent during the first six months of the current financial year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

Pakistan exported plastic material worth \$178.879

million during July-December (2023-24) as compared to the export of \$122.021 million during July-December (2022-23), showing growth of 46.60 per cent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In terms of quantity, plastic export also surged

by 122.22 per cent from 80,137 metric tons to 178,084 metric tons, the data revealed.

Meanwhile, year-on-year basis plastic exports increased by 150.13 per cent during December 2023 as compared to the same month of last year.

The plastic material

exports in December 2023 were recorded at US \$33.666 million against the export of \$13.459 million in December 2022, the PBS data revealed. On a month-on-month basis, the exports of plastic also surged by 16.54 per cent in December 2023 when compared to \$28.888 million in November 2023.

Malik for taking benefit of regional trade

LAHORE (APP): The SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former President Iftikhar Ali Malik has called for taking full advantage of the trade potential existed among Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists led by Muslim Khan Buner here Sunday, he added, Pakistan can unlock new avenues for economic prosperity and contribute to the advancement of the

entire region through enhanced cooperation and implementing strategic initiatives.

Malik said, "In an era where regional cooperation plays a pivotal role in economic growth, it is imperative for Pakistan to take proactive measures to have stronger trade ties with neighbors." He said the strategic geographical proximity of Afghanistan and Uzbekistan offers a unique opportunity for Pakistan to establish and

enhance trade routes that can stimulate economic development for all three Muslim countries.

He said, by capitalizing the potential, Pakistan can diversify its trade portfolio, strengthen diplomatic relations, and contribute to the overall stability and prosperity of the region.

It is crucial to prioritize the development of infrastructure of transportation networks and border facilitation to streamline

the movement of goods and services.

He said collaborative efforts in energy, agriculture, and technology sectors can further enhance economic interdependence, paving the way for sustainable growth.

With leveraging the strengths of each countries and promoting cross-border cooperation, he said, a robust economic ecosystem can be established that benefits all stakeholders.

WCCIS to hold "We-Exhibit 2024" in March

SIALKOT (APP): Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik has said that "We Exhibit 2024" will be held on March 2-3 at Living Dreams Marquee, Sialkot Cantt. In a statement, Abdul Ghafoor Malik said that after the success of the first "We-Exhibit" organized by the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS), the second exhibition was being organized in which women entrepreneurs from all across Pakistan including Sialkot would showcase their products for sale and for exhibition. He said, "It which will be an excellent opportunity for women entrepreneurs to showcase and highlight their products and bring up their businesses to the next level."

PFC to attend trade fair in Vietnam in Feb

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) will participate in a three-day International Trade Fair being held in Vietnam from February 28 to discover business opportunities and explore new markets in Europe.

The PFC Chief Executive Officer PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq disclosed this talking to a delegation of furniture manufacturers led by Muhammad Araib here Sunday.

He said that PFC along his company/brand is in touch with Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) for participating in this international mega event. He mentioned, this fair attracts thousands of global manufacturers from all over the world to showcase their products. PFC will exhibit its high quality products to capture their share in the international market. He said it's an excellent opportunity to showcase Pak products and develop business deals with international buyers. He said this fair also offers profes-

sional buyers a sourcing platform with wide variety of products ranging from basics to the most creative and qualitative.

Mian Kashif said that his company (Chenone) has already attended several other international fairs in the US, China, Italy, Turkey, Sri Lanka and introduced its products which are in great demand. He hoped getting orders from foreign buyers at the Vietnam Trade Fair.

He said that the main purpose of attending the foreign fairs is to help strengthen the national economy and TDAP is facilitating the manufacturers of export products.

He said he will also hold a series of marathon meetings with tycoons for investment to avail the government's unprecedented special package for foreign investors. He said he will also highlight salient features of the package and invite them to Pakistan having great opportunities for investment.

FBR and FMU to enhance coordination to combat illicit finance

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Chairman Federal Board of Revenue Malik Amjed Zubair Tiwana emphasised the need for sustained collaboration between Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) for development of quality financial intelligence on tax evasion and its optimal utilization in investigations.

The Chairman said this while addressing the concluding ceremony of the FBR-FMU Joint Workshop on Financial Intelligence for Tax Evasion organized with the assistance of FCDO's UPSCALE Programme in FBR headquarters on 27-28 January, 2024. The Chairman FBR congratulated the Directorate General of Intelligence and Investigation-Inland Revenue and the FMU for organising the event and desired for further enhancement of this partnership to achieve the unanimous goal of combating illicit finance. Mr. Tiwana also thanked Mr. Lewis Evans of British High Commission, present at the occasion, for providing assistance in organising the event.

Ms. Lubna Farooq, Director General of FMU, thanked FBR and FCDO and underscored the need



for sustained coordination between FBR and FMU for enhancing the knowledge base and promoting mutual understanding for combating tax fraud and tax evasion. This collaborative approach, she said, will enhance the effectiveness of investigations and contribute to a more robust and interconnected

framework for combating financial crimes. The workshop was also attended by the analysts of FMU and investigating officers of the Directorate General of Intelligence and Investigation-Inland Revenue. The workshop focused on identifying and understanding risk areas for financial intelligence on tax crimes.



ISLAMABAD: People purchasing used warm clothes at weekly Sunday bazar Aabpara in the Federal Capital.



In brief

ICC restores membership

DUBAI (Agencies): Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has been reinstated as a member of the International Cricket Council (ICC) after a two-month suspension, the ICC said on Sunday. The sport's governing body suspended the SLC on November 10 for government interference after Sri Lanka's ministry of sport dismissed the SLC board and replaced it with an interim committee following the country's poor performance at last year's 50-over World Cup. The SLC filed an appeal against their suspension with the ICC on November 21. "The (ICC) board have been monitoring the situation since the suspension and are now satisfied that SLC are no longer in breach of membership obligations," ICC said in a statement.

Hsieh, Mertens claim title

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Taiwanese veteran Hsieh Su-wei clinched her second title at this year's Australian Open on Sunday, partnering with Belgium's Elise Mertens to win the women's doubles after her success in the mixed. The second seeds proved too good for Ukraine's Lyudmyla Kichenok and Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko, seeded 11, sweeping past them 6-1, 7-5 on a hot afternoon at Rod Laver Arena. At 38, Hsieh is the second-oldest woman to win a Grand Slam doubles crown after American Lisa Raymond, who was just eight days older when she found success at the 2011 US Open. It was the second Grand Slam title for the pair after they teamed up to win Wimbledon in 2021. Hsieh won the mixed doubles on Friday alongside Poland's Jan Zielinski.

LeBron, Lakers beat Curry's Warriors

LOS ANGELES (AFP): LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers overcame Steph Curry and the Golden State Warriors 145-144 in a NBA double overtime classic on Saturday. James, defied his status as the oldest player in the league at 39, scoring 36 points with 20 rebounds and 12 assists in his 48 minutes on court. Curry, the 35-year-old two-time MVP, finished on the losing side despite an outstanding performance scoring 46 points with seven assists. Four-time MVP James settled the game by sinking his two free throws with just a second remaining on the clock. The Warriors grabbed the one point lead thanks to a superb 28-foot, three-point jumper from Curry with 5.2 seconds left. Klay Thompson took the game into the second period of overtime after his 25-foot three pointer with seven seconds remaining. All that came after Curry levelled the enthralling game with 5.2 seconds left in regulation. James said the duel with Curry was one he would look back on when his Hall of Fame career is finally over. "It's something that you will truly take all in when you are done playing and are able to watch with your grandkids and say that I played against one of the best ever to play this game," he said. "Steph came to me after the game and said 'how does it keep getting better?'" Nikola Jokic and the defending champions Denver Nuggets held off a Philadelphia 76ers team without star center Joel Embiid, winning 111-105 on Saturday.



MELBOURNE: Jannik Sinner celebrates with the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup trophy after defeating Daniil Medvedev in the men's singles final match.

Sinner storms back to beat Medvedev in Australian Open final

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Jannik Sinner stormed back from two sets down to beat Daniil Medvedev in a gruelling five-set Australian Open final on Sunday, winning his first Grand Slam.

The Italian fourth seed was blown off course in the first two sets but recovered to win 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 in three hours and 44 minutes.

The result is a bitter blow for the Russian third seed, who has now lost a second Australian Open final after being two sets up, following his defeat by Rafael Nadal in 2022.

