

Nine more die of pneumonia

LAHORE (INP): Fatal pneumonia has claimed the lives of nine more children in Punjab, reported. One child died of pneumonia in Lahore. As many as 773 new cases of pneumonia have been reported in Punjab while 197 new cases were reported in Lahore during one day. Not less than 362 deaths and 26711 cases of pneumonia were reported in Punjab this year while 62 deaths and 5719 cases of pneumonia were reported in Lahore this year.

@thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 25

Regd. No. 241

SHABAAN 05 1445 -- FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

# PTI and JUI-F term Feb 8 polls ‘rigged’

## Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf delegation visits Fazlur Rehman residence

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PTI and JUI-F on Thursday agreed on single point that the February 8 general elections were "not free and fair".

Speaking to the media in a joint

press conference, JUI-F's Hafiz Hamdullah stressed that both parties agree that the February 8 polls were not transparent and were marred with rigging and irregularities. JUI-F leader Hafiz Hamdullah has said the party welcomed a delegation of the PTI led by Asad Qaiser for talks.

He said party chief Fazlur Rehman declared the meeting "positive" in the current circumstances. "Basically it was discussed that the case brought by the PTI on what happened in February 8 elections, was also a case from before of the JUI." He said Rehman had already announced that the party rejected the

conduct of the elections. "PTI has announced that we will do a country-wide protest on Saturday and this process will continue because the JUI has also expressed doubts about the elections and their results and rejected them. "We have a joint point on which we are united," he said. Saif said the parties would struggle, talk and continue their movement and protests together till the people received their rights.

Meanwhile, stating that both parties have rejected the election results, PTI's Barrister Saif said that the party would move forward while remaining in contact with other political parties who deem the polls unfair. Sources said that PTI's delegation offered JUI-F an option to join the party in its protests against alleged rigging in polls and Opposition in the parliament, in a meeting with Maulana Fazlur Rehman. The two sides discussed matters related to government formation, while PTI also sought JUI-F's support for its candidate for PM's slot.

### Shehbaz set for PM slot

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Shehbaz Sharif is set to begin a second term as Pakistan's prime minister in the coming days, returning to the role he had until August when parliament was dissolved ahead of last week's elections.

Shehbaz, 72, was named by his party and coalition allies to head the nuclear-armed nation despite his elder brother and three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif winning a seat in the assembly and being favourite to be sworn in for a fourth term. Nawaz Sharif's daughter Maryam said in a post on X that her father did not want to run a minority coalition government having had clear majorities in his three previous stints as premier.

Their Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party controls only 80 seats in the 336-seat National Assembly but has been promised support by six other parties for a majority. The younger Sharif played a key role in keeping together a coalition of disparate parties for 16 months after parliament voted former premier and rival Imran Khan out of office in 2022, and in securing a last-gasp International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal in 2023.

Before his stint as prime minister, the younger Sharif was known more as a good administrator than a politician, having served as chief minister thrice in the country's largest province, Punjab. But as prime minister, he quickly took on the role of peacemaker between coalition parties often at odds with one another over key policies.

Shehbaz Sharif's biggest achievement in his short tenure was clinching a bailout from the IMF with Pakistan on the brink of a debt default. The deal was signed after he personally called on IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva last June. However, under his government, inflation touched a high of 38% with record depreciation of the rupee currency - mainly due to structural reforms necessitated by the IMF programme to stabilise the economy.

He blames the economic meltdown on Khan's government, which he says broke an agreement with IMF just before he was ousted. Shehbaz said his government had to introduce a slew of reforms and scrap subsidies, causing inflation to surge. Pakistan continues to be enmeshed in the economic crisis with inflation remaining high, hovering around 30%, and economic growth slowing to around 2%.

Shehbaz will need to emulate his feat of securing a short-term IMF bailout with the current programme expiring next month and a new extended deal needed to keep Pakistan on a narrow path to recovery.

## Fazl: Imran was ousted on Gen Bajwa's directives

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Emir Maulana Fazlur Rehman said Thursday that the no-confidence motion that ousted former prime minister Imran Khan was tabled on the directives of ex-army chief General (retired) Qamar Javed Bajwa.

In an interview on a private news channel, Fazl, who was the chief of the multi-party alliance Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) responsible for removing Khan, said: "I was personally against the no-confidence move [...] but if I had said no despite insistence of other parties, then an impression would've been given that I 'saved' the PTI founder."

The PDM removed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government in April 2022 and led by Shehbaz Sharif, the multi-party alliance ruled the country for 16 months before handing over the reins to the caretaker set-up. Fazl, during the interview, said: "While the Pakistan

Peoples Party (PPP) was running the movement for a no-confidence motion, Lt Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hamid told me that I could do whatever I wanted, but within the system."

The JUI-F chief said Hamid told him that he could not "do anything outside the system" — meaning that every move should be made inside the parliament, not on the streets. "But I rejected his directions," he said, but noted that later on, the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), and others left the PTI-led government.

"When they said that [the anti-PTI] is now in majority, I had to agree with them otherwise it would've been said that I helped save Imran Khan," the JUI-F chief, who has rejected February 8 election results, said. The February 8 did not return a clear majority for anyone, but independent candidates backed by Khan won 92 out of 264 seats, making them the largest group, followed by PML-N (79) and the PPP (54).

However, every party, even the PML-N which is seemingly about to form the next government, is unhappy with the election results. For his party, Fazl has decided to join the parliament, but not become part of the government. "The decisions will not be made in the parliament anymore, they will be made on the streets."

He noted that apparently, "rigging in elections" benefited the PML-N and there's a rumour that Nawaz was not winning the Lahore seat. Fazl said that PML-N's prime minister candidate Shehbaz had paid him a visit to speak about government formation, but he rejected the idea and instead called on the Nawaz-led party to join him in the opposition. "But Shehbaz left without responding to my offer [...] for me, the parliament has lost its credibility. If the establishment this that the elections were fair, then the May 9 narrative has been buried." — Monitoring Desk

## Steps taken under SIFC yielding positive results

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday said the measures taken under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIF) were yielding the positive results as the caretaker government made all-out efforts to revive the national economy.

"The caretaker government took steps to create a conducive environment for business, facilitate the role of the private sector in the country's development and increase tax revenue," he said while talking to a delegation of Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers (PALSP) and industrialists of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, led by Senator Nauman Wazir, at the Prime Minister Office.

State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmed, Federal Bureau of Revenue Chairman and secretaries of the ministries concerned were also present in the meeting, a PM Office news release said. Through its policies, the PM said, the government was facilitating the private sector to increase exports and employment opportunities.

He hoped that the next elected government would continue the journey of providing employment opportunities to the people, and overall economic progress by further increasing industrial development and investment in the country with the continuation of policies. PM

### Cabinet approves Tariq's appointment as PBM MD

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet on Thursday approved the appointment of Syed Tariq Muhammad ul Hassan as Managing Director of Pakistan Baitul Maal (PBM). The decision was taken on the recommendation of Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Security, according to a press release issued by the Prime Minister House Media Wing.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar presided over the cabinet meeting. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Commerce, the cabinet approved the transit/transfer of vehicle spare parts and new tires used by the Country Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Afghanistan from Karachi Port to Kabul. It was informed that such imports and their transfer to Afghanistan were prohibited to prevent smuggling in the country, however, the said spare parts and tires would be used by the United Nations and were not for commercial use. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Defence Production, the cabinet also approved the redeployment of Grade-20 officer Khan Nawaz of the Secretariat Group as Member Finance in the Heavy Industry Taxila.

Kakar commended the efforts of the caretaker finance minister, FBR chairman and all the concerned for reforms in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for the prudent economic policies.

He also appreciated the business community and investors for extending support in difficult times, saying it were the industrialists who had restored investors' confidence in the government and played their role in the development of national economy. Referring to the FBR reforms and the SIFC's establishment, PM Kakar said it was the best time to invest in diverse fields. The

companies associated with the steel industry should prioritize investment for the development of new iron ore deposits in the country.

In the meeting, the participants paid tribute to the caretaker government for its efforts for facilitating investment in the country, resolving the problems of industrialists, reforming the FBR and taking measures to restore the economy. The meeting was informed in detail about the large scale industry of steel and copper in Pakistan, the fourth largest export sector, of which copper exports volume alone was \$1.35 billion in the last financial year.



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

### Petrol price jacked up by Rs2.73 per litre

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The outgoing caretaker government has jacked up the petrol price by Rs2.73 per litre to Rs275.62 per litre for the next fortnight.

As per the notification issued by the Finance Division, the price for high-speed diesel has also been increased by Rs8.37 per litre to Rs287.33 per litre.

The new prices, as recommended by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) have taken effect from this midnight (February 16) and will remain in place till February 29.

### Arrest warrant issued for Gandapur

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Election Commission has issued arrest warrant for Ali Amin Gandapur the PTI leader who is now nominated for the coveted slot of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister and directed the official concerned to present him for the boy on Feb 28.

It is a case related to violating the code of conduct defined for the AJK Legislative Assembly held in July 2021 after a complaint was filed over the issue. The AJK Election Commission, in this connection, has sent a letter to the Dera Ismail Khan deputy commissioner, directing to present the accused on the next hearing. Gandapur was a federal cabinet member in the PTI government back then and held the portfolio of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan minister. That's why he was assigned the task of running the election campaign in the state. But his presence and some alleged actions meant to influence the electorate triggered a controversy, forcing the AJK Election Commission to order him leave the state.

During the election campaign, a video also went viral in which the security guards of Gandapur could be seen resorting to aerial firing. However, Gandapur and other PTI leaders had accused the PML-N supporters of attacking the convoy and described the aerial firing as an act of self-defence.

### Court extends bail granted to PTI founder

F.P. Report

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore on Thursday extended the interim bail granted to former prime minister and ex-PTI chairman Imran Khan in four, out of seven cases, until February 19, 2024.

ATC Judge Arshad Javed heard the bail petitions filed by the former prime minister in the cases of PML-N office burning, burning of a container at Lahore's Kalima Chowk, Zille Shah murder, and Zaman Park vandalism, and arson in court no 3, while Admin Judge Muhammad Naveed Iqbal heard the petitions filed in the cases of Jinnah House attack, Askari Tower attack, and torching of Shadman police station.

## PTI announces protests on 17th

— picks Omar Ayub as PTI's candidate for PM, Mian Aslam Iqbal as Punjab CM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Thursday announced staging "peaceful protests" across the country after rebutting reports of forming an alliance with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the Centre and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-Parliamentarians (PTI-P) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The announcements came after sources-based reports of PTI founder Imran Khan softening his stance against political rivals and consenting to hold talks with the PPP and the party's breakout faction led by Parvez Khattak. Party sources told media that Khan, who remains incarcerated at Adiala jail, is "ready" to talk to the PPP, which has already announced supporting Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's candidature for prime minister — Shehbaz Sharif.

However, PTI leader Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif denied the reports of contacting PPP for government formation. Speaking to journalists, the lawyer said that the PTI founder had "strictly" advised against holding talks with PPP and PML-N. "Reports of [PTI] forming government with PPP are misleading. The PTI founder said to sit in opposition but not to forge alliance with PPP and PML-N," he added.

Later, while talking to journalists after meeting with Khan in Rawalpindi, Barrister Gohar Khan and Sher Afzal Marwat also ruled out a coalition with the Bilawal-led party. "We informed Khan sahib about PPP's messages. In response, Khan sahib flatly rejected the idea of power-sharing with either the PPP or the PML-N," Marwat told journalists.

Moreover, Gohar categorically rejected media reports claiming a proposed political alliance between PTI and PTI-P in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "We will not be joining hands with the PTI-P." The PTI leader also invited those political parties who believe that the recent elections were rigged — including Jamaat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), and others — to join them in their protest on Saturday.

As Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the party having second largest majority in the National Assembly, allies with other political parties including PPP to form a coalition government in the Centre, PTI claimed that it had sufficient

numbers in the parliament to elect its prime minister. In a recent development, the party also nominated its general secretary Omar Ayub as its candidate for the post of the country's prime minister.

Meanwhile, Khan also nominated Mian Aslam as the PTI's nominee for Punjab chief minister and Salar Khan for Balochistan's top office. Reiterating the claims of winning the most National Assembly seats in the 2024 polls, the Imran-founded party said it has secured 180 NA seats.

"We have secured 180 seats," former PTI chairman Gohar said, adding that his party would only accept the results compiled in line with the Form 45s. In light of the leader's revelation about asking the political parties to join PTI's protests, sources said that Gohar would lead a delegation to a meeting with JUI-F supreme Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

It may be noted that two days ago, PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari expressed willingness to hold talks with PTI to promote the reconciliation process in the country. "We wanted that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf should also have been included in the reconciliation process as we want not only the PTI to be part of this process of reconciliation but every political power to be part of the process of reconciliation. "We want to go together with economic, defence agenda and other similar things and make Mian sahib and other friends successful so that we can make Pakistan and its people successful," he had announced at a joint press of six-party alliance on Tuesday. The sources told media about a decision taken by Khan to form a committee for negotiations with political parties under Asad Qaiser's leadership.

According to the sources, the PTI founder told Qaiser that all decisions would be taken in consultation with the political leadership and that they should prepare for government formation. Khan was also consulted about an alliance with a new political party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the task of which has also been given to Qaiser, the sources added. The political committee will make decisions regarding negotiations with political parties, the party sources said, adding that the PTI founder is ready to discuss serious issues with them.

## Election process internal sovereign affair: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office says Pakistan's election process is an internal sovereign affair, emphasizing the nation's commitment to upholding its constitutional obligations.

Responding to the queries of media persons at her weekly news briefing in Islamabad today about the reaction of different countries on the general elections, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch emphasized Pakistan's democratic nature, highlighting the significant participation of millions of voters, including unprecedented numbers of women and young voters in the general elections.

She mentioned that Pakistan welcomed foreign observers, including a group from the Commonwealth, demonstrating the country's commitment to transparency in the electoral process. She said Pakistan takes its constitutional obligations seriously. It is the right of Pakistanis to enjoy freedoms and democracy. She said any step that Pakistan takes in this regard is in conformity with its own constitutional obligations and not influenced by external advice.