Medvedev came into the match boasting a 6-3 winning record against the 22-year-old, but had lost the past three matches.

The Russian had played three gruelling five-setters at Melbourne Park and spent nearly six hours longer on the court than Sinner before the final.

But, looking fresh, he was quickly into his stride, unsettling the usually calm Sinner, who was unable to find any sort of rhythm.

The Italian, playing in

his first Grand Slam final, was broken just twice in the entire tournament in the run-up to Sunday's title decider but Medvedev doubled that tally in the first set.

World number four Sinner was again in deep trouble at the start of the second set, fending off multiple break points against a hungry Medvedev and pleading for backing from the crowd on Rod Laver Arena.

He survived that onslaught but was broken for a third time in the match in the fourth game when a poor drop shot allowed the Russian to set up a winner.

Medvedev raced through his service game to love, giving Sinner no time to gather his thoughts.

He hit a fierce forehand to set up two more break points in the sixth game and Sinner went wide with a forehand to slip 5-1 down.

The Italian broke back immediately and had another break point in the ninth game to put the set back on serve but Medvedev

snuffed out the mini-revival.

The third set was tighter and went with serve until the decisive 10th game.

Sinner put a forehand passing shot wide at the end of a 31-shot rally, missing out on the chance to earn two set points, but his chance came again and this time he took it to seal the set.

The momentum was now with Sinner and Medvedev, who required strapping for his foot, had to fight hard to hold early in the fourth set.

Sinner fired three aces to edge 4-3 ahead and broke in the 10th game when Medvedev fired long to take the match into a fifth set.

With the tension mounting, both players stayed solid on serve until the sixth game, when Medvedev dumped a backhand into the net to give Sinner three break points.

A forehand crosscourt winner gave the Italian the crucial break and he went on to take his first championship point.



HYDERABAD: Ben Foakes celebrates with man of the moment Tom Hartley.

Pope 196, Hartley seven-for script sensational England win

HYDERABAD (Agencies): England produced one of their best ever away wins, stunning India with a 28-run victory in a heart-stopping finish to the first Test in Hyderabad.

Inspired by one of the all-time great innings by Ollie Pope and a beguiling 7-62 from debutant spinner Tom Hartley, England set India 231 to win, then hustled the hosts out for 202 in the extra half-hour at the end of the fourth day.

Beating a team that had lost only three of their previous 46 home Tests is remarkable in itself, but England did it with a vastly inexperienced attack and with senior spinner Jack Leach hampered by a knee injury.

England recovered from a first-innings deficit of 190 - only twice before in Test history have they overturned such a margin to win. India have never previously lost a home Test when taking a lead in excess of 100.

After England began on 316-6, Pope pushed on to 196, the highest second-innings score ever made by an England batter in India. The tourists were bowled out for 420 on the stroke of lunch. The target should have been within India's reach, even on the wearing pitch, but the hosts buckled. England were led by the brilliant Hartley, who also made 34 with the bat. A collapse of 4-24 ripped the guts out of the India middle order and reduced the home supporters to an eerie silence.

With India on the brink, KS Bharat and Ravichandran Ashwin combined for a rearguard partnership of 78 that made the crowd believe again. India had the momentum, only for Hartley to bowl Bharat with a beauty.

The extra time was allowed, the shadows closed in. Ashwin danced

past Hartley to be stumped, but still India were not beaten.

Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj swiped 25 for the final wicket before Siraj was stumped off Hartley to spark wild England celebrations.

The second Test begins in Visakhapatnam on Friday, 2 February.

England produce win for the ages

England have been pushing the boundaries of possibility ever since captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum took charge in the summer of 2022. Last winter's defeat of Pakistan in Rawalpindi was one that went into the conversation of England's greatest away wins, but is surely trumped by this given the quality of the opposition, conditions, make-up of England's team and the position they found themselves in after the first innings.

All of this after a build-up that included Harry Brook pulling out of the squad for personal reasons and uncapped spinner Shoaib Bashir having to return to the UK to resolve a visa delay. After two days, England looked set for a heavy defeat, but fought back with the tenacity, confidence and positivity that have become their trademarks. In the end, India were overwhelmed.

The home side were certainly lacking the energy of Virat Kohli, missing from the first two Tests for personal reasons. Kohli would have urged them on in the field and relished the run-chase. As it is, England's win ignites the five-Test series, as they look to become the first team to win here for 12 years. It capped a wonderful day of Test cricket, following West Indies' shocking victory over Australia in Brisbane.

Left-field Hartley leads England

Hartley was a left-field pick for this

tour, a bowler with only 20 first-class matches but with attributes England believed could make him an asset in India. On the first evening, when Hartley's first ball in Test cricket was belted for six as he leaked seven runs an over, it seemed a huge mis-step. On Sunday, as Hartley bowled with unerring control and delightful dip, it looked like a masterstroke.

India, perhaps mindful of the ball keeping low from Hartley's end, were measured in adding 42 for the first wicket. Hartley changed the tone in the space of three balls, having both Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill held by the sharp hands of Pope under the helmet. Rohit Sharma, dropped on five by Zak Crawley at second slip, was trapped on the front foot by Hartley and Axar Patel, promoted to number five, patted a tame return catch as India retreated to their bunker. When KL Rahul, the most assured for his 22, was lbw playing back to one Joe Root go to turn, England became favourites.

Painstakingly, Bharat and Ashwin soaked up the pressure, rode their luck and inched the score onwards. They attacked Rehan Ahmed and had India finishing the day strongly, until Hartley's stunning delivery turned past Bharat's defence. Ashwin panicked, but the riotous last-wicket stand brought deafening noise from the crowd and the game was on the brink of a fifth day. Siraj could not resist one last swing, and Hartley was left with the first seven-wicket haul on debut by an England spinner since Jim Laker in 1948.

Pope classic lays foundation for monumental win

By rescuing England with 148 on Saturday, Pope had already played a great innings, certainly his best for England.

Pakistan beat Nigeria 11-5 in Hockey5s World Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan launched their campaign in the FIH Hockey5s World Cup Oman 2024 on a winning note, thrashing Nigeria 11-5 in their first match in Muscat on Sunday.

Pakistan's captain Rana Abdul Waheed Ashraf scored five goals, including a hat-trick, while Abdul Hanan Shahid chipped in with four goals. He also scored a hat-trick. Arshad Liaquat and Zakaria Hayat scored one goal apiece, according to information made available here by Pakistan Hockey Federation.

Pakistan will now next take on Netherlands in their second fixture later this day. The tournament is the first-ever Hockey5s World Championship, organized by International Hockey Federation and played with a different format of five players on each side.

Faizan, Enub bag top spots in Islamabad Marathon

ISLAMABAD (APP): Faizan Zulfikar and Enub claimed top spots in the Islamabad Marathon 2024 organized here at the Trail 3 Parking on Sunday.

Faizan Zulfikar bagged the first position in the male category. Full Marathon while Umair and Mubaris Bukhari grabbed second and third positions, respectively.

In the Full Marathon female category, Enub, Amina Shah and Ayesha Mastoor took first, second and third positions, respectively.

In Half Marathon, male category, Naveed, Irfan and Nagham took first, second and third positions, respectively. In the Half Marathon female category, Jennie, Christina Vezel and Huma Rehman took first, second and third positions, respectively.

In the 10km male category, Akhtar, Riaz and Waqar Ahmed took first, second and third positions, respectively. In the 10km female category, Rabeela Farooq, Maheen Tahir and Anum Tahir took first, second and third positions, respectively.

In the 5km male category, Samiullah, Kamil Hussain and Junaid Dildar took first, second and third positions, respectively. In the 5km female category, Amna Khan, Laila Kazmi and Kanwal took first, second and third positions, respectively. People from all walks of life including children featured in the marathon to promote and encourage healthy activity in the federal capital.

A total of five categories were kept in the marathon to encourage enthusiastic people towards running. There was a full marathon of 42.2km which began from Margalla Road to 7th Avenue to Shakaparia and then back.

West Indies win in Australia for first time since 1997



BRISBANE (AFP): Injured pace bowler Shamar Joseph produced a stunning spell of fast bowling to lead his side to one of the greatest upsets in Test history, with the West Indies stunning Australia by eight runs in Brisbane on Sunday.

The West Indies, who brought an under-strength side to Australia for the Test series, gave debuts to four players, including Joseph, in the two Tests.