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch pointed out that the interim report of Commonwealth observer group also highlighted the transparency and

participatory nature of the general elections. When asked about the budget announced by the Indian government for illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the spokesperson said pouring in money in the occupied territory can neither absolve the occupying power from its responsibilities nor can it legitimize its illegal occupation. She said Jammu and Kashmir is one of the oldest unresolved disputes. It has been on the agenda of the UN Security Council since 1948. She said the UN Security Council resolutions reaffirm the right of self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Voicing concerns over the presence of one million Indian security forces in IIOJK, she said these forces are responsible for suppression of Kashmiri people. She called for a solution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute on the basis of UNSC resolutions.

When asked about relationship with India, the spokesperson said both the countries have had a difficult relationship over the last several decades. She said Pakistan has always expressed desire to have peaceful relations with all neighbors including India. She however regretted that India has an approach of belligerence towards Pakistan

ECP dismisses Nawaz's plea

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan on Thursday binned the plea of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supremo Nawaz Sharif against his defeat in NA-15 Mansehra. According to unofficial and unconfirmed results from all polling stations in the constituency, PTI-backed independent candidate Shahzada Gustasap Khan won the seat with 105,249 votes, while Nawaz Sharif remained second with 80,382 votes.



## Tribute to Mirza Ghalib on 155th death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Today marks the solemn occasion of the 155th death anniversary of the illustrious Urdu poet, Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib. Ghalib wrote hundreds of Ghazals during his life which have since been interpreted and sung in many different ways. Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib is considered one of the most popular and influential poets of the Urdu language. His timeless poetry continues to inspire, enlighten, and evoke profound emotions, making him a revered figure in literary circles worldwide. Though Mirza Ghalib departed from this world on this day in 1869, his legacy remains vibrant and enduring. His words continue to echo through the corridors of time, touching the hearts and souls of countless admirers in India, Pakistan, and beyond.

## Keamari police thwarts diesel smuggling

KARACHI (APP): The Mochko police station of Keamari district thwarted an attempt to smuggle Iranian diesel worth millions of rupees. SSP Kemari, Arif Aslam Rao, told the media that a specially designed trawler used for diesel smuggling was apprehended at the Mochko checkpoint. Upon inspection, police discovered 7,000 liters of Iranian diesel concealed within secret compartments of the trawler. One suspect, identified as Sahib Shah, was arrested in connection with the smuggling. Both the diesel and vehicle were taken into police custody, with further legal actions being pursued by the police.

## PITB conducts workshop on 'The Art of Time Management'

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Information Technology Board's (PITB) BizLinks team conducted a workshop on 'The Art of Time Management' to equip participants with invaluable techniques for effective time utilisation. The interactive session, led by PITB Director Muhammad Jahanzeb Akbar, aimed to enhance productivity and streamline work processes through strategic time management practices. The workshop drew active participation from a diverse group of employees representing various teams within PITB. Participants engaged in insightful discussions, sharing experiences and learning practical approaches to optimize their daily tasks and responsibilities. As part of the engaging conclusion, a lively quiz was organised, adding an element of fun to the learning experience. The top 10 winners were acknowledged for their knowledge and rewarded with delectable chocolates, creating an atmosphere of camaraderie and celebration. Director Muhammad Jahanzeb Akbar expressed the significance of effective time management in fostering personal and professional growth, emphasizing its role in achieving organizational objectives.

## FDE teachers seek revamp of promotion & academic structures

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Government College Teachers Association (FGCTA) has urged the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training to revamp the promotion and academic structures of teachers of the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) colleges. The issue of Federal Government Colleges were brought to the forefront during a recent meeting held here Thursday between the representatives of the Federal Government College Teachers Association (FGCTA) and the Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training Mr Waseem Ajmal chaudhary. Dr. Rahima Rehman, the President of FGCTA, raised concerns about the slow promotion structure

## Ombudsman Punjab effective means of providing quick justice: Baligh

LAHORE (INP): Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that the office of Ombudsman Punjab was an easy and effective means of providing cheap and quick justice to the people. He was talking to Ombudsman Punjab, Major (Rtd) Azam Suleman who called on him Governor House Lahore on Thursday. During the meeting, the Ombudsman Punjab informed the Governor about various steps taken to provide speedy justice to the petitioners. Muhammad Balighur Rehman appreciated the Ombudsman Punjab and his team for the good work. He said that the office of Ombudsman Punjab was playing an important role in the improvement of the

system by providing justice to the people. He lauded the Ombudsman Punjab office for redressing the grievance of the complaints in a short period of time. The Governor Punjab further said that initiatives such as digitization of the Ombudsman Punjab office and mobile app for resolving the problems of overseas Pakistanis are commendable. Speaking on the occasion, Ombudsman Punjab Major (ret'd) Azam Sulaiman said that research and development wing has been established in the office of the Ombudsman. He said that the ombudsman Punjab received a record number of 35,139 applications in the last year and all of them were disposed of.

## 397 power pilferers detected in LESCO region during 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) detected a total of 397 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts -- Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara, on the 156th day of anti-power theft campaign. A LESCO spokesman told the media on Thursday that the company had also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 143 FIRs had been registered in respective police stations. The 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 156th 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 10 were commercial, 06 agricultural and 381 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 319,016 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 9,902 million. Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he explained that LESCO charged Rs 800,000 detection bill to an electricity pilferer in Ganda Singh Wala area; Rs 240,000 detection bills to another power pilferer in Khudiyana area, Rs 170,000 fine in the form of detection bills to customer stealing electricity in area of Kot Haleem Khan; and Rs 160,000 detection bill to a power thief in Shahdara Town. During the 156 days of grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned, the LESCO detected pilferage on 53,683 power connections and 49,507 FIRs have been registered against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations, while 17,562 accused have so far been arrested by the police. The LESCO has so far charged a total of

73,402,346 detection units worth Rs 2,819,411,120 to all the power pilferers. LESCO collects over Rs 105m from 2,070 defaulters: The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO), in collaboration with Tehsildars (Recovery), has recovered more than Rs 105 million from 2,070 chronic defaulters in its five districts - Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara - on the 151st day of its recovery campaign. A LESCO spokesman told the media here on Thursday that on the 151st day, Chief Engineer O&M (T&G) Zafar Iqbal with the support of Tehsildar City Mujahid Zia and Tehsildar Shalimar Noreez Humayun recovered outstanding dues of Rs 21.40 million from 241 defaulters in Northern Circle and Rs 21.07 million from 126 defaulters in Eastern Circle respectively. Similarly, LESCO Manager (Material Disposal) Engineer Anwar Watto along with Tehsildar Model Town Rana Arsal and Tehsildar Cant. Sajjad Qureshi recovered Rs 16.30 million from 259 defaulters in Central Circle, and Rs 7.54 million from 151 defaulters in South Circle; while Manager (Technical) Engineer Muhammad Farooq with the assistance of Tehsildar Nankana Sahib Muhammad Iqbal Rasheed and Tehsildar Sheikhupura Muhammad Aslam Gujjar recovered Rs 0.35 million from 13 defaulters in Nankana Circle and Rs 3.75 million from 63 defaulters in Sheikhupura Circle. He added that LESCO Manager E&S (PMU) Engineer Abbas Ali in collaboration with Naib Tehsildar Kasur and Okara Mirza Zahid Baig recovered outstanding dues of Rs 15.97 million from 523 defaulters in Okara Circle and Rs 19.18 million from 694 defaulters in Kasur Circle. Up till now during the recovery campaign, the LESCO with the help of Tehsildars (Recovery) recovered more than Rs 2.44 billion from 81,437 dead defaulters in its all circles of operation. He elaborated that LESCO recovered outstanding dues of Rs 350.01 million from 11,461 defaulters in Northern Circle; Rs 577.38 million from 10,437 defaulters in Eastern Circle; Rs 330.65 million from 9,268 defaulters in Central Circle; Rs 136.67 million from 4,776 defaulters in South Circle.

## Steps being taken for financial stability of KDA: DG KDA

KARACHI (APP): All possible measures are being taken to bring Karachi Development Authority (KDA), on the track of economic stability on a permanent basis. These views were expressed by Director General KDA Naveed Anwar while reviewing the renovation and ongoing development works of Civic Center Building. On this occasion, DG KDA Naveed Anwar issued orders to Chief Engineer

Tariq Rafi to repair the sewage system, lights, and washrooms in the building, construct the footpath around the building and ensure completion of these works within one month. The Chief Engineer KDA while briefing DG KDA said that one Assistant Executive Engineer and two Sub Engineers have been posted on every three floors while Executive Engineer Building and Executive Engineer Mechanical Civil

are responsible cleaning and maintenance, who will submit progress report of maintenance and ongoing development works on daily basis.

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN  
PAKISTAN BAIT-UL-MAL  
(An ISO 9001:2015 Certified Public Sector Organization)  
(MINISTRY OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION & SOCIAL SAFETY)

TENDER NOTICE

Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM), invites e-bids separately Technical and Financial from well reputed Manufacturers, firms and General Order Suppliers, registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Department, for Procurement of Uniform Items (Both for Winter and Summer Seasons), School Shoes and School Bags etc. for Students of twenty four (24) PBM Schools for Rehabilitation of Child Labour (SRCL) located at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

2. Standard Procurement Documents/ advertisement, containing detail of items, specification and other terms and conditions are available at the website of PBM [www.pbm.gov.pk](http://www.pbm.gov.pk) as well as PPRA [www.ppra.gov.pk](http://www.ppra.gov.pk).

3. E-Bids prepared in accordance with PPRA rules and instructions given in the Standard Procurement Documents, shall be submitted at E-Pak Acquisition & Disposal System ([www.eprocure.gov.pk](http://www.eprocure.gov.pk)), on or before 07-03-2024 till 11:00AM accompanied by a call deposit receipt / pay order/ Bank draft of Rs.400,000/- as earnest money (refundable/ interest free) in favour of Director, PBM Provincial Office, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar for each application. Original Pay order/ CDR must be forwarded to Provincial Office on or before 07-03-2024.

4. Technical bids will be opened on the same day at 11:30AM in Pakistan Bait ul Mal, Provincial Office, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the presence of bidders or their representatives. The firm/ supplier must bring samples of the Uniform items at the time of opening of Technical Bids. Whereas, Financial Bids of technically qualified firms/suppliers, will be opened on 14-03-2024 at 11:30AM.

5. Successful firm (s)/bidder (s) will be bound to supply goods on approved rates for one year from the issuance of first supply order at designated places. The uniform terms will be inspected at the Godown of the supplier(s)/ vendor(s) prior to issuance of items to the Schools.

6. PBM reserves the right to reject any/all bids at any time in accordance with PPRA's Rules.

PID(P) 044/24

(Director)

**Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Provincial Office  
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**  
University Road, Near KFC, behind Shell Petroleum,  
Peshawar (Ph# 091-9218021)



NOWSHERA: The Pakistan China Friendship Association (PCFA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zone Development & Management Company (KPEZDMC)celebrate Chinese Spring Festival 2024 at Rashakai Special Economic Zone (RSEZ).

## Private Hajj bookings set to commence on Friday: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Affairs and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Islamic Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Thursday announced that the private Hajj organizers would start booking for the Hajj 2024 from Friday, February 16, nationwide. Addressing a press conference along with Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Chairman Jamal Khan Tarakai, Vice Chairman Haji Sanaullah and other representative, said the intending pilgrims within the country and abroad could grab this sacred opportunity till February 25. Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council expressed optimism about the possibility of extending the application submission deadline by a month through private Hajj organizers' platform. He revealed that Hajj quota allocated to the private Hajj organizers was 89,604 pilgrims, with fifty percent quota of 44,802 pilgrims is reserved for Sponsorship Hajj Scheme. Ashrafi urged the government to provide all possible assistance to the intending Pakistani overseas pilgrims

for smoothly remitting their funds in the local financial institutions. He proposed that it would be far better if they could be allowed to send their money into the private Hajj organizers' accounts in Saudi Arabia through International Bank Accounts Numbers (IBAN). Ashrafi informed that the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony had established a dedicated helpline in collaboration with HOAP for further convenience of the pilgrims. He expressed gratitude to the government of Pakistan and as well as Saudi Arabia for making state-of-the-art arrangements for the intending pilgrims in advance. He said HOAP had ensured to provide maximum ease and comfort to the pilgrims and furthermore, it had devised a self-accountability mechanism within the private Hajj organizers to address pilgrims' grievances immediately and penalize the particular Hajj organizers for bad conduct with the affected pilgrims. Concluding his remarks, Ashrafi said, "Hajj is a religious obligation that every capable person must fulfill once in life." Meanwhile, HOAP Chairman Jamal Khan Tarakai announced that under the leadership of Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, a consolidated training programme was being initiated for pilgrims across the country. He said this comprehensive programme would help intending pilgrims to perform their religious rites in a more comfortable environment in the Kingdom. To save themselves from any fraud, he asked the intending pilgrims to book their spiritual journey through registered Hajj organizers mentioning that their complete list was available on the official website of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. HOAP Vice Chairman Haji Sanaullah said the private Hajj organizers were providing a big facility to Pakistan overseas pilgrims that they could directly travel to Saudi Arabia from their resident countries to perform this sacred obligation.

## Sindh Police chief visits KATI

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh, Riffat Mukhtar Raja on Thursday paid a visit to the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), accompanied by Additional IGP Karachi, AIGP Admin, SSP Korangi, and other police officials. Upon arrival, Deputy Pattern-in-Chief of KATI, Zubair Chhaya, along with President Syed Johar Ali and other office bearers, warmly welcomed the IGP Sindh, said a news release. During the visit, KATI office bearers provided a comprehensive briefing on neighbourhood care/communitary policing and security measures in place at KATI. The IGP Sindh examined proposals to establish Korangi Industrial Area as a model zone for community policing and issued further directives accordingly. He announced the allocation of an additional 200 police personnel to enhance security at KATI, underscoring the importance of leveraging technology for robust security measures. Highlighting the significance of technology in modern security frameworks, he advocated for the establishment of a digital data center for Korangi industries to manage employee records securely.