They were beaten inside three days in Adelaide last week and were expected to suffer a similar fate in the day-night Test in Brisbane.

But after bowling the hosts out for 207 in the second session Sunday, the West Indies recorded their first win in Australia since they last tasted victory in Perth in 1997. West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite struggled to contain his emotions after the match.

"It means everything, playing with the legend Brian Lara watching, playing in Australia, a place we haven't won in a number of years," he said.

"To come here with this young group, seven or eight uncapped players is nothing but amazing and special. "For us to come and do it against the number one team in the world, here in Australia, is amazing. "It shows that once we have the belief and the heart, we can do anything."

Joseph was outstanding Sunday, bowling 11.5 overs of hostile pace to finish with 7-68 in just his second Test, despite the pain in his foot.

"Kraigg kept coming up and asking if I was alright, but I said I'm not coming off," Joseph said. "I said I wanted to do it for the team. I think this win is very important for us and it's just the beginning for West Indies cricket."

Australian captain Pat Cummins said that while the loss hurt he could see the benefit it would have on cricket in the West Indies. "It hurts — they outplayed us," Cummins said.

"I know a lot of the talk coming into this series was there's a lot of (West Indian) debutants, but once you put them in an international eleven, you know it's going to be tough."

"They were fantastic — they've created a couple of new superstars. "As a cricket fan, as a Test match cricket fan, there's a part of me that's happy."

Australia had resumed the day at 60-2 with Steve Smith, who carried his bat for a superb 91 not out, and Cameron Green looking comfortable against Kemar Roach and Alzarri Joseph.

Shamar Joseph, who had to retire hurt after being hit on the toe in the second innings on Saturday night, did not bowl Saturday and only

came into the attack 45 minutes into the first session. He dismissed Green when the Australian number four chopped on, then bowled Travis Head with a beautiful yorker, Head's second first-ball duck of the match.

Australia, cruising at 113-2, were suddenly 113-4, although Smith looked unperturbed as he reached his half-century.

Joseph struck again when Mitchell Marsh edged to Alick Athanaze at third slip and, although the ball popped out of Athanaze's hands, it went straight to Justin Greaves to leave Australia 132-5, 84 runs from victory.

Alex Carey was next to go, clean bowled by a 145-kilometre (90.1-mile) per hour thunderbolt that crashed into off stump, with Australia 136-6. Mitchell Starc decided the best path to victory was attack and smashed 21 runs from just 14 balls before trying one big hit too many and holing out to Kevin Sinclair in the covers.

Cummins was next to go, getting an edge to a diving Joshua Da Silva behind the stumps. After the break, Alzarri Joseph claimed Nathan Lyon caught behind before Shamar Joseph wrapped up the innings when he beat Josh Hazlewood for pace and bowled him through the gate.

Australia set up heavyweight Asian Cup clash after thrashing Indonesia

Doha (AFP): Australia set up a tasty Asian Cup quarter-final clash against South Korea or Saudi Arabia with a 4-0 win over a spirited but limited Indonesia on Sunday.

The Socceroos are trying to win the title for a second time and were again solid rather than spectacular in getting the job done in a niggly last-16 encounter in Doha. Two goals in the first half, a deflected own goal on 12 minutes and a diving header by Martin Boyle on the stroke of the break, put Graham Arnold's side on their way.

With Indonesia out of gas at the end, Craig Goodwin volleyed in a rebound on 89 minutes for 3-0 and defender Harry Souttar made it four in stoppage time. The scoreline flattered Australia but it was their third clean sheet in four matches and they have conceded only once.

Roberto Mancini's Saudi Arabia face Jurgen Klinsmann's South Korea on Tuesday for the right to meet them. Indonesia were making their first appearance in the knockout rounds of the competition and were ranked 121 places below a physically imposing Australia. They produced the first chance on six minutes when Netherlands-born

attacker Rafael Struick prodded the ball first time narrowly over the bar.

Indonesia were behind soon after, Jackson Irvine crossing hard and low from the right and the ball flicking off the boot of defender Elkan Baggott and wrong-footing goalkeeper Ernando Ari.

Arnold puffed out his cheeks in relief midway through the half when Indonesia's Justin Hubner, who plays for the under-21 team of Premier League Wolves, let fly from distance. Hubner, another born in the Netherlands, did not really get hold of it and goalkeeper Maty Ryan saved easily.

There was not too much in it for a lot of the half, a physical game reduced to niggly fouls and Indonesia twice letting fly with ambitious attempts that flew over the target. Indonesia's vocal fans dominated at the compact Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium but they were silenced for a second time on 45 minutes when Scotland-born Boyle connected on a delicious Gethin Jones cross to stoop in for 2-0. Mitchell Duke should have made it 3-0 with 10 minutes left but he missed the target with only the goalkeeper to beat, before Goodwin made the game

safe. Souttar headed in at the death to embellish the scoreline. Debutants Tajikistan meet the UAE later Sunday, also in the last 16.

Palestine expect 'celebration' in debut of Asian Cup last 16: Palestine striker Tamer Seyam said Monday's historic Asian Cup last-16 match against hosts Qatar will be a "celebration" for fans who find themselves in the unusual position of rooting for both teams.

Palestine have reached the knockout rounds for the first time despite a deeply troubled build-up overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in the Palestinian territory of Gaza. Some of the players have lost loved ones and have family trapped in Gaza. The team trained and played matches abroad in the lead-up to their third Asian Cup.

Fans of other sides in Qatar have been vocal in their support of the Palestine team, who qualified with a 3-0 win over Hong Kong in their final group match. Palestine play the hosts and holders at the 68,000-capacity Al-Bayt Stadium and Seyam said on the eve of the game that it was "an honour" to have supporters of other teams cheering for them.



DOHA: Harry Souttar of Australia scores his team's fourth goal during the AFC Asian Cup Round of 16 match between Australia and Indonesia.



In brief

20 injured in road accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least 20 people were injured on Sunday in a traffic accident when a vehicle of a wedding convoy overturned in Sanghar district. According to the private news channel, as soon as the incident was reported, the rescue teams reached the spot and swiftly shifted all the injured to the hospital. According to police sources, 8 injured were shifted to Hyderabad because of critical condition.

2000 participated in Islamabad marathon

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nearly 2,000 participants, including both local and international runners, took part in the Islamabad Marathon that began on Sunday. The marathon featured four categories, including full and half marathons, along with 5 and 10-kilometer races, said a private news channel. It also included a special Kids Marathon, catering to the younger participants. The organizers emphasized their commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle and encouraging physical activity among children. These marathons not only provide a platform for professional athletes but also promote fitness and well-being in the community, fostering a culture of health consciousness and sportsmanship.

Cold spell grips country

ISLAMABAD (APP): In the next twelve hours, most regions of the country will experience cold and partly cloudy conditions, while upper districts are expected to be enveloped in clouds. The Meteorological Department predicts significant rain and snowfall over mountainous landscapes, impacting key areas including Islamabad, the Pothohar region, Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP), northern Balochistan, Kashmir, and surrounding hilly terrains. Simultaneously, a forecast of shallow to moderate fog looms over select plain areas of Punjab and upper Sindh, raising caution for commuters and residents alike. Temperature readings recorded this Islamabad and Lahore 10 degrees centigrade, Karachi 15, Peshawar five, Quetta eight, Gilgit two, Murree three and Muzaffarabad six degrees centigrade.

Railways to ensure quality dining facilities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is planning to attach quality dining facilities with most of its passenger trains that would help the travelers to provide fresh eatable items during their journey in the trains across the country. In the new service, the passengers would enjoy a better environment with enhanced dining facilities as at a time, 45 passengers could take food in the upgraded dining car, an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said the premium dining car has a menu list of 40 food items, including barbecue and pizza while keeping in view demands of the passengers, ovens (Tandoors) have been installed to provide fresh roti (plain bread). Initially, the official said that two dining cars have been attached to Zakariya Express (Up and Down), followed by two more to be attached with the up and down trains of Hazara Express. The official said that after this, five more trains would be equipped with restaurant on-wheel service, followed by the other ones. "We are focusing on improving our other services too," he added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services Dr Nadeem Jan chaired meeting of the Donors Strategic Forum. —APP Photo

ICP tightens security for elections, Section 144 enforced

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) have implemented Section 144, introducing strict measures that demand reporting of all election-related programs to the respective police stations to ensure the smooth and secure conduct of upcoming elections.