RE-TENDER NOTICE

- Sealed bids on the basis of "Items Rate System" are hereby invited from the contractors / firms already registered with this office for project "Installation of 60 x Water Supply Scheme in the Tribal Districts, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber & Orakzai for a total estimated cost of Rs.226.250 million.
- Tender form & complete set of bidding documents can be collected from the date of appearance of the advertisement in the press from the office of undersign on production of call deposit (original) & Tender form fee till **04 March 2024**.
- The bidding shall be carried out on the basis of "item rate system", wherein the bidders are required to Quote in % on project cost in the BOQ.
- The bids shall be accompanied with the earnest money/Bid security @ 2% of bid cost including stamp duty in favour of the IGFC KP (North) in shape of call deposit from any scheduled bank of Pakistan.
- As per provincial Govt. notification no. SO (FR)/FD/9-7/2011/VOL-1-11 Dated 05-11-2014, in case of quoting bid upto 10% below on the engineer estimate, the bidder will furnish an additional security with the bid, in shape of call deposit/bank guarantee. Further, in lieu of bank guarantee/call deposit, an equivalent insurance coverage of a company having at least AA rating from PACRAMR shall also be acceptable from contractors/bidders, subject to verification by the scheduled bank, whereas bank guarantees will be obtained from the contractors/bidders quoting more than 10% below on engineer estimate. These guarantees will be discharged on expiry of the defect liability period of the contract.
- The bids must reach to the office of the undersigned up to **04 March 2024** on 1200 hrs through registered courier services. Wherein the bids will be opened on the same day at 1400hrs in the presence of bidders / their representatives, who may like to attend, in the office of the IGFC KP (North), Works Branch HQ Frontier Corps KP Peshawar. The late bids received will not be entertained.
- Bids will be valid for 90 days from the date of acceptance of tender by the competent authority.
- Any item not reflected in the bill of quantities (BOQ) and required at the site, shall be paid in accordance with MRS rates Current Market Rate, subject to prior approval.
- Incomplete/disfiguring/over-writing/by-hand/delayed bids will be considered non-responsive.
- In case of equal bids 1st, 2nd and 3rd etc, the lowest bidder would be decided through toss/ draw by the undersigned.
- The procuring entity may reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposals. The procurement entity shall upon request communicate to any contractor who submitted a bid or proposal, the ground for rejection of all bids or proposals as per PPRA.
- The bidders are liberty to seek any clarification or further information from the office of undersigned, if desire on any working day during office hours.

Lieutenant Colonel  
GSO-I (Works)  
For Inspector General Frontier Corps KP (North)



# PHC orders PTI's leadership to approach ROs

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership to approach concerned Returning Officers (ROs) for redressal of their grievances and appellate authority by disposal of writ pleas against alteration in election result, on Thursday.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered ROs to hear grievances of the petitioners if results didn't concluded otherwise applicant may knock the competent forum for redressal.

Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah, Shumail Ahmad Butt and Inam Yousafzai advocates appeared on behalf of PTI's leaders defeated in the general while Qazi

Jawad Ihsanullah, Barrister Mudassar Emir and Ysin Raza advocates on behalf victorious candidates.

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was represented by Mohsin Kamran Sadiq advocate before PHC in writ pleas against alteration in results at different constituencies of Peshawar, Bannu, Kohat and other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

PTI's lawyer Shumail Ahmad Butt informed that ECP didn't submitted reply despite PHC's orders. However, ECP's lawyer Mohsin Kamran argued that the commission had submitted reply in Arbab Jahan Dad plea. The petitioner's counsel contended that it is reply in only one writ.

PTI's lawyers informed that ROs had called them

after court's proceedings and argued that Form49 doesn't issued as well as added that same pleas are fixed for today (Thursday) and Tomorrow (Friday) hearings.

They added that ECP to ensure issuance of gazette notification of successful candidates in general elections.

In the meantime, ECP's lawyer Mohsin Kamran Sadiq informed that gazette notifications of some constituencies also issued already.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Waqar Ahmad dispose-off writ pleas of PTI's leadership regarding alteration in election results and ordered them to approach concerned ROs for redressal of their grievances.

## NACTA team, DG Info discuss media role in peace

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-member delegation from National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) on Thursday met with Director General Information and Public Relations here at his office and discussed matters relating to the role of Information Dept in promotion of peace in the province.

The role of media, especially the Radio in providing intimate and accurate information to the general public was also discussed in detail.

DG Information KP, Muhammad Imran said the media has played a pivotal and responsible role in maintaining lasting peace in the province. To further improve its capacity and sphere, the Information Dept has established FM radios in the far-flung areas of the newly merged districts from where transmission in local and Pashto languages was continued.

He said the role of people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in promoting national harmony and cohesion was of the prime importance adding that the Info Dept was endeavoring to render its services in a best possible manner in this connection. He said ten radio stations of the department were proving credible information to the public besides informing them regarding their responsibilities.

The NACTA delegation while commending the role of Information and Public Relations Department in the province hoped that these endeavors will definitely yield encouraging results.

## KP to become Tora bora under Gandapur tenure

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) chapter spokesperson Akhtiarwali Khan on Thursday rejected the results of KP and alleged that KP to become Afghanistan's Tora bora with Gandapur as CM.

It is pertinent to note that Tora Bora is linked to the battle of Tora Bora on December 3-17, 2001 wherein a US-led coalition attacked the cave complex of the White Mountains at Tora Bora in Afghanistan.

He alleged that the PTI founder adopted the anti-state agenda by appointing Ali Amin Gandapur as the Chief Minister.

"If Ali Amin Gandapur becomes the CM, a situation similar to Balochistan will arise in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PTI is plotting to make Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Tora-Bora," he alleged. He said PML-N rejected the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa election results.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has nominated Ali Amin Gandapur as the Chief Minister candidate of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Ali Amin Gandapur, a former federal minister and member of the national and provincial assembly elected in the general elections 2024, has now been nominated as the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by his party.

Founder PTI Imran Khan said during an informal conversation with journalists during the hearing of the case in Adiala Jail that

Ali Amin has been nominated for Chief Minister KP and vowed that there will be no talks with PML-N, PPP, and MQM.

Who is Ali Amin Gandapur?

Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur is a prominent Pakistani politician who served as the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan from October 5, 2018, to April 10, 2022.

Before his tenure at the federal level, Gandapur was a member of the Provincial Assembly of KP from 2013 to 2018.

During his time in the provincial assembly, he held the position of Provincial Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Revenue.



PESHAWAR: PTI leader Taimor Jagra speaking during a press conference.

### Working hours in MTI hospitals issued

PESHAWAR (APP): The KP Health Department Thursday issued a declaration of days for working in MTI hospitals after the approval of the Health Advisor Dr. Riaz Anwar.

The days were approved in the light of MTI Policy Board recommendations, the letters says. Working days will be implemented at MTIs Hospitals and its affiliated MTIs Colleges, according to the notification issued in this connection by the health department KP.

IBP days in MTI hospitals will be from Monday to Saturday and working days in affiliated MTI Medical Colleges will be from Monday to Friday.

## Traffic Police fines violaters

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: City Traffic Police Peshawar imposed fines on 11, 850 people last month for using unregistered vehicles and black glasses. On the instructions of Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Zahidullah, CTP Peshawar took action against unregistered vehicles and users of black glasses in different sectors of the city, under which 5850 were fined for using black glasses, for driving unregistered vehicles and motorcycles.

As per the press release of media wing of traffic Hqr, action was taken against 6000 people and black glasses were removed from

vehicles and fines were imposed on violaters.

CTO Dr. Zahidullah has said that the traffic staff will use all their capabilities to ensure the implementation of the rules while strict legal action will be taken against the violaters. He further said that the use of black glasses and driving of unregistered vehicles is prohibited, against which CTP Peshawar is alert and no one will be lenient because the law is the same for everyone and no one is exempted.

He further said that the citizens should cooperate with the traffic staff and prove that they are patriotic Pakistanis by obeying the traffic rules.

## ICS teaching association congrats new principal

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Islamia Collegiate School (ICS) Teaching Association president Kafeel Ahmad congratulated newly appointed Principal Muhammad Sikandar Khan and Senior Teacher Muhammad Hayat Khan as Vice Principal, Thursday.

ICS Teaching Association president Kafeel Ahmad and general secretary Muhammad Shahzad appreciated Vice Chancellor Islamia College University Dr. Gul Majeed Khan for his commitment to redress the school's issues.

ICS Teaching Association hopeful that newly appointed Principal and Vice Principal will utilize their expertise for betterment of the institution. The teaching association will support every effort for welfare and uplift of ICS.

## Teams raided on warehouse

PESHAWAR (APP): Food safety team Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Thursday conducted a surprise raid on a warehouse in Charsadda Bazar and recovered a large batch of 1500 liters of expired various branded drinks and seized the site.

According to details given by the Spokesperson Food Authority, a large batch of 1500 liters of expired various branded drinks was seized from the warehouse and a fine imposed on the owners, further action also initiated.

The public should inform the Food Authority officials about such businesses and provide evidence of responsible citizens, Director General Food Authority Shafiullah Khan told media men soon after the raid. He said Food safety teams are conducting operations across the province against the adulteration mafia.

## Crackdown on drug dealers

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Police crackdown on drug dealers including anti-social elements continued with a total of 880 suspected accused arrested during different operations in the last one month, a spokesman of the Police said here Thursday.

According to details, the official said that Peshawar Police successfully arrested 880 accused during various operations in the last one month.

The arrested suspects were wanted by the Police for illegal weapons and other crimes.

The official also confirmed that during operations they have recovered 92 Kalashnikovs, 1,380 pistols, 32 shotguns, 143 rifles, one hand grenade and 44 cartridges from the arrested suspects and during the last one month, 1, 368 accused involved in drug trafficking were also arrested.

The official disclosed that besides recovering arms and ammunition, 57 kg of ice, 33 kg of heroin, 20 kg of opium, 278 kg of hashish, and 433 bottles of liquor were recovered from the arrested suspects.

## Fire erupted in house

PESHAWAR (APP): A fire suddenly broke out in the house of a person named Faheem Khan in Yousafabad Dir Colony here on Thursday, official of the Rescue 1122 said.

According to the details, given by the officials of the Rescue 1122, he disclosed that the fire erupted due to short-circuit and as soon as the information was received, the fire vehicle of Rescue 1122 was dispatched to the accident site.

Rescue 1122 officials reached the spot and started extinguishing the fire. There was no casualty in the fire, the officials of the Rescue 1122 said during their relief activities. Firefighters professionally confined the fire to one place and completely brought the fire under control within 30 minutes, the officials of the Rescue 1122 said.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Assistant Zafar Ullah Khan Umarzai cutting a ribbon to inaugurate China Window Center in City.

## Anticipated reshuffle of bureaucrats expected

**Syed Adnan**

PESHAWAR: As the dust settles following the conclusion of the elections across the nation and its provinces, all eyes turn to the impending formation of the new government in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. With Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf emerging victorious and securing a majority, speculation mounts regarding the composition of the incoming administration and the anticipated reshuffling of bureaucrats.

Amidst the fervor of political transitions, PTI-backed politicians prepare to usher in a new era, with the party announcing Ali Amin Gandapur as the presumptive Chief Minister. With the Provincial Assembly set to convene in the coming weeks for the swearing-in ceremony, expectations run high for significant changes within the bureaucratic landscape.

Foremost among the anticipated reforms is the reshuffle of key administrative positions, including secretaries, commissioners, deputy commissioners, and assistant commissioners. The incoming government is poised to instigate a comprehensive overhaul, aiming to infuse fresh leadership and align administrative structures with its policy agenda.

Notably, the police department is also slated for transformation, with potential changes looming for District Police Officers and Regional Police Officers. Sources suggest that incumbents perceived as obstructive or non-aligned with PTI's vision may face reassignment.

Moreover, speculation surrounds the imminent transfer of the Chief Secretary and Inspector General of Police, both of whom have been perceived as adversarial to PTI interests. Citing alleged bias and ineffectiveness in managing

administrative affairs, proponents of change advocate for their replacement to rejuvenate governance mechanisms and bolster PTI's agenda implementation.

In addition to the reshuffle of high-profile positions, attention is drawn to the emergence of sidelined officers poised for elevation to prominent administrative roles.

Amidst the anticipation of administrative reshuffling, it is imperative to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of numerous diligent and competent officers currently serving in various capacities. These dedicated individuals have demonstrated unwavering commitment and proficiency in their roles, tirelessly working to uphold the principles of good governance and public service. As the new government takes shape, it is essential to ensure that these exemplary officers are duly recognized and compensated for their

hard work and dedication. Their experience, expertise, and integrity are invaluable assets that can greatly contribute to the effective functioning of the administration and the realization of developmental objectives. Therefore, their inclusion and recognition in the forthcoming administrative framework are not only warranted but also vital for fostering continuity, stability, and excellence in governance.

As the transition unfolds, stakeholders await the official announcement of appointments and transfers, poised to witness the unfolding of a new chapter in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's governance landscape. With expectations high for reform and revitalization, the incoming administration faces the daunting task of translating electoral mandates into tangible progress, heralding a period of anticipation and transformation in the province.

## Court bars repatriation of Afghan's transgenders

PESHAWAR (INP): The Peshawar High Court on Thursday issued a temporary order barring the repatriation of 16 Afghan transgender women and directed authorities to stop harassing registered Afghan transgender migrants residing in Pakistan.

The order came in response to a writ petition filed by the transgender women against their potential deportation under a government decision to repatriate all Afghan nationals. Their lawyer argued that their lives would be in danger if they were sent back to Afghanistan, where persecution of transgender individuals is widespread.

Justice Shakeel Ahmed and Justice Waqar Ahmed heard the petition, acknowledging the precarious situation of Afghan transgenders in their home country. However, the court also clarified that foreign nationals do not have the same rights as Pakistani citizens and can only stay if they have valid visas.

Despite this, the judges noted that even registered Afghan refugees with valid documentation, including Proof of Registration (POR) cards, were being harassed by authorities. They deemed such actions unacceptable and damaging to Pakistan's international reputation.

Therefore, the High Court directed authorities to halt the repatriation of the 16 Afghan transgender women and keep their deportation on hold until further proceedings.

The Court also ordered to end the harassment of registered Afghan transgender migrants as they are protected under Pakistani law and must be treated with dignity and respect.

This decision provides temporary relief to the affected transgender women and highlights the ongoing challenges faced by this marginalized community in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

## MoU signed to increase digital skilled workforce

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Higher Education Department and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Cultural Communication Center signed a memorandum of understanding to increase the digital skilled workforce in the province.

The MoU signing ceremony held at the Pakhtunkhwa House in Islamabad was attended by provincial ministers Dr. Amir Abdullah, Dr. Najibullah besides Dr. Qasim Jan and relevant officials of the provincial government, said a press release.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah participated in the ceremony via video link.