According to the ICP public relations officer on Sunday, the enforcement emphasized the significance of obtaining permission to organize any such event, with unapproved gatherings risking legal consequences under Section 144.

He said that Section 144, now in effect, mandated that election-related programs must be officially communicated to the relevant police stations. The

goal is to bolster security measures and prevent any potential clashes between rival groups. Organizing programmes without obtaining proper permission is viewed as a direct violation of Section 144, prompting law enforcement to take decisive legal action, added.

He further emphasized that stringent measures have been put in place to mitigate the risk of conflicts and ensure a peaceful electoral process.

The authorities are urging the public to collaborate closely with the Islamabad Capital Police to facilitate the orderly execution of elections. This cooperative effort aimed to maintain harmony and safeguard against any potential harm arising

from confrontations between opposing factions, he added.

The residents of the federal capital are encouraged to report any suspicious or illegal activities related to the elections through the Caller 15 or ICT15 app.

This initiative aimed to empower the community to actively contribute to the maintenance of a secure electoral environment by promptly reporting any violations or potential threats, citizens play a crucial role in upholding the integrity of the democratic process.

He concluded that with the imposition of Section 144, the Islamabad administration took commendable steps to ensure the safety and tranquility of the electoral proceedings.

CDA launches new website

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) has launched its new website to facilitate the general public.

In this regard, a ceremony was held at the CDA headquarters which was attended by the CDA chairman, members of the CDA Board, representatives of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries and officers of concerned formations.

On this occasion, the CDA chairman said that the use of technology in the authority will improve service delivery. He said that the launch of the new and updated website is an important step towards digitalization.

He further said that Land and Estate records are also being digitized. CDA is introducing secure paper for issuing allotment and transfer letters to reduce the risk of forgery and tampering of records, he said. CDA chairman further added that this will help reduce complaints of corruption, and fraudulent transactions and eradication of complaints like alteration in records.

A tree management system has also been introduced as part of the technology-based initiatives being taken in the authority. This system will be based on state-of-the-art Digital Trees Inventory software.

Similarly, for the first time, all tree and plant data will also be digitized with the help of field force and satellite imagery. Under this barren land can be identified along with trees and plant data so that the land of Islamabad can be kept free from illegal constructions and encroachment and plantation can be done there as per need.

The launch of the new website will further boost the confidence of overseas Pakistanis as a new online property verification system has also been introduced to facilitate citizens in property transactions from the comfort of their own homes and they will be able to verify the property through the CDA website.

Moreover, in the new website, all CDA services will be provided online so that citizens do not have to visit CDA offices. Similarly, the tendering process has also been made online. E-tendering will not only improve rate and efficiency.

Election fervor grows as political parties rally support ahead of general elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): With the general elections just around the corner on the 8th of next month, political activities are reaching a fever pitch as parties intensify their efforts to secure the support of voters. Public gatherings have become a common sight as political parties strategically organize rallies to connect with the electorate. The atmosphere is charged with enthusiasm as candidates articulate their visions and agendas to sway public opinion.

In addition to large-scale gatherings, candidates are actively engaging with voters through corner meetings, providing an opportunity for

more intimate discussions on local issues and concerns. This grassroots approach aims to establish a direct connection between candidates and the electorate. A notable aspect of the upcoming elections is the diverse pool of candidates, reflecting a broad representation of the population. A total of 5,121 candidates are in the race for the National Assembly seats, encompassing 4,807 males, 312 females, and two transgender individuals.

Similarly, for the four provincial assemblies, 12,695 candidates are competing, comprising 12,123 males, 570 females, and two transgender candidates.

The electoral landscape is marked by the contestation of 266 general seats in the National Assembly and 593 general seats across the four provincial assemblies.

This massive electoral battleground underscores the significance of the elections in shaping the political landscape of the nation.

As the countdown to Election Day continues, the political discourse is expected to intensify further, with candidates and parties leaving no stone unturned to garner voter support. The nation awaits the outcome of this democratic exercise, which will shape the direction of governance for the foreseeable future.

ECP's active WhatsApp helpline ensures complaint registration

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has taken a proactive step by introducing an active WhatsApp helpline, providing citizens with a platform to register and resolve their election-related complaints swiftly.

This initiative aims to enhance accessibility and responsiveness in addressing concerns leading up to the upcoming general elections in 2024.

Using this WhatsApp number, 0327 5050610 individuals, particularly those who are speech and hearing impaired, can submit their

complaints via video. The ECP has established the Election Monitoring and Complaint Centre (EMCC) to facilitate and address the voters' grievances pertaining to the upcoming general elections 2024. According to official sources, apart from WhatsApp, the complaints can be submitted through email

at complaints@ecp.gov.pk, or the dedicated helpline 111-327-000.

The election watchdog has set up control rooms at its secretariat, as well as provincial, divisional, and district-level offices to han-

dle the registration and resolution of complaints.

At this center, the public will have the opportunity to contact and register their election-related grievances. Trained staff has been appointed at the center to ensure prompt resolution of these issues. The ECP urged people to promptly share footage of any code of conduct violations in their areas for swift response and resolution. The control center also has social media and electronic media monitoring facility. Complaints can also be sent through fax number 051-9204403.

HEC invites applications for DAAD Master's scholarship from female Afghan refugees

ISLAMABAD (APP): Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has invited applications for the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) fully funded Master's scholarships for the academic year 2024 from the female Afghan refugees to pursue two years Master's study in HEC recognized universities in Pakistan.

According to the HEC, this scholarship programme is open for all disciplines and is funded by the DAAD, with funds from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany. The award of scholarships will be subject to the provision of funds.

About the eligibility criteria, the HEC said that female Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan, with valid Proof of Registration (POR) Card from Ministry

of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON).

The candidates must have completed an HEC recognized undergraduate degree (16 years of education) with at least 2.5 CGPA. The result awaiting students cannot apply.

The candidates must have successfully completed undergraduate degree (16 years of education) and HEC Pakistan will facilitate in admission or the candidate must be currently enrolled in first semester in HEC recognized university, pursuing two-year Master's degree.

The candidate must not be receiving any other academic scholarship or support while availing this scholarship programme. About the selection process, the HEC conveyed that the selection will be merit-based and factor-in academic credentials and selection interview.

To apply for this oppor-

tunity, the required documents are copy of valid Proof of Registration (POR) from Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), copy of Matriculation and Intermediate certificates with DMCS, copy of undergraduate degree and final transcript, two letters of recommendation from teachers, Letter of Motivation/Personal Statement and Proof of enrollment in institute like Admission letter (In case of enrollment in institute).

The applicants are advised to check their email and HEC website <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/HECAnnouncements/Pages/Announcements.aspx> regularly for updates and apply well before the closing date to get assistance in case of any inconvenience. The closing date for submitting application is February 05.

Up-gradation of Liaquat Bagh Library, completed to promote reading habits among students: Commissioner

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Commissioner of Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta, said on Sunday that the upgrade of the Liaquat Bagh Library, a project, had been completed to promote and encourage reading habits, particularly among students.

He said that the relevant authorities had been directed to further improve the facilities in the e-library in light of the suggestions being given by the students.

The Commissioner informed that after the completion of the upgrade project, the library had been opened for the citizens, and on average, 150 people visit the library daily.

The membership fee of the library is Rs 250, he said, adding that the renewal fee would be Rs 50 once a year. Six computers, student lockers, and a kids room had also been specially built in the library, he informed.

The library administration had been directed to provide free tea to the students as a goodwill gesture, the commissioner said.



In its upgrade, special arrangements were made to equip the library with modern sciences, Liaquat Ali Chhatta said and informed that there are more than 50,000 books in the library, out of which about 800 are for competitive exams.

"The library would have computers as well as internet facilities," Liaquat Ali Chhatta said. "Through the e-system, male and female students would be equipped with modern sciences," he added. A separate place would be allotted for the

students in the competitive examinations, the commissioner said.

Separate space would also be allocated for the citizens who would come there to read newspapers and magazines, he said.

He informed, "Our aim is to provide a pleasant environment to every student coming to the library so that the atmosphere of knowledge and friendship can be promoted."

Special desks of 18 departments set up in BFC to facilitate businessmen: Commissioner

The Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta has said that special desks of 18 different departments had been set up in Business Facilitation Center (BFC), Rawalpindi established in Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) to facilitate business community and promote business activities in the region.