According to the memorandum of understanding, two hundred thousand students from the province's public colleges will be trained in various fields of digital skills.

Students receiving training in digital skills will also be provided employment opportunities in domestic and international markets.

Syed Arshad Hussain Shah said that the memorandum of understanding between the provincial government and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Cultural Communication Center is a major success for the current provincial government.

He said that this partnership will prove to be crucial in fulfilling the requirements of digital skills in the province. He said that the implementation of this memorandum of understanding will be highly beneficial to enhance skilled labour.

The chief minister said that partnership between the two countries will strengthen longstanding relations.

He said that implementation of this memorandum of understanding will assist in achieving the goals of the provincial government's human resource export strategy, adding provincial government is taking steps to increase the skilled workforce.

Syed Arshad Hussain said that training the province's youth in digital skills can greatly improve the province's economy. The current vigilant government has initiated implementation on this objective by preparing a feasible roadmap.

## Pesco notifies power shutdown due to maintenance work

PESHAWAR (APP): 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Pesco authorities here Thursday notified power shutdown due to maintenance work in areas of Kohistan, Bannu and Dikhan.

According to Pesco, power supply will remain suspended from Besham - Pattan Transmission Line on 17th February from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM, resultantly consumers of Tajori City, Achozai, Behram

Tari Road, Express, Titter Khel feeders will face inconvenience.

Similarly, power supply will remain suspended from DIKhan Grid Station on 16th February from 9 AM to 4 PM, resultantly consumer of 132 KV Prova grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

Similarly, power supply will remain suspended from Bannu Grid Station on 17th and 18th February from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM, resultantly consumers of City 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Express, Fatima Khel 2, Woolen Mill, Cantt 1, Janikhel 1, 2 and Haved feeders will face inconvenience.

## PTI & JJ: Cracks appeared in alliance

PESHAWAR (INP): Cracks are appearing in the potential alliance between PTI and JJ in KP as PTI reportedly reconsiders its affiliation with the religious party.

According to sources within PTI, the party has put a halt on independent candidates joining forces with KP Jamaat-e-Islami. This development comes as the PTI candidate in KP, likely Ali Amin Gandapur, appears poised to form the provincial government independently.

PTI was surprised by JJ's demands, which included extending the alliance to the federal level. This condition seems to have clashed with PTI's earlier plans to partner with Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen at the center and Punjab.

PTI leadership, faced with this unexpected hurdle, is currently seeking counsel from the party's founding members before making a final decision.

## Seema defends M.Phil thesis

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: A Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) scholar Seema Irshad in Pakistan Studies defended her thesis from Qurtaba University Peshawar, on Thursday.

The research titled; "The Revocation of Articles 370 and 35A in the Constitution of India and Pakistan's Response" under the supervision of Dr. Fazal Rehman.

The external examiner was Dr. Shehla Gul of Islamia College Peshawar. The scholar attributed her success to the prayers and hard work of his parents.





## In brief

### Two minor sisters burn to death

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Two minor sisters burn to death while another girl sustained injuries as hut of wood caught fire in Basti Goram Pitafi chowk on Thursday. According to Rescue officials, three minor girls including two sisters were present into their house when suddenly fire erupted in hut made with wood near Basti Goram Pitafi chowk Mondka road. As a result, seven years old Hijab d/o Ansar and 8 Nayyab d/o Ansar burn alive while 8 Dua Fatima d/o Abid sustained serious burn injuries as 84 percent body burnt. Rescue 1122 shifted the injured girl to district headquarters hospital after providing first aid.

### Nazamani house robbed

LARKANA (APP): Singer Ashique Nizamani has requested Inspector General of Sindh Police and SSP Larkana to help recover his loss as his house is robbed for third time and no progress has been made to identify and arrest the culprits. In a press conference here Thursday along with his sons, Singer Nizamani complained that he is living in slum like area in a poor house. He has already submitted written complaints in the office of the SSP Larkana and in Police Station Rehmatpur but no action is taken yet.

### Pre-monsoon measures started

FAISALABAD (APP): The Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) started pre-monsoon initiatives, here on Thursday. In this regard, the postings of sub-engineers, assistant directors and deputy director's operations East and West zones have been completed. According to official sources, the officers have been directed to join their new place of posting and ensure quality services of drainage of sewage water to people. Meanwhile, the district environment agency filed applications for registration of cases against brick-kilns functioning on old technology, here on Thursday. Deputy Director Johar Abbas said that Rs 100,000 fine had also been imposed on owners of brick-kilns situated near Chak No 4-JB, Sargodha Road. Legal action was taken in violation of Punjab Environmental Protection (Smog Prevention and Control Rules 2023).

### Secretariat nears completion

MULTAN (APP): The Civil Secretariat South Punjab is swiftly advancing towards its final stages, marking a significant milestone for the region. Noteworthy progress includes the near-completion of the secretariat building itself, with the Government Officers Residences (GOR) already finalized. In a review meeting held on Thursday, chaired by Additional Secretary Muhammad Farooq Dogar and attended by officials including Deputy Secretary Abdul Saboor Thakur, Section Officer Development Hafiz Khurshid Malik and Project Director IDAP Faisal Zaman, essential steps were outlined to ensure the seamless integration of modern amenities. The meeting also discussed about the allocation of funds for the purchase of computers, sound systems, office furniture, and solar power systems, underlining the commitment to efficiency and sustainability. Addressing the meeting, Additional Secretary Muhammad Farooq Dogar stressed the importance of outfitting secretaries' offices with state-of-the-art equipment to facilitate seamless communication, including video conferencing capabilities and high-speed laptops tailored for the e-filing system. Project Director Faisal Zaman briefed the meeting about upcoming installation of solar power systems.

# Civil society, nationalists hold protest in Thatta

## F.P. Report

THATTA: A sudden surge in the incidents of street crime compelled members of different political parties and social organizations to stage a massive protest in Thatta city on Thursday.

The annoyed protests bashed Thatta police over its failure to keep law and order situation under control. Leaders of Sindh Taraqi Pasand Party and other political parties called growing incidents of robbery an onslaught on the peace of historically esteemed Thatta district. District President of STP

Syed Jalal Shah said that the district police had failed to deal with the gang of street criminal that was operating in the district with complete impunity.

He disclosed that more than ten incidents of mobile and money snatching had been reported from different parts of Thatta district during the past two weeks but the district police had remained less-serious. Haji Hassan Jakhro said that the elected representatives of the areas were busy in the celebrations of their victory acquired through unbri-

dled rigging, while inhabitants of Thatta were under immense threat. He urged higher authorities to take measures for restoring peace in the district. The protest followed by sit-in caused blockage of traffic on main national highway.

As soon as the crowd gathered at the main road SSP Thatta Aftab Ahmed Nizamani persuaded them to disperse on assurance of bringing law and order situation to normalcy. He vowed to set up police pickets on sensitive routes of the district to curb the menace.

# KKKU distributed laptops among students

## F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Khan Khattak University (KKKU) on Thursday organized a function to distribute remaining laptops of Prime Minister Youth Laptop Scheme to meritorious students. University Registrar Dr. Rafiullah Khan was the chief guest of the event.

Prime Minister Youth Laptop Scheme Super Focal Person and Deputy Registrar Academics Mohammad Rahim while explaining the details of the scheme said that a total of 141 laptops have been distributed to the talented students so far. The Super Focal Person highlighted the positive impact of such initiatives on the academic activities of the students by providing them with the necessary tools to excel in their studies.

A large number of students participated. Registrar Dr. Rafiullah Khan appreciated the efforts of Super Focal Person and Departmental Focal Person emphasizing their key role in ensuring the distribution of laptops. He appreciated their hard work and dedication to get the university's share of this scheme. During his



address, Registrar Dr. Rafiullah Khan congratulated the students who received the laptops and appreciated their academic excellence. He emphasized the importance of such initiatives in empowering the youth and promoting a high culture of teaching within the university.

Meanwhile, Additional Assistant Commissioner One Shamim Ullah under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Karak Mujibur Rahman is determined to ensure public service on the basis of merit. Today, Idris son of Abdul Jalil Sukna Deogra made a fake Power of Attorney and took it to the Patwari and Registrar and

then took it to Additional AC Shamimullah. Therefore, Additional AC Shamimullah issued a letter to the concerned authorities for making fake Mukhtiar Nama and trying to deceive the officers and directed to take strict legal action against the maker of fake Mukhtiar Nama, Muhammad Idris.

Further, Additional Assistant Commissioner One Karak Shamim Ullah made it very clear that the district administration should try hard for the convenience of the people and solve the problems, they will not allow anyone to do illegal work, no one is above the law, so such illegal actions are not allowed.



**D I KHAN:** KP Caretaker Chief Minister, Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chairing a meeting regarding ongoing developmental initiatives and security situation.

## Firdous Ashiq Awan apologizes

SIALKOT (INP): Leader of Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) Firdous Ashiq Awan, found herself in the spotlight again today as she appeared before the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding allegations of assaulting a police officer.

The hearing, presided over by a two-member bench with Member Sindh Nisar Durrani at the helm, delved into the contentious incident that has sparked nationwide attention. Awan, accompanied by her legal counsel, submitted a written response to the ECP, addressing the accusations levelled against her.

Notably, the ECP received a corresponding written statement from the police official involved. "Who are you to take the law into your hands?" Member Sindh Durrani said to Awan. In response, she highlighted the unique circumstances surrounding the incident, stating, "There were 381 polling stations in my constituency, this incident did not happen anywhere else." She further alluded to a "strange atmosphere" prevailing at the polling stations, seeking to contextualize her actions.

However, amidst the back-and-forth, Awan offered an apology, expressing regret for her actions. "The law [officers] should have protected me, the crowd was harassing me," she asserted. Member Sindh Durrani remarked, "We did not expect a slap from you." The commission reserved the verdict on Awan's slapping case. During the last hearing, Awan was asked to formally submit a written response.

## Old rivalry claims one more life

SHIKARPUR (PPI): One more villager was killed and other injured in the katcha area of Rustam within Kot Shahoo Police Station on Thursday.

According to a report, a group of armed men opened fires on two villagers coming back to their village Anwar Baddani on Rekshaw. As a result, Ali Hassan Baddani was killed on the spot while his relative Papoo son of Iqbal Badani received serious injured.

The body was brought to Taluka Hospital Khanpur for medico legal formalities. The cause behind the murder was said to be an ongoing old enmity between two rival groups of Baddani and Misrani communities developed over the old matter of theft. No FIR was registered till late evening. After the incident, both of Baddani and Misrani community men equipped with weapons which caused unrest in localities.

## Govt officer arrested

HYDERABAD (INP): Hyderabad Cantonment police arrested a government officer involved in stealing a number of cars and motorbikes, police said on Thursday. Cantonment police station SHO told media that accused Zain is a BS-16 government officer in Revenue Department who was arrested with the help of CCTV footage of a car stealing case.

Police said the accused has already been challaned in other car and bike stealing cases. The police recovered a stolen car and several motorcycles from the possession of the accused. Police said the accused told them that he had stolen 125 bikes and was arrested after he stole a police motorbike.

# Pakistan Army setup Women's Skill Center

## F.P. Report

MINGORA: Pakistan Army continues its commitment to empower women in remote areas with the inauguration of the Women's Skill Center at Pechar, Swat. Established in collaboration with local elders and Non-governmental organizations, this initiative aims to provide women with essential skills for economic independence and self-sufficiency.

The Women's Skill Center, launched last year, recently celebrated the successful completion of its

first three-month course. During a special ceremony, participants were awarded sewing machines and cash prizes as recognition of their dedication and achievements.

The curriculum included training in sewing, embroidery, pico technique and handicrafts, equipping women with valuable skills for employment and entrepreneurship. The closing ceremony also featured an exhibition showcasing the sewing and embroidery masterpieces crafted by the local women during the course.

The event garnered significant praise from the community, highlighting the positive impact of the Skill Center on women's lives. Encouraged by the overwhelming response, the Women's Skill Center is set to commence its second edition in February, with a growing number of women eager to enroll. Local women expressed gratitude towards the Pakistan Army for its efforts in establishing the Skill Center, emphasizing its role in fostering economic empowerment and independence.

# Quack medical practitioners playing with human lives

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Unspecialized and fake doctor's rules over Mardan, large clinics were opened, however, fake Peers and fraudsters completed the remaining task, along with juggling; started giving high-dose steroid capsules and tablets were given, collection of huge sums of money is normal, health regulatory authority and health authority disappeared like a horn, dangerous diseases of kidney, skin, heart and mind started spreading rapidly among the citizens.

According to details, sudden increase in deaths, the district administration also given deaf ear, the Secretary Health is requested to take immediate action. According to the details, the urban areas of Mardan Bari Cham, Khawaja Ganj, Toru Chowk, Baghdada, Pohan Colony, Shamsi Road, Par Hoti, Dagai, Akhun Baba, Sikandri Koroono, Mayar, Nawa Kali, Toru, Muqam Chowk, Gujar Garhi, Mardan Khas, Kachehri Chowk, New Adda, Bajli Ghar, Nissta Road, Bypass Road, Mirafazal Khan Bazar and other important urban and in suburban areas unspecialized and fake doctor have opened clinics.

These so-called doctors who are openly playing with people's lives are charging huge amounts of money by giving prescriptions of steroids and substandard herbal medicines to simple citizens. In spite of the fact that the fraudsters are robbing the citizens through various tricks, they send them to the designated laboratories by prescribing medical tests including steroid and sexual drugs and substandard and harmful capsules and drugs.

For a long time in Mardan, the district administration of Mardan has given deaf ears on the med-

ical practice of fake peers and so called doctors who playing with the lives of citizens while the Health Department and HRA have become silent spectators and given free rein to those who play with the precious lives of the citizens, public social circles have demanded the Health Secretary to take immediate action against these so-called doctors and fraudsters.

Meanwhile, newly elected MNAs supported by Tehreek-e-Insaf, Muhammad Atif Khan and Shahram Khan Tarkai appeared in the anti-corruption court, granted pre-arrest bail in two cases, Muhammad Atif Khan was also granted pre-arrest bail in the ATC court.

According to Information Secretary Peshawar Region Engineer Adil Nawaz, the Peshawar High Court had approved the protective bail of Muhammad Atif Khan and Shahram Khan Tarkai in the past few days, after which the two leaders named in the incidents of 9 May appeared in the Anti-Corruption Court in two cases under 1 and 3.

BBA was approved after which Muhammad Atif Khan appeared in ATC court and Sessions Court which granted BBA in FIR.833 and FIR No. 832. On this occasion MPA Tariq Mehmood Tufail Anjum, Ameer Farzand Khan, ILF District President Azhar Rahim Khan Advocate, General Secretary Alamgir Khan Advocate and members of ILF were also with him.

**Admn helpless before butchers in Mardan:** District administration failed to implement the administrative writ, the butchers started charging arbitrary prices, the sale of meat became normal, government checking is a question mark the people started hanging due to inflation.

The citizens requested the higher authorities to

take immediate notice on this. According to details Toru Chowk, Khawaja Ganj, Bicket Gunj, Pakistan Chowk, Baghdada, Nehar Chowk, Shamsi Road, New Adda, Kas Koroono, Bajli Ghar, Chato chowk, Charsada Chowk, Muqam Chowk, Nisata Road and other urban and suburban areas instead of the fixed rate of beef meat by Price Control Committee general sale of Rs. 800 to Rs. 900 rupees per kg has a normal routine.

Also, there is a lot of water mixed meat found in the market to which the administration have given deaf ear and the citizens are forced to buy unhealthy meat at high prices, the citizens demanded the higher authorities for immediate notice and action.

**MPC announces to boycott JI coverage due to smear campaign:** An important meeting of the Mardan Press Club (MPC) announced boycott from coverage of Jamiat-e-Islami (JI) due to their smear campaign against media personnel on social media, on Thursday.

The decision was made in cabinet meeting chaired by MPC President M Bashir Adil in which Vice President Faqir Hussain, General Secretary Akhunzada Fazal Haq, Joint Secretary Khurshid Wabab and Finance Secretary Parvez Shaheen were present. Campaigning against the President and the Press Club in an uncivilized manner on social media was strongly condemned and it was unanimously decided to boycott the coverage of all activities of Jamaat-e-Islami.

The cabinet also unanimously decided to ban the entry of Alamzeb Khan and Muhammad Idris into the press club for running an indecent campaign on social media against the president of the press club and the press club.



**QUETTA:** Workers of Four Party Etihad talking part in a protest against alleged rigging in general elections.

# Enrollment campaign launched in Khyber District

## F.P. Report

JAMRUD: Under the supervision of the Jamrud Education Sub-Division Office, annual centralized examinations for government primary schools will begin on March 12 which was decided in a consultative meeting at the District Education Office, Khyber in Jamrud, on Thursday.

According to details, the head teachers from all government primary schools in Circles 1 and 2. Various matters regarding the annual centralized examinations were finalized.

SDEO Adil Nawaz, ASDEO Hajji Wajid and ASDEO Hajji Khalil Rahman outlined the decision of the Khyber Education Department to

prepare a single paper for all students of Jamrud Sub-Division schools to ensure uniformity in examinations, promote competitiveness among students, and eliminate fear and intimidation.

Responsibilities were assigned to teachers from different schools to prepare question papers from KG to class 5, which will be sent to the District Education Office, Khyber in Jamrud. Each school will collect appropriate fees for the composition, printing, and answer sheets of the question papers, as well as fees for students' data and expenses as per the prescribed fees.

SDEO Jamrud, Mr. Adil Nawaz, Hajji Wajid, ASDEO Jamrud, along with ASDEO Jamrud, Mr.

Hajji Khalil Rahman emphasized the importance of raising awareness among students about the annual centralized examinations and consistently preparing them for the exams.

The participants reiterated the commitment of the Khyber Education Department to providing educational facilities to children according to modern requirements. Teachers offered various suggestions for preparing question papers, which were appreciated, and it was collectively agreed to successfully conduct these examinations and emphasize the enrollment campaign, urging to enroll children from their villages, neighborhoods, and areas into schools.

# Man killed, three injured in mishap

BUREWALA (INP): A man was killed while three others sustained injuries in a collision between a motorcycle-rickshaw and tractor-trolley near Village 195/EB.

A motorcycle-rickshaw was on the way to the city area when a speeding tractor-

trolley loaded with sugarcane collided with the rickshaw near Village 195/EB. Resultantly, Muhammad Saleem resident of Village 415/EB died on the spot while three others Ejaz, Zulfiqar, and Raju sustained serious injuries.

Rescue officials reached

the spot and shifted the body and injured to the hospital, however, Gagu Mandi police have also started the investigations into the incident by taking the tractor trolley into custody while the driver managed to escape from the scene.





## Palestinians flee as Israel orders evacuation of besieged Nasser Hospital

GAZA: Dozens of Palestinians have been seen leaving the besieged Nasser Hospital in Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis after Israeli forces ordered the evacuation of the complex, but health officials say thousands, including critically ill patients, remain inside. Video footage shared with Al Jazeera showed crowds of displaced people, who had been sheltering inside the hospital, leaving. A doctor wearing green hospital scrubs walked ahead of the crowd, and some carried white flags.

Israeli forces ordered the evacuation of the complex. In a post shared on the social media platform X, the army said, "Hamas continues to conduct military activities" in the hospital, an unsubstantiated claim Israel has made about other Gaza health facilities it has raided during its months-long war. The Israeli military - which used drones and loudspeakers to tell people to leave Nasser Hospital - said it opened "a secure route" to allow civilians to exit, while medics and patients could remain inside. However, witnesses and medical NGO Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres, or MSF) said those sheltering inside were afraid to leave after reports people were shot on the way out. The Israeli army also fired on people inside the hospital, including a doctor and a nurse. More than 2,500 people are still inside the complex, including displaced people, patients, medics and their families, Gaza Health Ministry spokesperson Dr Ashraf al-Qudra said. The situation at the hospital was already critical but the last 24 hours have made things on

the ground even more "scary", MSF's Guillemette Thomas told Al Jazeera. "The situation is really critical for the patients and we are worried about the future," she said. About 400 patients are in a critical condition at the hospital, she added. World Health Organization spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic said Israel has denied the UN agency access to Nasser Hospital since January 29.

"We tried several times to go there, but our requests have been denied. We heard reports about some 400 patients still being there, that 10 people have been killed, that a warehouse has been destroyed," he told Al Jazeera. Dr Ahmed al-Moghrabi, the head of plastic surgery at Nasser Hospital, recorded a message from inside the facility when Israel's evacuation orders came in. "[The Israeli army] sent a hostage with cuffed hands into the hospital asking him to tell us that we should evacuate. And when people started really evacuating, they opened fire and they shot at the people. And they killed the hostage [they had sent inside], as well," he said.

Speaking to Al Jazeera, he said thousands of people, including critically ill patients, are being delayed at Israeli checkpoints as they try to flee the area. He also described the situation at the hospital as "dangerous". Nasser Hospital, the largest health facility in southern Gaza, has been under siege for three weeks. The bodies of several people killed by Israeli sniper fire in the hospital compound have been lying on the ground for days as it is too unsafe to reach them. At least three people have been killed by Israeli

snipers near the facility in the past 48 hours, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from the city of Rafah, said Israeli forces have been setting up checkpoints along the road leading to Nasser medical facility as they force people to flee. "The situation, on an hourly basis, is getting much more difficult and dire for people who are trapped inside this medical facility," he said. "Some people [who left], exposed to Israeli fire, were forced to return back again to the medical facility." Earlier, Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud said Israeli forces destroyed one of the main gates of the facility. "They destroyed the northern gate of the hospital and blocked it with piles of sand and rubble. Only the eastern gate is open now," he said, also reporting from Rafah.

"There are tanks and armoured vehicles stationed in front of that gate. There are face-recognition cameras installed ... From past experience, setting up face-recognition cameras and hi-tech equipment means raids and mass arrests are soon going to happen," he added. Israeli forces have raided Gaza's hospitals one after the other since the war, which has killed more than 28,000 Palestinians, began on October 7.

In just the first 36 hours of the war, Israel targeted Nasser Hospital, as well as the Indonesian Hospital and al-Quds Hospital, killing dozens of healthcare workers. By the end of November, 30 of Gaza's 36 hospitals were hit by Israeli rockets. Currently, only six of Gaza's hospitals remain functional. — Aljazeera

## Japan test flight for new flagship rocket rescheduled

TOKYO (AP): Japan's space agency says its new flagship H3 rocket will have a second test flight on Saturday, two days later than an initially planned liftoff that was postponed due to a bad weather forecast at the launch site in southwestern Japan.

The liftoff was originally scheduled for Thursday but was postponed due to thunder and strong wind forecasted at the Tanegashima Space Center. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, said that its H3 rocket will attempt a test flight on Saturday with an alternative launch window through the end of March.

JAXA has been developing H3 for more than a decade as a successor to its current mainstay, H-2A, which has just two more flights planned before its retirement. The upcoming launch is being closely watched as a test for Japan's space development after H3 failed in its debut flight last March, when the rocket had to be destroyed along with its payload, the advanced land observation satellite, or ALOS-3. This time, the rocket will carry a mockup of the ALOS satellite, called VEP-4. JAXA says the mission's primary goal for the second test flight is to put the rocket into the intended trajectory. The agency also wants to place two observation microsatellites into orbit. H3 is designed to carry larger payloads than H-2A at much lower costs to be globally competitive. Expectations are high following a recent steak of successes. JAXA made a historic precision moon landing last month of its spacecraft that had been launched from the H-2A rocket, days after the 48th H-2A rocket successfully placed a spy satellite into its planned orbit.

## Kim oversees test of new surface-to-sea missiles

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has overseen the test of new surface-to-sea missiles, according to state media, while ordering his military to strengthen its readiness in disputed waters north of the South Korean border island of Yeonpyeong.

The report on the launches by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on Thursday came a day after South Korea's military said North Korea had fired multiple cruise missiles in waters off its eastern port of Wonsan. The test was Pyongyang's sixth missile launch event of the year. The KCNA report said Kim supervised the "evaluation test-fire of new-type surface-to-sea missile Padasuri-6 to be equipped by the navy", and expressed "great satisfaction over the results of the test-fire".

The missiles hit their intended targets after flying over the East Sea for 1,400 seconds, it said. The East Sea is known as the Sea of Japan internationally. Kim also accused South Korea of frequently violating his country's sovereignty by insisting on a "Northern Limit Line" (NLL), the maritime demarcation line between the two Koreas, and conducting maritime patrols and inter-diction of third-party ships, according to the KCNA. The North Korean leader also gave orders to his military to strengthen its readiness in the waters north of Yeonpyeong Island and to the west of the Korean peninsula, in the region of the NLL.

Waters near the NLL, which was drawn up by the United States-led United Nations Command at the end of the Korean War in 1953, have been the site of previous clashes between the two Koreas. In 2010, North Korea torpedoed a South Korean warship in the Yellow Sea, killing 46 Sailors, and fired a barrage of artillery shells



at Yeonpyeong Island, killing four others.

According to the KCNA, Kim referred to the de facto border as a "ghost one without any ground in the light of international law". "It doesn't matter how many lines exist in [North Korea's] western sea, and what's clear is that if the enemy violates what we consider as our maritime border lines, we will take that as a violation of our sovereignty and an armed provocation," he was quoted as saying. Kim also pledged that Pyongyang would "thoroughly defend our maritime sovereignty by force of arms and actions, not by any rhetoric".

Earlier this year, the North Korean leader told his country's rubber-stamp parliament that he would no longer recognise the NLL, and declared that Pyongyang was abandoning its long-standing goal of reconciliation with Seoul. He also said that if South Korea "violates even 0.001 millime-

tre of our territorial land, air and waters, it will be considered a war provocation".

In a separate report, KCNA said Kim also inspected a "major" munitions factory and learned in detail about the modernisation of production. During the visit, he stressed the factory's role in bolstering North Korea's armed forces and laid out tasks to improve the quality of munitions and increase production as "required by the prevailing situation and the developing revolution", KCNA said.

Kim's visit to the munitions factory comes as the US and its allies have accused North Korea of trading arms with Russia. The White House said last month that Russia had recently used short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) sourced from North Korea to conduct strikes against Ukraine, citing newly declassified intelligence. — Agencies

## UN warns of 'dangerous' escalation cycle in war-wracked Yemen

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations special envoy for Yemen has called for immediate action to end the "dangerous escalatory cycle" in the war-wracked country, as Houthi rebels continue their attacks in the Red Sea and Western powers retaliate with strikes on Yemen.

"I am engaging the Yemeni parties and relevant regional actors to support de-escalation in the Red Sea to protect the mediation space in Yemen," Hans Grundberg told the UN Security Council. "Three things need to happen in the immediate term to create an off-ramp to this dangerous escalatory cycle," Grundberg said, calling for regional de-escalation; for all parties to refrain from "military opportunism"; and for progress towards a mediated agreement to be protected.

Yemen's Houthis have been launching attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden against ships they said were linked to Israel. The attacks are in solidarity with Palestinians and will not cease until Israel stops its war on Gaza, the rebels said. But the provocations

have prompted the United States and United Kingdom to intervene, launching a series of air raids on targets in Yemen in the hope of deterring the Houthis. The Iran-backed rebels have been fighting a Saudi-led coalition since 2015, months after they seized the capital Sanaa and most of Yemen's population centres, forcing the internationally recognised government south to Aden.

As recently as December, painstaking negotiations were gaining ground and the UN said the warring parties had agreed to work towards "the resumption of an inclusive political process". The recent Houthi attacks, in addition to Western retaliation, have thrown the peace process up in the air. However, "in my latest exchanges, I have received assurances that all parties prefer the path to peace," Grundberg said. Hundreds of thousands of people in Yemen have died in the fighting and from indirect causes, such as disease and malnutrition. More than 18 million Yemenis need "urgent support", according to the UN's humanitarian

agency OCHA. "Yemen is not a footnote to a wider regional story," Grundberg warned. "The regional escalation does not negate the urgent needs in Yemen for a nationwide ceasefire." Al Jazeera's Gabriel Elizondo, reporting from the UN headquarters in New York, said this was the first time in nearly five months that the Security Council has held an "open" meeting on Yemen. "Last year, the internationally recognised government and the Houthis were inching closer to some peace agreement, but ... it's certainly much more complicated now," Elizondo said. Grundberg is right now focused on trying to keep the parameters of the Yemen ceasefire in place, our correspondent added, but current developments around the war on Gaza are making things more difficult.