He informed that the Center was working from last week and over 41 applications were received in the Business Facilitation Center so far

out of which No Objection Certificates (NOC) were issued to 20 applicants, while the rest were still under process.

In a statement on Sunday, special desks of 18 different departments were set up in the center including Municipal Corporation, RDA, Small Industries, Local Government, PHA, WASA, Environment, Irrigation, Tourism, Home Department, Police, Food Authority, Livestock and others to expedite issuance of the NOC process to start new businesses.

The administration was committed to improve the business environment in Rawalpindi and BFC has every facility to guide and process the requests of the businessmen within stipulated time frame, 30 days for completion certificate and 45 days for change of land use, he added.

The establishment of the center had facilitated the business community, he said adding, now, the businessmen would be provided all the facilities under one roof in BFC.

Traffic management plan being implemented

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Murree, Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi has said that implementation of traffic management plan finalized to facilitate the tourists was being ensured to avoid gridlock on the city roads.

He said that 13 tourist facilitation centers were established at different places in Murree while a control room had also been made fully functional.

The DC said that the district administration had made excellent arrangements to promote tourism in the region besides helping and assisting the

tourists.

A large number of tourists visit, 'Queen of Hills', Murree to enjoy the snowfall in winter, he said adding, solid steps were taken by the district administration to provide assistance and guidance to the tourists.

He informed that on the directives of the Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta, the administration was ensuring strict implementation of Murree Contingency Plan to facilitate the tourists.

All the machinery along with the drivers would be available round the clock

during the snowfall season, he said.

According to Murree Contingency Plan, additional staff had been provided to traffic police and related departments.

He said that the role of traffic police is most important to regulate the traffic in Murree. Entry of the vehicles would be allowed according to the parking capacity in Murree, he informed.

The management had completed all its arrangements for the snowfall season and the staff and officers would not be allowed to remain absent from the duties, he warned.

17 killed in traffic accidents

KABUL (Amu TV): At least 17 people were killed in various traffic accidents on the Kabul-Jalalabad Highway, a major route connecting Kabul to eastern Nangarhar province, on Sunday, according to a Taliban spokesman. Khalid Zadran, a spokesman for the Taliban's police command in Kabul, stated that 10 traffic accidents occurred on the highway in the Sarubi district of Kabul on Sunday, Jan. 28. Zadran attributed the accidents to driver carelessness in different areas of the highway.

Taliban SC killed in traffic accident

KABUL (Amu TV): Jalaluddin Haqqani, the head of the chamber of public security of the Taliban-run Supreme Court, was killed in a traffic accident in Ghazni province on Saturday, Jan. 27, according to a statement by the court. The statement added that Haqqani "had served" the Taliban for the past 20 years. No further details about the incident were provided in the statement.

Senior Islamic Emirate delegation visits deportees at Torkham



KABUL (Tolo News): A delegation of the Islamic Emirate comprised of acting ministers of Refugees and Repatriation, and Borders and Tribal Affairs, as well as the

The acting minister of Tribal Affairs, Noorullah Noori, also visited the Durand Line and met with the residents and passengers. "We have visited the area. The officials will address their problems within their capacities, particularly the problems of refugees," he said. The officials said that efforts are underway by the high commission for refugees' affairs to construct shelters for the deportees. "We have met with the refugees who return to the country, and they are facing problems. We promised them that after the winter, practical work on the permanent camps will

begin," said Hamdullah Fitrat, head of the press and public affairs of the Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs. "They visited Torkham and assessed the current situation of the Afghan refugees and also assessed the checkpoints, trade and transit as well as the checkpoints which are created to prevent the smuggling," said Zabiullah Mujahid, Islamic Emirate spokesman. Based on the statistics of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, within the last year, around 1 million Afghan refugees arrived in Afghanistan from Pakistan, Iran and Turkey.

Beijing cautious about opening Wakhan Corridor Road: Chinese Media



KABUL (Khaama Press): Chinese media have reported that the country may not fulfil the Taliban's aim of connecting Afghanistan to China's economy through the Wakhan Corridor. According to "South China Morning Post," China considers this project a "suspicious economic case" and approaches it with caution. This road connects Afghanistan via the Wakhan Corridor to Xinjiang, China. Previously, the Taliban's governor in Badakhshan had announced the completion of the construction of the Wakhan Corridor road up to the Chinese border, officially linking Afghanistan to China through this province. He also mentioned plans to asphalt the road shortly. This project had an estimated cost of around 370 million Afghanis and was initiated by the previous Afghan government to attract Chinese investments. Construction of this 50-kilometer road began in May 2021 in the Badakhshan province but was halted due to the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan. However, analysts suggest that China, due to security concerns related to terrorism and separatism, restricts full access to its land border with Afghanistan. Professor Zhu Yongbiao from Lanzhou University believes the project is primarily a way for the Taliban to demonstrate its governance capabilities to neighboring countries. He pointed out that the Wakhan Corridor road is largely unusable and has no economic viability due to the challenging mountainous terrain. "The road itself is largely devoid of practical access and economic value," he said, "adding that Afghanistan could not build highways in the high-altitude Wakhan Corridor." Mr. Zhao mentioned that China lacks customs facilities in this region, and it seems unlikely that China would invest in it. He emphasized that building a road in this area is highly expensive and offers no short-term economic benefits. He also added the Wakhjir Pass is seen by China as a crucial counterterrorism front line, given its proximity to Xinjiang, home to a predominantly Muslim Uygur population. "China must have its security considerations. This road is not economically worthwhile, but it must have security risks," Zhu said. Currently, China lacks customs facilities in the area where Afghanistan borders Xinjiang, and there's no indication they plan to establish one, South China Post said. The Wakhan Corridor is a long, thin piece of land in northeastern Afghanistan that reaches towards China. It separates Tajikistan and Pakistan, running about 220 miles long and ranging from 8.1 to 40.4 miles wide. Around 12,000 people live in about 110 villages within this area.

Taliban reports over 12 million e-ID cards issued

KABUL (Amu TV): The Taliban-run National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) announced Sunday that it has issued electronic identity cards to 12.288 million people across Afghanistan since the start of their distribution. The Taliban-controlled National Television, citing the NSIA, reported that 7.1 million identity cards were issued to men and 5.1 million to women. The NSIA noted that the majority of these electronic identity cards were distributed in major cities and densely populated provinces, including Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar, Balkh, and Kandahar. Specifically, 5.567 million cards were issued in Kabul, over 796,000 in Herat, 645,000 in Nangarhar, more than 508,000 in Balkh, and 343,000 in Kandahar. More than six million electronic ID cards have been distributed since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan. While the number of electronic identity cards distributed in other provinces has not been disclosed, the NSIA mentioned that 75 electronic ID distribution centers are operational throughout the country. Additionally, mobile teams are actively distributing these cards. Following their ascent to power in August 2021, the Taliban stated their intention to conduct a census of Afghanistan's population.

200 families in poverty now without bread to eat

KABUL (Khaama Press): On the outskirts of Kabul, there's a simple house tucked away in a narrow alley. It has weathered walls and a worn-out look, and one of its two rooms provides shelter for a woman and her five children. The woman, who acts as the head of this relatively large family, is without employment or a source of income. The family's only income comes from her 12-year-old son, who brings home meagre earnings by selling matches. She reminisces about the days when life was relatively calm and content alongside her husband. However, tragedy struck three years ago when she received the news of her husband's death. Since that day, peace and comfort have become a distant memory for her, confined to the past. She pays a rent of 1,000 Afghanis for her house, but for the past five months, she has been unable to afford both the rent and basic utilities like water and electricity. She can hardly recall the last time they had a proper meal, as the only accessible food for her and her children is bread. Their small dwelling receives sunlight only dur-

ing the early hours of the day due to the high walls of the neighbouring house, making it cold and dark for the rest of the day. To combat the cold, she uses almond shells as fuel and old pieces of cloth as makeshift fire starters for her heater. Among other challenges, her youngest son suffers from a painful skin condition that relentlessly afflicts him. The skin ailment covers the right side of his face, from forehead to ear and left eye, continually scratching the surface and penetrating deeper layers. The disease has only seen temporary relief with treatment, and with delayed care, it is steadily spreading. Her eldest daughter possesses skills in weaving, embroidery, and beadwork, but they lack the means to find work and generate income from these talents. The life of this woman, named Habiba, and her family is emblematic of the struggle faced by 200 impoverished families, all headed by women. These families have lost their fathers and husbands to war, disability, or addiction. For years, they received support from a personal charitable foundation led by a kind-heart-

ed man who quietly provided for them without any fanfare. Haji Khadem Rahimian, the man who had been the benevolent guardian of these families for years, is now struggling due to Afghanistan's economic crisis and can no longer support them. He receives hundreds of calls from destitute families every day, warning that their children will perish from hunger if they don't receive assistance. According to the officials of this charitable organization, these families are on their list of recipients, and their assistance has been discontinued. Habiba reveals that apart from financial aid from this charitable organization, she has not received help from any other institution or organization. Once, when she visited the local representative's office to obtain a card for the World Food Program, she was asked for 500 Afghanis as a bribe. Habiba and these 200 families without breadwinners now hope for a miracle, a miracle that can be an act of generosity and compassion from any other citizen and save these hungry stomachs from starvation and these suffering bodies from the cold's grip.