Among the complications is the US's move to return the Houthis to a list of "terrorist" groups - a decision the UN fears could harm Yemen's economy, particularly commercial imports of essential items, UN aid operations director

Edem Wosornu said. The US move, announced last month, takes effect and hits the Houthis with harsh sanctions in response to the attacks on cargo ships. The Houthi attacks have prompted some major shipping companies to detour around southern Africa to avoid the Red Sea, a vital route that normally carries about 12 percent of global maritime trade. Wosornu said that while the humanitarian community was concerned about "any potential adverse effects" of the US designation, she noted that Washington had issued exemptions aimed at lessening the impact on civilians in Yemen. "Nevertheless, we fear there may be an effect on the economy, including commercial imports of essential items on which the people of Yemen depend on more than ever," Wosornu told the Security Council. "Humanitarian aid cannot make up for gaps in the supply of commercial goods. Such effects may reverberate across the country. Yemen's already fragile economy cannot handle any further major shocks," she said. — Agencies

## Polish doctor rescued after copter comes under attack

WARSAW (BBC): A Polish doctor abducted in Chad has been saved after a dramatic night-time rescue, reports say. Kidnappers in the central African nation fired at a helicopter attempting to rescue Aleksandra Kuligowska. She was abducted near the southern town of Dono Manga.

Armed men accompanying a fake patient seized the doctor from the hospital where she worked, news agency AFP says, citing a Chadian governor. Ms Kuligowska, a volunteer at the hospital run by Catholic charity Caritas, was then held hostage for five days in a dense forest around 10km (six miles) from Dono Manga, state platform Djarma Media reports. The doctor was rescued at 03:00 local time (02:00 GMT), the report says, in what authorities describe as a joint operation by French and Chadian forces. "When the helicopter flew overhead, the kidnappers came out to try to shoot down the helicopter,

leaving the hostage alone," local governor Ildjima Abdraman was quoted as saying by AFP. "While our ground troops advanced, they managed to rescue the hostage. All the kidnappers were killed. There were three of them." Ms Kuligowska was taken to the capital, N'Djamena, by helicopter, with Djarma Media describing her as "weakened and traumatised" but well. Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said on X, formerly Twitter: "She is safe and healthy, which I have told those close to her by telephone. I thank local forces and our French allies for their actions." Poland's Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz on X gave his "utmost thanks" to his French counterpart and the French troops, adding that Ms Kuligowska would return to Poland "soon". She had been seized with a Mexican colleague, named by state media as Carlos.

The pair were whisked away from the St Michel

hospital on motorbikes, but the kidnappers left Carlos at the roadside after security forces gave chase. No group has said it was behind the doctors' kidnapping. Armed bandits frequently kidnap Chadians for ransom in the region, about 400km (250 miles) south of N'Djamena. According to AFP, a spokesperson for the French forces stationed in the Sahel confirmed that Chadian forces had carried out the rescue but refused to say what part French soldiers played.

France has long had a military presence in the West African countries it once colonised and over the past decade its troops have participated in an anti-jihadist operation in the Sahel. However, following a string of coups from 2022 onwards, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have expelled French soldiers from their countries. Despite experiencing a military takeover itself, Chad is home to around 1,000 French troops.

## Expert calls on Venezuela to tackle hunger

CARACAS (AP): A United Nations-backed expert on food security urged Venezuela's government to develop a robust plan to address hunger and malnutrition affecting its population, and called for an end to the crippling economic sanctions imposed on the South American country.

Michael Fakhri, UN special rapporteur on the right to food, acknowledged progress made by the government of President Nicolás Maduro in recent years to address food insecurity, including its effort to boost local production of food. But at the end of a 14-day visit across the country, he told reporters that the root causes of hunger and malnutrition have not been addressed. He said social programs created in response to severe food shortages have morphed into "charitable handouts" and have become "susceptible to patronage."

"Food is an expression of love," Fakhri said after highlighting the role of food in carnival celebrations, which coincided with this visit. "But love with hunger does not last. I learned that in Venezuela. Hunger is insidious. Hunger is not a member of this political party or that political party," Fakhri told reporters he witnessed firsthand how economic sanctions have "constrained the government's fiscal ability" to implement social programs and deliver public services. Their impact, he said, has been felt disproportionately by the poor. Maduro's government has long denounced sanctions, the most crippling of which were imposed after his 2018 re-election. But, Fakhri said, sanctions are not the only cause behind malnutrition. Corruption, lack of transparency, and the lack of enforcement of existing legislation have also played a role.

Venezuela's complex social, economic and political crisis has driven more than 7.4 million people to migrate and pushed millions of others into poverty. Food insecurity has been a deciding factor for many migrants. Fakhri's visit comes as Venezuela's protracted crisis continues to evolve. Gone are the empty grocery store shelves that marked the initial years of Venezuela's complex crisis.

## No 'clear way out': How Ecuador descended into gang violence

ECUADOR: Paulina Guaman's life is no longer the same. The young Ecuadorian dentist has been obliged to make changes to her daily routine, in the hope of keeping danger at bay. "Life has changed completely. I feel fear living in Ecuador," Guaman, who lives in the city of Cuenca, told Al Jazeera.

"I no longer answer the phone with the same confidence as before. Businesses don't open the way they used to. [I'm scared] of not being able to continue working because someone might come to extort me." Guaman's situation reflects a widespread fear felt by many Ecuadorians, as the country finds itself in the grips of a years-long crime surge. Once considered an "island of peace" in Latin America, the Andean nation is now battling to rid itself of the criminal gangs that rule unchecked in large parts of the country.

In January alone, Ecuador saw at least 391 violent deaths. Last year was the most violent in the country's modern history, registering 7,872 murders - 43.2 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants. That marks a notable increase over 2020, when the figure was just 7.8 per 100,000 inhabitants. To address the spike in crime, Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa has taken drastic action: He signed

executive decrees laying the groundwork for a nationwide referendum, designed to beef up government security powers and amend the constitution. A voting date is expected to be set in the coming days. How did Ecuador arrive at this point? To understand the country's security crisis, Al Jazeera untangles the web of factors fuelling the violence.

The decline in Ecuador's security situation has been years in the making. One of the principal drivers behind the crisis is the growth of the global cocaine trade. In its latest World Drug Report, the United Nations described "a prolonged surge in both supply and demand of cocaine". In 2021 alone, an estimated 22 million people consumed the drug, and production reached approximately 2,304 tonnes, marking the seventh straight year of increases. Experts say Ecuador has played an increasingly prominent role in the drug's export from Latin America. The country is sandwiched between the two largest cocaine-producing countries in the world, Peru and Colombia. "Ecuador is a small country in a violent neighbourhood, and it's become a key part of global narco-trafficking networks," said Will Freeman, a fellow for Latin America studies at the Council on Foreign

Relations, a US-based think tank.

He pointed out that Ecuador's position on the Pacific coast makes the country prime real estate for export operations seeking to send cocaine abroad. "Globally, maritime cocaine shipping is on the rise, so it's no longer moving largely along the Mexico-Central America corridor. It's increasingly moving through South America's ports, and Ecuador has important ports. That's put Ecuador in the eye of the storm," Freeman explained. As Ecuador's prominence in the cocaine trade boomed, so too did its criminal underworld - luring in new forces including prominent Mexican cartels and Balkan criminal gangs. Another factor that contributed to the instability in Ecuador was a peace deal across the border in Colombia. For decades, Colombia has been mired in a multi-pronged internal conflict, with government forces, right-wing paramilitary groups, criminal networks and left-wing rebels all fighting for power.

But a breakthrough came in 2016. The largest left-wing group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), agreed to a deal to disband its armed forces, in exchange for concessions like rural development and

social security programmes. As thousands of FARC fighters laid down their arms, a power vacuum formed. The FARC's dissolution created an opportunity for other groups to take over its lucrative drug-trafficking routes, particularly along the border. With gangs and other armed groups jockeying for power, new bursts of violence erupted. Pockets of fighting spilled into neighbouring Ecuador. Some dissident members of the FARC, disillusioned with the peace deal, even moved their operations to the country. Despite detaining several high-profile gang leaders, Ecuador has struggled to deliver decisive blows to the criminal networks operating within its borders.

Even imprisonment has not stopped their proliferation. Gangs maintain a presence in many of the country's 36 prisons: In 2022, the head of the prison agency SNAI estimated that 11,000 of the 32,000 people incarcerated were gang members. United Nations experts also reported that some parts of Ecuador's prisons were "self-governed by detainees who are members of criminal organisations". Systemic corruption helps to foster those conditions, allowing gangs to operate with relative impunity, according to experts. — Aljazeera

## Turkey rescuers battle to save workers trapped in landslide-hit gold mine

ANKARA: Turkey is under pressure to shut down a gold mine buried by a massive landslide, as hundreds of rescuers battle to save at least nine trapped workers. The Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects said that the government should close the Cöpler mine in the eastern town of Ilic "immediately".

The union said its past warnings about a looming disaster had gone unheeded. "All those responsible for the disaster should be held accountable before the judiciary," it said in a statement. "All environmental impact reports should be cancelled and the plant should be closed immediately." Rescuers were deployed to search through cyanide-saturated soil to save the workers, trapped when 10 million cubic metres of sludge rolled over their open pit.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said that some 1,700 search and rescue personnel, including police and military teams, mine rescuers and volunteers, were deployed to find the mine workers. Of the nine

missing, five people were believed to be in a container hut, three in a vehicle and one in a truck, he said at the disaster site. An investigation has been launched and the authorities said that four people, including the pit's field manager, had been arrested.

The mine is run by private company Anagold, which has been extracting gold in the region since 2010. Eighty percent of Anagold is owned by SSR Mining, which is based in Denver in the United States, and Turkey-based Lidya Madencilik and Calik Holding. The mine produced 56,768 ounces (1,609kg) of gold in the third quarter of last year and is SSR's second-largest producing gold mine. Rescuers have been searching through a cyanide-laced field in the area, located in Turkey's mountainous Erzincan province, to find the workers.

Environmentalists fear that cyanide and sulphuric acid used in the gold extraction process could spread into the Euphrates River, which runs from Turkey to neigh-

bouring Syria and Iraq.

The Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change said in a statement that a stream leading to the Euphrates was closed to prevent water pollution. Erzincan Governor Hamza Aydogdu said there was no leakage into the waterway. But the Ilic Nature and Environment Platform, a local pressure group, said the stream had already mixed with the Euphrates. "Don't seal off [the stream], seal off the mine," the group said.

The mine was closed down in 2020 following a cyanide leak caused by a burst pipe into the river. It reopened two years later after the company was fined and a cleanup operation was completed. A Turkish court then fined the company 16.5 million Turkish lire (\$537,000 at the current exchange rate). But local efforts to shut it down failed. Turkey has a poor mine safety record. In 2022, an explosion at the Amasra coal mine on the Black Sea coast killed 41 workers. — Aljazeera



**The Frontier Post**

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

**Pakistan Navy and contemporary challenges**

**P**AKISTAN Navy recently hosted a successful Keel Laying Ceremony of the second Hangor Class Submarine at Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works (KS&EW). According to a bilateral defense agreement between Pakistan and the People's Republic of China (PRC), 8 Hangor Class Submarines were to be built for the Pakistan Navy. Four submarines are currently under construction at Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry in China whereas the remaining 04 are being built at KS&EW under the Transfer of Technology (ToT) agreement between the two longstanding allies.

Pakistan is a peace-loving nation and Peace preacher state in the region and beyond, whilst Islamabad specifically illustrated its quest for peace through participation in the UN peace missions, multilateral exercises and global campaign against Sea piracy throughout the past. Pakistan has faced eternal animosity from its staunch rival since from very existence and confronts an all-time risk of aggression from its Eastern frontiers, thus Pakistan's defense forces including the Pakistan Navy have shored up their operational preparedness within territorial waters, coastal areas, and land borders to effectively safeguard the nation's territorial sovereignty, economic interests alongside maintaining their presence in the area. The current complex geopolitical and geostrategic dynamics have caused significant security challenges for the Pakistan Navy which demands an all-weather kinetic strategy and heightened vigilance to effectively thwart potential hazards. Pakistan Navy has always remained committed to maintaining regional peace and stability along with ensuring the safety and security of the Country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the global energy/trade routes through the country's territorial waters.

Pakistan Navy launched a decade long modernization program to acquire state of the art warships, submarines, anti-Ship and armed drone capabilities through a mix of indigenization and procuring the latest state of the art technologies from friendly countries including China, Turkey, South Africa and others. Besides purchasing 8 Hangor Class Submarines and 054 A/P type frigates from China, Pakistan struck a defense deal with Republic of Turkey for 4 Meljum type corvettes on Transfer of Technology (ToT) basis. Two such warships have already inducted into Pakistan Naval fleet and remaining two would be completed in the next two years.

In fact, an undeclared arms race is set between arch rivals, India and Pakistan, which pragmatically expanding in all spheres of the national defence ranging from ground forces, air power, Naval surface and subsurface capabilities together with nonconventional weapons, long range missiles, and nuclear warheads. New Delhi is unprecedentedly expanding its military capability, wherein India's blue water navy with bulk of conventional weapons, over a dozen submarines, Air craft carriers and nuclear powered submarines seriously threaten Pakistan territorial sovereignty and cause grave challenges to the country's defence. In response, Pakistan Navy has acquired 8 Hangor II type conventional submarines from China that can successfully launch short range nuclear capable Babur missile to effectively counter Indian air craft carriers and submarines fleet during any war scenario in the future.

Historically, Indian Navy has advantage of its numerical superiority while New Delhi also enjoys superior capabilities in case of its air craft carriers and nuclear powered submarines which Pakistan planned to foil through Offensive Sea denial strategy augmented with Hangor-II type conventional submarines coupled with the most advanced Tughril Class 054 A/P frigates which are equipped with the latest sonars and supersonic missiles successfully pushing regional tactical balance in favor of Pakistan Navy. Pakistan Navy not only increasing its surface fleet through induction of cautiously selected quality weapons but enhances its presence in its traditional orbit in Indian Ocean Region (IOR), gradually projecting Pakistan Naval power in the region and beyond. Pakistan Navy is near to chase its long held goal of attaining the status of a credible Naval power in Indian Ocean Region. However, continuation of this title would require persistent upgradation in the fleet, R & D, personnel training, induction of latest electronic gadgets and sonars to effectively coup with the emerging challenges in the contemporary world.