2 Bridges worth 31million AFN Inaugurated on Kandahar highway

ZABUL (Agencies): Accompanied by several central heads of the Ministry, the Head of Public Works of Zabul province, and technical engineers, Honorable Alhaj Mullah Muhammad Isa "Thani," the Acting Minister of Public Works, inaugurated two bridges in Zabul province during their visit to the southwestern provinces of the country, says ministry of public works. The Acting Minister of Public Works provided details about the bridges, stating that the first one, named Ghoshi Rabat, spans 34 meters in length and 8.7 meters in width, with a value exceeding 16 million Afghanis. The second bridge, called Sangar Manda, measures 42 meters in length and 8.7 meters in width, with a value exceeding 15 million Afghanis. Both bridges were constructed within a five-month period and are now operational. The Acting Minister of Public Works further mentioned that the completion of these bridges marks significant progress on the Kabul-Kandahar highway, with most of the bridges now finished. The remaining bridges are expected to be completed soon.

Kaisy Khademi narrowly defeated by Jackson Chauke in IBO Flyweight Title clash



KABUL (Khaama Press): In a gripping contest that held the audience on the edge of their seats at London's historic York Hall, Afghan-British boxer Kaisy Khademi (Qais Khademi) faced a challenging bout against South African boxer Jackson Chauke on January 27, 2024. The highly anticipated fight was for the coveted IBO World flyweight title, marking a significant event in the boxing calendar. Khademi, born in Kabul and a resident of London, brought his unique style and resilience to the ring, having a history of overcoming challenges both inside and outside the boxing world. His journey to this title fight was marked by determination and skill, as he previously won and successfully defended the IBO Inter-Continental super-flyweight title. Jackson Chauke, known for his extensive experience and formidable boxing skills, proved to be a tough competitor. With an impressive record and a background that includes an extensive amateur career, Chauke brought his A-game to the fight. His approach, combining aggressive tactics and strategic defense, posed a significant challenge to Khademi. The fight progressed through intense rounds, with both boxers showcasing their skills and determination. Khademi, known for his sharp counterattacks and agile movements, engaged in a tactical battle against Chauke's forwardpressing style. The contest displayed a blend of technique, speed, and endurance, captivating the

audience with its high-octane action. As the rounds progressed, the intensity of the fight escalated, with both boxers having their moments of dominance. The anticipation built up towards the later rounds, as the outcome of the fight hung in balance. Khademi, fighting in his adopted hometown, had strong support from the crowd, adding to the electric atmosphere of the event. In a turn of events that culminated in the 12th round, Jackson Chauke emerged victorious, securing more points as per the judges' decision. His victory earned him the IBO World flyweight championship belt, a significant milestone in his career. Chauke's win was a testament to his skill, experience, and strategic approach in the ring. For Kaisy Khademi, despite the loss, the fight was a display of his resilience and skill as a boxer. His journey to this championship bout and his performance in the ring underscore his status as a formidable boxer in his weight class. The event, rich in talent and sportsmanship, not only added a new chapter in the careers of both Khademi and Chauke but also high-

Around 80000 tons of goods transported by railway lines last week

KABUL (Agencies) During the last week Afghanistan Railway facilitated the transportation of a significant volume of goods, amounting to 79,834 metric tons, says ARA in a statement. Among these, 69,068 tons were transported via Hairatan Railway, 2,653 tons via Aqeeana Railway, and 8,113 tons via Torghondi Railway. The materials transported included petroleum, non-petroleum products, and various other commodities, contributing to the import and export activities of the country. It is worth noting that a portion of these transfers involved transit and export operations. Over the course of the previous week, 811 tons of goods were transited and exported, predominantly consisting of dry fruits, rice, and fresh fruits. The Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA) remains committed to enhancing the conditions for increased transfers and providing essential facilities to traders, aiming to facilitate smoother trade operations and drive economic growth.

lighted the spirit of boxing. The fight between Khademi and Chauke will be remembered as a significant event in the world of boxing, showcasing the best of what the sport has to offer.

Baghlan sugar factory operation restarted

BAGHLAN (Tolo News): Baghlan sugar factory has restarted its operations after construction. Officials in the opening ceremony of this factory said that with its activation, the work environment will be favorable for more than a thousand technical and service workers. Abdul Hamid Akhundzada, general director of governmental factories of the Finance Ministry, said: "Companies are being restructured as you are witnessing today. The guidance of the leader of the Islamic Emirate is not about not making development, but creating new factories in order to strengthen the economy." The general director of governmental factories said that according to the order of the leader of the

Islamic Emirate, all governmental factories which are inactive will be activated. "The delegations created by the leader of the Islamic Emirate with the aim of creating new factories and renovating the old ones are trying to renovate the factories, and the proposal for a number of new companies have also been approved," said Ahmad Jan Bilal, general director of coherence and coordination of governmental factories. Abdul Rahman Haqqani, governor of Baghlan, said: "Now we see that in various parts of Afghanistan the works are ongoing and these kinds of works make us happy." A number of workers are happy with the re-operation of this factory and said that the operation of large

factories is effective in reducing the unemployment of the country's citizens. "They should create such factories so that young people don't travel abroad and find a living in their own country," said Salahuddin, a worker. "We want more factories to be created for unemployed youth and to provide them with work," said Baz Mohammad, a worker. Baghlan sugar factory started operating in the central Baghlan industrial town in 1319 (solar year), but its activity was stopped in 1370 due to wars and changes in the country. This factory was reconstructed again in 1385, but after some time, it stopped working again.

8 killed, 6 wounded in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, Japan and Dinmark announced \$38 million assistance to Afghanistan, with UNHCR asking Pakistan to avoid maltreating Afghan refugees. Once again, various international institutions called for the reopening of girls' schools in the country, but the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan maintains it is not against education for girls. Last week's major events: UN-led meeting will be held on February 18. Kabulov: 4 nations to attend meeting on Afghanistan. Amid calls for reopening of girls schools; Kabir renews IEA stance. UNHCR: Pakistan should treat Afghans well. Japan, Dinmark announce \$38m in aid to Afghanistan. Casualties At least eight people were killed and six others wounded in different incidents across the country last week.

According to reports, three people were killed and six others wounded as a result of an explosion in Kunar province. Local officials said a person in Samangan killed his uncle, aunty and their daughter. Two children were killed when an unexploded mortar shell they were playing with went off in the capital of northern Samangan province. UN-led meeting on Afghanistan A UN-led meeting is scheduled to be held in Doha on February 18 and 19. The first meeting was held in May 2023 and the IEA was not invited to that. But last week Deputy Prime Minister Maulvi Abdul Kabir confirmed the IEA representative had been invited to attend the meeting on Afghanistan in Doha. Norway's Chargé d'Affaires Paul Klouman Bekken, in a meeting with Kabir, said IEA had been invited to the upcoming huddle in the capital of Qatar.