**Doha Summit and Talib-Iran teamwork**

**I**RAN'S Ambassador and Special Representative in Kabul, honorable Hassan Kazemi Qomi told the world through a post on X that the Islamic Emirate has sat two important conditions for its participation at the upcoming Doha Conference on Afghanistan. According to the Iranian Envoy, it is a good opportunity to find out how serious the proposal of finding a 'fairway' for the interaction that comes under the goals of the meeting. If the path of interaction is followed, the world will witness a stable Afghanistan.

Nowadays, the clerics-regimes in Afghanistan and Iran are on cordial terms after Pakistan pulled back its support to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Taliban and Sheeti-controlled Islamic Republic of Iran have faced fundamental ideological differences in their bilateral relations since the Taliban movement emerged in early 90s. Both nations found common political grounds in the recent past that include identical challenges, and shared fate, coinciding prospects to survive in a somehow contained and isolated environment amid sanctions and coercion from the powerful Western lobby. Afghanistan and Iran have strengthened their trade and economic bonds through peaceful settlement of their border and water disputes along with enhanced cooperation in the political domain.

Presently, a UN-led conference on Afghanistan is scheduled to be held on 18-19 February in Doha Qatar. This meeting will be hosted by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and will discuss the proposals of the Afghanistan Independent Assessment report based on the UN Security Council Resolution 2721. The UN authorities have invited the Islamic Emirate to attend the meeting but Afghan authorities have not yet officially confirmed their participation. Interestingly, the Special Envoy of Taliban's newly invented friend spoke on behalf of the Taliban government informing the world about some conditions put forth by the cleric regime prior to attend the global huddle.

Historically, Taliban's Afghanistan is plunged into a wide range of issues ranging from political instability, terrorism and the worst effects of global warming to ever-growing poverty, humanitarian and economic crises, shortages of resources, and arrival of returnees coupled with serious issues created by the rulers' domestic and foreign policies in the past two years. Doha conference has opened a window of cooperation for Kabul to interact with the global community, apprise them on Afghanistan problems and seek their cooperation at an early stage. Hence, creating hurdles and setting conditions would spoil the environment and will reduce the scope for cooperation from the global community along with shutting this important window for unlimited period. Hence, Afghans must speak for themselves instead using hired mouth-pieces if they seek a dignified return into the global community, otherwise they will be known from their company they keep. That is a Global rejection and isolation with no say and least participation in the world affairs.

**US allies fear the fallout of a new Trump era**

Brad Glosserman

**I**T'S hard to tell if Donald Trump's recent comments about his readiness to disregard treaty obligations if US allies didn't live up to their promises to increase defense spending were more shocking to American allies and partners or US analysts and strategists.

Stunning as his remarks were, the rest of the world appears to have priced in the former president's disdain not only for allies but the entire global order his predecessors created. Even if Trump doesn't win the November election, that thinking and approach will remain a constant concern of US allies - and adversaries. The genie is not going back into the bottle.

Trump's readiness to tear up treaties and ignore US defense commitments was a feature, not a bug, of his presidency. For him, all relationships are transactional. (Some are status affirming - he is ready to like people who like him - but that is just another form of exchange.) He complained that the US - more specifically, his predecessors - had been hoodwinked by allies who refused to honor a 2006 pledge to spend 2% of GDP on defense and then forced to fill the gap. He aimed to highlight the gullibility of previous presidents and underscore how Trump would be a much better deal maker. Trump reiterated his criticism last week, telling a campaign rally that at a 2018 meeting he informed European allies that his administration would not protect them if they were attacked by Russia and hadn't hit the 2% mark. He then went further and said that he would encourage Russia "to do whatever the hell they want" if allies didn't keep their promise.

Typically, Trump exaggerated. The Washington Post noted that no one could recall him ever saying such a thing to another leader, and presidential advisers from that time say that Trump embellished his comments in the re-telling. He doubled down over the weekend, posting on Truth Social, his social media platform, that he wanted to upend another foundational premise of US foreign assistance. Rather than providing unconditional aid, a

mainstay of US foreign policy, his administration would "never give money anymore without the hope of a payback, or without 'strings' attached." If any recipient "ever turns against us, or strikes it rich sometime in the future," he added, any loans would have to be immediately repaid.

No one in Asia can be surprised by this. Leaving for the 2019 Osaka Group of 20 summit, Trump told a television interviewer that "We have a treaty with Japan. If Japan is attacked, we will fight World War III. We will go in and we will protect them and we will fight with our lives and with our treasure. We will fight at all costs, right? But if we're attacked, Japan doesn't have to help us at all. They can watch it on a Sony television, the attack." After leaving office in 2021, he warned South Korea that if he reclaimed the presidency, Seoul would have to pay more money to maintain a US troop presence in country. Condemnations of Trump's recent remarks were quick and cutting. The Biden administration called them "appalling and unheeded." The Washington Post cited a German member of the European Parliament who said Trump had "no values, no international expertise, a pure transactional mindset." An informal survey of Asian opinion indicates that while regional experts are worried, Trump isn't the problem. Asian observers and strategists who follow the US - and they do so very closely, reading not just headlines but digging deep into details - recognize that the former president leads a movement. They know that even if Trump doesn't win in November, his ideas will persist.

When I asked a Japanese diplomat shortly after the last US presidential vote if he was relieved that Joe Biden won, he shook his head, noting that Trump might have lost but Trumpism would live on. Shahrman Lockman, a director at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia, a think tank with close ties to the government, agreed in an email, explaining that "if America can elect Trump in

2016 and come close to re-electing him again, what's to say that Trump is an aberration?" He offered the grim prediction that "Trump-like figures - transactional, capricious and abhorrent - may well be a recurrent occupant of the White House for decades to come." Proof is in the paralysis that grips the US Congress. While some resistance is partisan politics - a readiness to follow Trump's lead and an instinctive refusal to provide any "wins" for Biden in an election year - there is also a belief among many, if not most, Republicans - who make common cause with a much smaller, but no less fervent group of Democrats - that disengagement, perhaps even isolation, is best for the country. The inability to do anything - or an actual desire to stand down - is doing great damage to US credibility. Some, like Ryo Hinata-Yamaguchi of the University of Tokyo's Center for Advanced Research and Technology and an adjunct fellow at the Pacific Forum, worry that political games are a "distraction" for policy makers in Washington. Others, such as Gibum Kim, an analyst at the Korean Institute for Defense Analysis (KIDA), a think tank affiliated with Korea's Ministry of Defense, consider it "dysfunction." All fear that it will become the new norm.

Tom Corben, a research fellow at the United States Studies Centre in Sydney, Australia, believes it already has. "US allies are increasingly used to Congressional dysfunction and distraction," with the strategic community in Australia largely unconcerned as the Department of Defense operates under continuing resolutions, for example. The implications of this sad state of affairs are wide ranging. It undermines "US credibility and standing abroad to allies and partners," charged Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a professor of Political Science at Thailand's Chulalongkorn University, a point made by every one of my respondents. Moreover, it undercuts US capabilities and has, Corben noted in an email, "real implementation costs

for US strategy in Asia." He explained that "if the intent of US regional strategy is to deter, rather than punishing, Chinese adventurism or miscalculation, then we can't afford these perpetual delays to resourcing - deterrence won't work if the resources aren't in place before things escalate."

Allies are hedging, which can be a good thing. Governments are increasing defense spending and diversifying security relationships. They're strengthening ties with old partners and forging new ones with others. Trilateral and multilateralism are another result. These efforts signal a seriousness that should reinforce alliances with the US Those countries know that for all the uncertainty and confusion, alliance with the US is the best security option. Other forms of hedging are not so good. In a few, rare cases, allied governments might be tempted to bandwagon with former adversaries. Equally worrisome are some forms of self-help. Chun In-bum, former head of South Korean special forces, warned that policies that raise questions about US security commitments to Korea will increase support for his country to go nuclear. While reluctance to take that fateful step is much higher in Japan, pressure to do so will mount if US security guarantees are questioned and South Korea crosses the nuclear threshold.

For all the encouragement to do more for themselves, KIDA's Kim cautioned that this could still be a problem for Washington. "Allies and partners seeking more strategic and/or tactical room to maneuver and not necessarily aligning with the US on certain matters would surely be very frustrating for the US" Trump seems to think that the US will retain its power and authority even as allies assume new responsibilities. That is unlikely. Old models of leadership and multilateral management must adjust to this new world. "The whole world is watching," said Kim, adding that "I only hope that US leaders would care as much about US leadership in global affairs as we do in allied and partner countries."

The Japan Times

**Ukraine's drone war spells end for US Army helicopter force**

David Axe

**F**OR wartime missions, the helicopter is dead. Well, mostly. The US Army - the world's biggest helicopter force - dramatically took a budgetary axe to its multi-billion-dollar portfolio of rotorcraft programs last week, canceling a next-generation scout helicopter as well as an effort to upgrade hundreds of decades-old transport helicopters.

It's no secret what motivated the Army leadership to take such drastic measures. "We are learning from the battlefield - especially in Ukraine - that aerial reconnaissance has fundamentally changed," said General Randy George, the Army's top officer. An absolute bloodbath among helicopter pilots on both sides of Russia's two-year wider war on Ukraine explains the US Army's sense of urgency. Inasmuch as the helicopter is dying, the Ukraine war is killing it. Most likely, rotorcraft will endure into their second century; but in very different roles.

In the months leading up to Russia's further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, it was mostly business as usual in Russian and Ukrainian helicopter regiments. They scouted ahead of the front lines, prepared for close-air-support missions directly attacking enemy forces and also transported troops along the front. But after the Russians attacked, a whole lot of old ways proved virtually suicidal. Ground-based air-defenses - guns and missiles - were always a serious threat to slow-flying rotorcraft. As it turns out, they're a much bigger threat than almost anyone realized. Helicopters have dropped like flies on both sides. According to a running tally by the analysts at the intelligence collective Oryx, the Russians have lost around a hundred of their pre-war force of 800 or so attack and transport helicopters. The Ukrainians have, for their part, lost half of their 60 or so helicopters - although they've gotten, from their allies, more than 80 helicopters as replacements.

The devastating loss of helicopters and, more importantly, their crews compelled the Russian and Ukrainian air forces to radically change what they use their helicopters for. Put simply, helicopters no longer fly anywhere near the front line unless the circumstances are truly extraordinary. One extraordinary circumstance was the Russian army's encirclement of the port of Mariupol in southern Ukraine in the spring of 2022. In a desperate bid to resupply the city's besieged garrison and retrieve the wounded, Ukrainian transport helicopters flew scores of miles mere feet off the ground in order to reach Mariupol without tipping off Russian air-defenders.

At least three of the helicopters didn't make it in, or back. Mariupol was the exception. By mid-2022, the closest a helicopter got to the front line under normal circumstances was a few miles. Russian and Ukrainian rotorcraft continued to haul troops and supplies - but not too close to

the fighting. They also continued to launch attacks on enemy troops - but usually from miles away, using unguided rockets they lobbed at high angles like artillery. And yet rotorcraft still fell from the sky in startling numbers. Russian attack helicopters were especially vulnerable as they hovered for 30 seconds or longer while their crew tried to steer command-guided anti-tank missiles. The Russians have lost perhaps a third of their best Ka-52 attack 'copters. The US Army isn't willing to risk its own helicopters over the front line of some future war. So it simply canceled the helicopter whose mission would have required it to fly close to enemy forces: the futuristic Future Attack Reconnaissance Aircraft scout helicopter.

The American ground-combat branch also axed an effort to upgrade 700 or more older Blackhawk transport helicopters. US Army leaders soothed their aviators - and the United States' sprawling rotorcraft industrial base - by promising to reinvest billions of dollars in savings in other helicopter programs, including expanded production of a new Blackhawk model as well as the latest version of the twin-rotor Chinook heavy-lift helicopter. Notably, neither of these types would have to fly very close to the front line in order to remain relevant. If there's a big open question, it's what America plans to do with its hundreds of Apache attack helicopters, which do have to fly close to the front line.

The likely answer has been apparent for a while now. The US Army is upgrading its Apaches to the new "Block E" version, which includes controls and radio links in the cockpit that allow the crew to control drones that operate 30 miles or more ahead of the helicopter. "This combination results in increased survivability of Apache aircrews," Army colonel Steven Van Riper explained. Unshockingly, drones are the solution to a lot of the US Army's rotorcraft problems. As it grounds more and more helicopters, the Army is launching more and more drones. One of the things the service said it would do with its rotorcraft savings is "increase investments in research and development to expand and accelerate the Army's unmanned aerial reconnaissance capability."

Again, the Ukraine war is showing how it's done. Today the air over the 600-mile front line in Ukraine might be mostly devoid of manned helicopters. But it's practically teeming with drone helicopters, especially small reusable quadcopters, hexacopters and octocopters as well as single-used quadcopters packed with around a pound of explosives.

The Ukrainians, who retain a robotics advantage over the Russians, are building and launching as many as 50,000 small drones a month. Who needs to risk a \$25-million helicopter and its crew when you can fill the air with thousands of drones, none costing more than a few thousand dollars?

The Telegraph

**Center ground growing ever-smaller**

Ranvir S. Nayar

**N**ORMALLY, few people in Europe care much about European Parliament elections - other than the members of the parliament, of course, whose political lives and livelihoods are often on the line. This year, however, all eyes are on the elections, which are still four months away but already making news.

Between June 6 and 9, more than 400 million voters in the 27 member countries of the EU will be able to choose 720 MEPs to represent them for the next five years. Voter interest in these elections has been in decline since the first poll in 1979, with turnout falling from almost 62 percent to just 42 percent in 2014, before rising back above 50 percent in 2019, when 50.62 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots. This year, there are several reasons why the European Parliament elections are attracting greater attention across the continent. Firstly, most political parties are taking them very seriously, as they coincide

with, or are likely to set the scene and narratives for, almost a dozen national parliamentary, legislative or presidential elections scheduled for this year and next. An equally strong reason for the unusually keen interest in the elections is the unprecedented corruption scandal that emerged in the Parliament in December 2022, when a vice president and several other officials, including at least three other MEPs, were accused of taking bribes from Qatar in exchange for championing the nation's agenda in Europe.