Separately, UN secretary-general's spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said António Guterres would convene the meeting on February 18 and 19. Call for girls' education, IEA view January 24 marked as the International Day of Education, with some international organizations renewing calls for the reopening of girls' schools. Amnesty International (AI) called for the immediate reopening of all schools and universities for girls in Afghanistan. Rosa Otunbayeva, head of the UNAMA, asked the Islamic Emirate to accept the right to education for all citizens of the country, not only from a moral point of view, but also for the good, well-being and peace of society. She said the continued deprivation of Afghan girls of education did not only have a bad effect on all Afghans; but would also isolate Afghanistan at the

global level. Maulvi Kabir, in a meeting with Norway's Chargé d'Affaires Paul Klouman Bekken, said IEA was not against girls' education and a special committee had been tasked to ensure compliance with the order from the supreme leader to address the issue. UN report, IEA reaction A new UNAMA report said IEA authorities continued to enforce and promulgate restrictions on women's rights to work, education and freedom of movement. In particular, the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice and its departments at provincial level, take on this enforcement role with regard to hijab, mahram and other requirements imposed on women by visiting public places, offices and educational institutes, as well as establishing checkpoints and monitoring compliance. For example, on 26

December in Kandahar, officials of the Department of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice visited a bus terminal to ensure that women were not travelling long distances without mahrams and instructed bus drivers that they were not to permit women to board without a mahram. Chief spokesman for IEA, said the UNAMA human rights indicated its ignorance and unawareness about Sharia rules. 4-way meeting on Afghanistan A four-way meeting on the current situation in Afghanistan is expected by the end of January, says a Russian diplomat. Russian presidential envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, said Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan would participate in the meeting. The participants are expected to exchange views on an inclusive government, as well as the

need for combating terrorism and narcotics. UNHCR: Pakistan should treat refugees well United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'s global security and supply department head says she has asked Pakistani authorities to extend the cards of Afghan refugees and be lenient towards them. The Ministry of (MoRRA) wrote on its X handle that acting Minister of Refugee and Repatriation Affairs Khalil Ur Rahman Haqqani met UNHCR's Security and Supply Department head Shoko Shimozowa and the delegation accompanying her. Shimozowa, who returned to the country recently, said: "We held meetings with Pakistani authorities and discussed with them the problems of Afghan migrants. We also asked the authorities to extend the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards of

Afghan migrants and be lenient towards them." More than 500,000 Afghan refugees have either been deported from Pakistan or have voluntarily during the past four months, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said on Tuesday. Maulvi Abdul Kabir, during a meeting with the European Union Charge d'Affaires Raffaella Iodice, said Pakistan was forcibly repatriating Afghan refugees regardless of the circumstances and was against all rules. Humanitarian aid The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in Afghanistan says Denmark has contributed 2.2 million US dollars to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF). Likewise, Japan has pledged to provide \$36 million in fresh assistance to Afghanistan's different sectors.



RAWALPINDI: Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Zardari Bhutto addressing to public meeting at Liaquat Bagh.

Inflation, employment main concerns of NA-119 voters: Mariyam

LAHORE, Jan 28 (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz is contesting election from NA-119 for the first time. Total population of the constituency is almost 916,517. Total voters in the constituency are 520,829, out of which 277,172 are men and 243,657 women voters.

There are 338 polling stations in NA-119, while number of polling booths is 994. Major areas of this constituency are Singhapura, Bhagbanpura, Jamelabad, Daroghawala, Bund Raod, China Scheme and others.

There are a total of 19 candidates contesting election from the constituency. Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party's Aleem Khan has withdrawn his candidature in favour of

Maryam Nawaz from this constituency.

From NA-119, Pakistan People's Party candidate is Iftikhar Shahid, while Zulfiqar Ali is candidate of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Different people, while talking to APP in the constituency, said on Sunday that inflation and employment were major concerns of the people of NA-119. Ali Shahid, a resident of Singhapura, said, "Major problems of the constituency are high inflation, clean drinking water, encroachments, poor condition of roads, etc."

Another resident from China Scheme said that current inflation in the country had made it difficult for common people to survive. Shahid Saqib from Bund Road said that every individual had its own

political affiliation and people would vote for candidates of their choice.

Most of people from NA-119 said they would exercise their right to vote on February 8, but they also expressed apprehension that their problems would not be solved like in the past.

During 2018 general election, the current NA-119 Lahore-III constituency was part of NA-127 Lahore-V, from where PML-N candidate Ali Pervaiz Malik secured 113,273 votes and stood victorious, while Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's Jamshed Iqbal Cheema was his opponent, who had secured 66,861 votes. During 2018 general election, 51 per cent turnout was witnessed in the constituency.

Sanam Javed gets election symbols to face Maryam Nawaz

LAHORE (INP): Social media activist Sanam Javed Khan, affiliated with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has been assigned election symbols to contest in two national and one provincial constituencies, following a Supreme Court decision. After a three-member bench, led by Justice Muneeb Akhtar, heard appeals against the rejection of Sanam Javed's papers, returning officers allotted her election symbols for constituencies NA-119, NA-120, and PP-150. The election symbols assigned are a photo frame and a pillow from PP-150, setting the stage for a competitive contest against Maryam Nawaz in NA-119.

Sanam Javed, expressing determination, conveyed a message to Maryam Nawaz, stating, "Tell Maryam Nawaz that I have entered the field. My family will spearhead my election campaign, and the people will fight Nawaz for me." She accused Maryam Nawaz of engaging in video politics and running away when faced with adversity. Highlighting the commitment of PTI and its leader to serving the nation, Sanam emphasized that they endure imprisonment for the people and have a record of building universities for the welfare of the poor. She asserted that their leader did not engage in corrupt practices or establish sugar mills, emphasizing their contributions such as the health card during their tenure.

In a separate legal development, Sanam Javed faced a post-arrest bail hearing in the Anti-Terrorism Court regarding the burning of Muslim League (N)'s office. The court adjourned the next hearing till January 29 after completing the post-arrest bail proceedings in the case. The decision on the bail application has been reserved by the court.

Mian Hayat Manika joins PTI

PAKPATTAN (INP): Mian Hayat Manika, the son of former provincial minister Mian Atta Manika bid farewell to Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), and joined Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). During a press conference, Mian Hayat Manika announced his resignation from the PML-N party and revealed he had joined PTI on the aspiration of his constituency voters. He vowed to win the provincial assembly seat from Pakpattan and would present his victory as a gift to the PTI founder.

PTI ticket holders Rao Umer Hashim, Rao Nasseem Hashim, Mehr Mohuddin Chishtii, district president PTI, Riaz Arshad Niazi and other party workers were present in the conference. Before joining PTI, Mian Hayat Manika was contesting the general election 2024 as an independent candidate from Punjab Assembly constituency PP-193.

However, in general elections 2018, he contested election as a PML-N candidate and lost the election battle to PTI's candidate Mian Furrakh Manika in the constituency.

UN urges reversal of funding pause for Palestinian agency

DOHA/GENEVA (Reuters): U.N. officials urged countries to reconsider a pause in funding for the U.N. agency for Palestinians on Sunday, vowing that any staff found to be involved in Hamas' attack on Israel would be punished and warning that aid for some two million people in Gaza was at stake.

At least nine countries, including top donors the U.S. and Germany, have paused funding for the U.N. refugee agency for Palestinians (UNRWA) after allegations by Israel that a dozen of its 13,000 staff in Gaza were involved in the Oct. 7 rampage. "While I understand their concerns - I was myself horrified by these accusations - I strongly appeal to the governments that have suspended their contributions to, at least, guarantee the continuity of UNRWA's operations," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Sunday, vowing to hold to account "any U.N. employee involved in acts of terror".

He said this could include criminal prosecution - a rare move within the global body since most staff enjoy functional immunity, although Guterres has the power to waive it.

Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA commissioner-general, also urged countries to "reconsider their decisions before UNRWA is forced to suspend its humanitarian response." A U.N. investigation into the Israeli allegations is currently under way.

More than 26,000 people have been killed in Israel's military campaign against Hamas in Gaza, the enclave's health ministry said. With flows of aid like food and medicine into the territory just a trickle of pre-conflict levels, deaths from preventable diseases as well as the risk of famine are growing, aid officials say.

Since the Oct. 7 attacks, which killed 1,200 people in Israel, most of Gaza's 2.3 million people have become more reliant on the aid UNRWA provides, including about one million who have fled Israeli bombardments sheltering in its facilities. Responding to Guterres' statement, Israel's U.N. Ambassador Gilad Erdan called on all donor states to suspend their support and demand an in-depth investigation into "the involvement of all UNRWA employees in terror."

He added in a statement that Guterres' appeal for continued funding for the agency had "proven once again that the security of the citizens of Israel is not really important for him." Observers and aid workers said the move by the donors would exacerbate hunger. "Donors, do not starve children for the sins of a few individual aid workers," said Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

A U.N. appointed expert on the right to food, Michael Fakhr, warned that the funding cuts meant that

famine was now "inevitable" in Gaza. Even before the conflict, UNRWA was struggling to secure funding and warned that it was on the verge of collapse. Many of its 13,000 staff members are refugees themselves and at least 150 have been killed since the Israel-Hamas conflict began.

Palestinians expressed anger at the funding cuts.

"We used to say Israel was launching a war of famine against us in parallel to its war of destruction, now those countries who suspended the aid to UNRWA declared themselves partners in this war, and collective punishment," said Yamen Hamad, who lives at an UNRWA-run school in Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza Strip, after fleeing northern Gaza.

Egyptian foreign minister Sameh Shoukry said he was "surprised" by the move to pause UNRWA funding and said it would lead to more suffering for Palestinians.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry also urged countries that had paused funding to reconsider their move.

UNRWA's role has long been criticised by Israel which alleges it has supported Hamas for years - an allegation the agency denies. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas accused Israel of leading an oppressive campaign against the agency. "The campaign aims to liquidate the issue of Palestinian refugees..." he said in a statement.

'Russia's drones, missiles target Ukraine's critical infrastructure'

KYIV (Reuters): Russia launched drone and missile attacks targeting civilian and critical infrastructure across wide areas of Ukraine, Kyiv's Air Force said on Sunday. Preliminary information did not show any casualties in the attacks, the air force said on the Telegram messaging app.

Russia and Ukraine have increased their air attacks on each other's territory in recent months, targeting critical military, energy and transport infrastructure. The air force said Russia attacked the central Poltava region with two ballistic missiles fired from the Iskander ballistic missile system, and three surface-to-air missiles over the Donetsk region in the east. Filip Pronin, governor of Poltava region, wrote on Telegram that the attack struck an industrial site in the city of Kremenchuk, sparking a fire.

Ashrafi urges global condemnation of Israeli atrocities

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative on Religious Affairs and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Muslim Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Ashrafi on Sunday emphasized that Israeli atrocities condemnation was a fundamental duty for every individual.

Addressing both national and international media, he lamented the global failure to halt the Israeli aggression against the oppressed Palestinians.

As the chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council, Ashrafi underscored Pakistan's commitment to fostering strong relations with all Islamic nations, including Iran. He highlighted Pakistan's avoidance of escalating tensions

in the region, attributing it to the patience and diplomacy of Pakistan's political and military leadership.

He emphasized that terrorists posed a common threat to both Pakistan and Iran. With the recent resumption of diplomatic relations between the two nations, the tragic killing of Pakistani workers served as a call for unity in combating terrorism, he added.

Regarding the upcoming elections, Ashrafi clarified that there were no restrictions on women voting. Additionally, he announced that the Pakistan Ulema Council would host a significant press conference concerning the elections in Islamabad on Tuesday.

Highlighting the close ties between Iran and Pakistan as neighboring

and fraternal Islamic nations, he expressed optimism for further enhancement in the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran. Responding to a query, Ashrafi highlighted that the people of Pakistan, predominantly Muslims, held their national identity with pride, anchored in their diverse religious schools of thought.

He further emphasized that the prevailing issues in Pakistan necessitated solidarity across all segments of society. With unity and tolerance, Pakistan had the capacity to surmount all challenges and adversities.

Addressing another question, Ashrafi credited Pakistan's military, political leadership, and security institutions for steering the region away from dire situations and crises.

Muslims targeted in India amid rising religious intolerance

ISLAMABAD (APP): India is facing a troubling increase in hatred and violence directed towards religious minorities, notably Muslims, Christians and Dalits. This has raised significant concerns regarding religious tolerance and communal harmony in the country.

The recent events across different regions of India, as reported by the Kashmir Media Service on Sunday, underscore the pressing need to address this issue.

The escalating situation is challenging India's self-proclaimed secular and democratic identity, causing deep concern among peace-loving and law-abiding citizens, especially after the BJP government ideologically named it Bharat with a focus on Hindutva principles.

A noticeable increase in hate attacks on Muslims has been seen in the run up to and post inauguration of the disputed Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22. In several cases, Muslims have found themselves to be

at the receiving end as the state machinery either connived with the mobs or looked the other way at the violence. A Muslim teenager was assaulted and paraded naked by a mob chanting Hindutva religious slogan for "disrespecting" a Hindutva saffron flag in Sangareddy district of Telangana state in India.

The Hindutva mobs include RSS, BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal put fire on the 19-year-old Muslim victim's private part and put out its video on various social media platforms.

The terror Hindutva mob's ghastly act occurred as Narendra Modi was inaugurating the temple built on the ruins of the Babri Masjid.

In Mumbai city, the Hindutva mobs ransacked shops, damaged vehicles of Muslims and assaulted several people, days after violence broke out in the city's Mira Road suburb on the eve of the disputed Ram temple inauguration.

Clashes erupted between Muslims and Hindutva groups after the latter

insisted that their procession be allowed to pass through a Muslim neighbourhood despite police objections. Several Muslims were injured during the clashes and Muslim individuals were arrested. The Hindutva authorities' bulldozed Muslim shops in Muslim-dominated area of Mira Road's Naya Nagar of Mumbai city.

Earlier, a Muslim shop manager faced harassment by a group of Hindutvas over a poster of Hindu deity Ram at a store in Dehradun, Uttarakhand state. The police have initiated legal action following the incident wherein a mob objected to the poster of the Hindu deity at Aman General Store, owned by Rakesh Borai, and misbehaved with the Muslim manager. The Hindutva mob hurled communal slurs and also attacked two Muslim employees, Mohammad Ayub Khan and Girish. In Lucknow, a catering contractor, Pradeep Kumar Gupta, filed a police complaint against one of his customers, Madan Lal Vajpayee.

Thousands of Sikhs in San Francisco set to take part in vote for Khalistan

NEW YORK (APP): Thousands of Sikhs residents in the US state of California are set to vote in San Francisco Sunday on a referendum that is aimed at creating an independent state in Indian Punjab called Khalistan, according to organizers.

Known as "The Khalistan Referendum," the vote also calls attention to persecution of Sikhs in India. The Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), an advocacy organization, has been mobilizing Sikhs in the area to make the trip in large numbers to cast their votes.

The goal of the vote is to determine how much support the movement has before bringing the matter to the United Nations.

In California, supporters of the movement have placed hoardings along highways, adorned their cars in stickers, and left pamphlets outlining the cause at various Indian shops. Voting for the Khalistan referendum has been taking place since 2021 in countries like Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom.

The organizers hope to

hold an official referendum vote in India in 2025.

In a statement issued Saturday evening, the Punjab Referendum Commission (PRC) said, "We believe strongly in the right to self-determination, and accordingly, we encourage all government bodies to allow their citizens to exercise this right through referendums that follow internationally recognized standards and protocols."

The commission expressed the hope that the Indian government will allow for voter education efforts to begin on the referendum and stand ready to meet and agree to the rules to be followed for these efforts.

Meanwhile, the commission announced at a press conference in San Francisco on Saturday the "voter eligibility" for people living in Indian Punjab.

"Indigenous Punjabis of any faith living in Indian Governed Punjab are eligible to register and vote in Khalistan Referendum," the announcement said.

"The eligibility criteria

for voters from Indian Governed Punjab is markedly different from the voters outside Punjab," according to the announcement.

"While outside Punjab only Sikhs are eligible to vote, in Indian Punjab, people of all faith are entitled to vote on the question: 'Should Indian Governed Punjab Be An Independent Country?'"

Addressing the Press Conference, Professor Matt Qvortrup, a well known referendum expert and member of PRC, said, "If India is a true democracy as it claims, it must allow voter registration and polling in Khalistan Referendum to be held in Punjab."

Dr Bakhshish Singh Sandhu, President of the Council of Khalistan pointed out that under India's rule, Punjab and its people have been suffering from genocide, econocide and drug epidemic. The Khalistan Referendum, he said, was the opportunity for the Punjabi people to express their will on the question of 'Punjab's sovereignty and prosperity'.



ISLAMABAD : Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi press conference along with relevant authorities including the Head of JIT constituted to investigate the "malicious campaign" against the top judiciary on social media.