The scandal resulted in the arrest of key individuals named in the allegations and the matter is still under investigation. But it also revealed the extent to which MEPs might have been indulging in illegal, or at the very least immoral, behavior. A recent study, for example, found that at least one in four MEPs were involved in corruption cases or facing

some other type of legal action or scandal. All of this has come in very handy for those parties and politicians, mainly on the far right of the political spectrum, that have long been opposed to the European Parliament, and even the wider EU. They accuse Brussels of being an opaque, hugely overpaid bureaucracy that is completely disconnected from the realities on the streets of member nations, and which controls hundreds of trillions of euros in funds that are used not for the greater good of the people, but for their own whims and fancies. They also accuse, with some justification, Brussels, and most notably the European Commission, of developing millions of rules and regulations, many of them extraordinarily complex and intrusive, that have resulted in European industries and economies becoming highly uncompetitive.

Little wonder, then, that recent polls suggest far-right and populist parties are set to make sizable gains in the European elections, while centrist parties, both center-left and center-right, are likely to lose votes. This is a trend we saw even during the previous election in 2019. In the view of these far-right and populist parties, it is not only the corruption scandals that are indicative of all that is wrong with the EU and its administrative body, the European Commission. They have long been critical of its stance on several political and policy decisions including, notably, immigration and the rules governing agriculture, sustainability and ecology. With inflation and the cost of living still rising sharply in several European nations, far-right politicians have found other sticks with which to beat the centrists, as well as leftists. They

accuse bureaucrats in Brussels of adopting policies such as the Green Deal that have made life more expensive for Europeans, pushing up the prices of fuel, food and most other necessities of life.

As a result, almost 50 percent of the MEPs who will be elected in June might be outside of the super grand coalition of the three centrist groups. The elections might also result in the first downturn in votes for green parties in Europe, which have been on the ascendance for more than two decades. The word on the street is that many Europeans are unwilling to pay the price required to go

green in their daily lives, and so the Green Deal adopted by the EU is falling prey to populist propaganda. This shift toward the hard-right, if it plays out in the upcoming European and national elections, is bound to put huge pressure on the EU, and in particular its sustainability agenda, which the right-wingers might try to unravel or push back from its goals. Even now, the EU is struggling to ensure it will meet its commitments on climate change. All of this also means that the heightened interest in the outcome of the European Parliament elections is not limited to Europe; they will be closely watched by thousands of ecology and sustainability activists as well.

**Important Notice**

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



# Int’l recognition of Palestine can kickstart peace process

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

**UK Foreign Minister David Cameron last month announced that his country was considering recognizing a Palestinian state. The US State Department has put out a similar message. This is being touted as Israel faces an ongoing genocide case in front of the International Court of Justice.**

Israel is supposed to present a report to the court by Feb. 23 showing the measures it has taken to prevent genocide in Gaza. Any observer can see that the killing of innocent civilians has not stopped; in fact, it has only accelerated. The International Court of Justice will take the issue to the UN Security Council. But any resolution that is not in favor of Israel will likely be vetoed by the US. What could happen next is a vote in the UN General Assembly on giving Palestine full membership. This would be the right course of action. Israel has been dragging out this issue since the time of Oslo, when it got from the Palestinians a recognition of Israel but it never recognized a state of Palestine in return. All the Palestinians got was Israeli recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The Israelis kept finding reasons to avoid having to recognize a state. They claimed that the Palestinians should recognize Israel as a Jewish state. However, when Egypt and Jordan established diplomatic relations with

Tel Aviv and recognized the state of Israel, they were not asked to do the same. Why are the Palestinians only offered this specific type of recognition and what does it mean?

Israel has used all means possible to avoid talking about a Palestinian state. It first used divide and conquer, so it propped up Hamas to have the excuse that Palestinians are not united and it cannot have a discussion with a party that is committed to the destruction of the state of Israel. The other excuse Israelis give is that the Palestinian Authority is inept and hence Palestinians are unable to govern themselves. Anyone who observes the Palestinian issue closely can easily conclude that Israelis do not want a Palestinian state. Now, they are finally spelling it out. In December, the Israeli ambassador to the UK said it bluntly during a TV interview. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu bragged to Likud party lawmakers that he was the "only one" who could prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Of course, the Likud is committed to settlements, which means it is opposed to the concept of a Palestinian state on what it considers to be the land of Israel. Recently, Israeli officials have found another way to push back against the idea of a Palestinian state. They say it would be

"rewarding terrorism." This way, the "terrorists" would have achieved their goal. However, Israelis have resorted to terrorism throughout their history. Menachem Begin killed innocent people and so did Yitzhak Shamir, but Israel was still founded. In fact, both Begin and Shamir went on to become prime minister.

The international community today recognizes that the occupation is no longer sustainable. Regional stability requires a Palestinian state. However, the world should also recognize that, if the issue is left to the Israelis, it will never happen. A Palestinian state with well-defined borders should be imposed on Israel. This would push Tel Aviv to discuss the other details, such as the shape of the state, the settlements, the issue of refugees' right of return, the security arrangements, etc. However, without a solid starting point, which is the recognition of a Palestinian state along the borders of 1967, the negotiations will be as futile as they have been in the 30 years since the Oslo Accords. The mistake that the Arab world committed in 2002 was that it offered an initiative to Israel but did not push for it.

The Arab Peace Initiative offers Israel unanimous recognition and normalization in return for a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Israelis did not even

accept discussing it. To be fair, even if today Israel had a prime minister who believed in the two-state solution, it is very unlikely he would be able to deliver on that. The reason is that the settler movement would be able to block it. Today, the mood in Israel is not in favor of giving the Palestinians a state. The thinking is that the Gazans were under blockade for 17 years and yet were still able to carry out the Oct. 7 attacks. What would happen if they had a state of their own and were positioned strategically on the hills overlooking Tel Aviv? So, a Palestinian state should be imposed on Israel.

This is the time for the Arab world to rectify the mistake it made in 2002. Today, Arab countries should push and use all the leverage they have with the US to pressure it into recognizing the state of Palestine. This would facilitate an international recognition of Palestine. Once a Palestinian state is a fait accompli, the Israelis will have no choice but to seal a deal. A Palestinian state not only involves the fate of the Palestinians, but also the stability of the region.

Palestine has long been a central cause for the Arab and Muslim worlds. It has also been a cause that all radical movements across the region have used to gain legitimacy. It is now time to pressure Israel into peace and the first step toward achieving that is through international recognition of the state of Palestine.

# Voters elect anti-George Santos to send a message to Washington

Max Burns

**THE Democrats' winning streak continues. Despite concerns about President Joe Biden's low approval ratings and inability to pull away from leading Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump in the polls, the Democrats claimed another victory in a closely watched off-cycle race.**

Long Island isn't normally considered the center of political gravity for the nation. But then in 2022, the bombastic Republican George Santos won the House seat in New York's 3rd District in an upset victory that shocked the state's political watchers. Little did anyone in Great Neck know that the George Santos show would become an early contender for the scandal of the decade and Santos would be expelled on ethics violations within a year of winning office, ushering in a special election Tuesday to replace him. Almost everything about Santos' public biography turned out to be untrue, or suspect.

That's made this true swing district a bellwether for the 2024 election. The candidates on both sides - Democrat Tom Suozzi and Republican Mazi Pilip - tacked toward the middle and largely focused on national issues such as immigration, abortion and crime while millions in campaign cash flowed into the district. Suozzi struck a tough tone on immigration, while Pilip seemed to drag her feet in acknowledging she had voted for Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump. Suozzi raised over \$4.5 million in the last four months of the campaign, alongside an eye-popping \$12.3 million in spending from outside groups on both sides. Even Pilip, a first-time candidate only nominated after a costly and brutal internal party battle, raked in \$1.3 million. For locals, Tuesday will thankfully bring an end to the \$22 million in television ads that have blanketed Long Island for months.

Suozzi's victory demonstrates that even with voter attention on issues like immigration and crime that generally play well for Republicans, Democrats

don't need to worry they can't win in this environment. It likely didn't hurt that the Republicans in power now have been making headlines for infighting, gridlock and dysfunction. Significantly, after hammering away about a crisis at the southern border, the House GOP followed Trump's command to kill the Senate's bipartisan compromise on immigration, instead impeaching Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas by the narrowest of margins. It's a move sure to be defeated in the Senate and leave Congress without any accomplishments on immigration.

Suozzi staked his campaign on the theory that voters would blame Republicans for two years of incompetence in Congress and the growing extremism of Trump's rhetoric. He also wielded Republicans' failure to pass a border bill as a political weapon, lambasting the GOP's dysfunctionality while criticizing Pilip for waffling on the issue. Suozzi continued that theme into his victory speech on Tuesday night, emphasizing that voters want politicians who will fix problems. "The people of Long Island and Queens are sick and tired of the political bickering. They've had it," he declared. Indeed, the result is also a major blow to Johnson, who has seen his already razor-thin 219-212 majority whittled down by yet another critical vote. Johnson badly needed a reliable vote in Pilip. Instead, he's now likely to face even more scathing criticism from Republican colleagues who are already skeptical of his ability to deliver wins. Suozzi's victory allows Johnson virtually no margin for error as he struggles to navigate an increasingly complex legislative landscape.

Meanwhile, Democrats can credibly claim to have the momentum going into the general election. Suozzi's win caps off two years in which Democrats have outperformed expectations at the ballot box and delivered surprise losses to incumbent Republicans. It also offers Democrats a big

win after a week that saw Biden on the defensive over renewed concerns about his age. Still, it would be a mistake to see the results as only indicative of national trends.

Progressive Democrats laid the blame for Santos' election and Republicans' strong 2022 performance squarely at the feet of New York state Democratic Party chair Jay Jacobs. New York Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez accused Jacobs of costing Democrats the House in 2022 thanks to party mismanagement and poor strategy. Jacobs struck a defiant tone at the time, refusing calls from hundreds of party members to resign.

After all, the district is left-leaning, and Democrats generally outnumber Republicans among the key early voting demographic. What's more, President Joe Biden won the district by 8 points in 2020. Santos initially lost to then-incumbent Rep. Suozzi in 2020 by 12 points before riding to victory two years later when Suozzi gave up the seat to run unsuccessfully for governor. Republicans last held the seat in 2010. And of course you can't discount the specific candidates themselves. As a first-time congressional candidate facing a Democratic funding juggernaut, Pilip was outmatched by Suozzi at the debate and in field operations. By comparison, Suozzi's team spent much of the last year laying the groundwork for a full-throttle campaign that played out on the congressm-elect's old turf. After an eventful year and a half of Santos, voters were justifiably afraid of gambling on yet another political newcomer.

Perhaps burned by the experience of an unvetted Santos, the relative newcomer Pilip couldn't win the argument that the district needed another fresh face. It won't be lost on Biden that voters are once again showing their willingness to stick with familiar names and veteran politicians in a campaign season marked by political upheaval. In the future, expect to see more swing-state Democrats borrowing from Suozzi's playbook.

CNN

# Suozzi makes Democrats look good for a New York minute

Gail Collins

**HEY, Tom Suozzi beat Mazi Pilip. Are you excited? OK, I know it was only a congressional race in the New York suburbs. But he stomped her! The Democrats had been truly afraid that voters would be too cranky about the border and Biden Boredom to rally around a career politician whose greatest claim to fame was quite possibly his time as Nassau County executive.**

Suozzi hardly super-embraced President Biden. ("The bottom line is he's old.") But he was certainly less standoffish about his party's leader than Pilip, a Republican who spent most of the campaign declining to say who she voted for in 2020. And this was, truly, a big Biden win. Congressional races are mainly about the party and its leaders. The candidates are sometimes very, very colorful. Or very, very scary. But the only thing that really matters is which side has the most votes. Thanks to the folks in New York's Third Congressional District, the Republican edge in the House is now even itsy-bitsier - a mere three irritable members are enough to ruin any plan.

Feel free to dwell on this. We've got nine months of presidential politics to get through. Nine months of Joe Biden's age and Donald Trump's ... well, you pick your favorite. For now let's go with his comments on NATO - encouraging Russia "to do whatever the hell they want" to member states that don't pay up. Or his recent insistence that Taylor Swift is bound to come over to his side because he made her a lot of money. Or - OK, I know you really don't want to go on. Suozzi is not exactly a romantic figure. He's a career politician who chose to not seek re-election to run unsuccessfully for governor in 2022, a decision that very temporarily gave America an

unexpected gift: Representative George Santos.

Remember that? It was the first time Republicans elected an openly gay non-incumbent to the House. Very exciting for a minute or two, until we discovered Santos had lied about pretty much everything else: education, jobs, criminal history, kindness to animals. He did, however, make history on one front, becoming only the sixth member of the House to be kicked out of office by his comrades since the founding of the Republic. (Toward the end of the campaign, Democrats ran commercials comparing Pilip to Santos, but she was pretty darned successful in keeping him off her team - so much so that Santos announced he wasn't planning to vote.)

After Santos left, the House Republicans were stuck with a majority so narrow, they couldn't even manage to accomplish some of the most mindless partisan posturing on their agenda. "Miss me yet?" Santos posted on X after his former colleagues initially failed to get enough votes to impeach Alejandro Mayorkas, the secretary of homeland security.

I think I speak for virtually the entire politically aware universe when I say, um, no. So here we are. The district that gave us George Santos has traded him in for Tom Suozzi.

It bears repeating that this was a stupendous win for Biden and the Democrats, even though Suozzi frequently seemed reluctant to remind the electorate which party he belonged to. He was just a guy who wanted to increase border security and stuff. Pilip, meanwhile, basically ran around the district hollering "It's me! The Republican! Republican!" I said, Republican!" Pretty much all she wanted to talk about, really. Although to

be fair, Pilip's biography is way more interesting than Suozzi's. Born in Ethiopia, she immigrated to Israel, where she worked with the paratroopers. Moved to the United States about 20 years ago, around which time Suozzi was preparing for his first unsuccessful race for governor.

But let's give the man credit. And a little time to enjoy his victory, since the Third District is going to look very different in November, when Suozzi will run for re-election. Because of a court ruling, the state once again has to redraw all the congressional boundaries in New York, and we will be hearing a whole, whole lot of charges of gerrymandering. There is no way you want to discuss gerrymandering right now, although it is sorta comforting to know that this is one of the few issues in which both parties are prepared to be equally nefarious when they have the chance. The only thing you need to dwell on right now, people, is that the Democrats won another seat in the House. When Suozzi is sworn in, the Republicans will have a squeaky majority of 219 to 213. Making life even more miserable for House Speaker Mike "Boring Isn't Necessarily Bad" Johnson.

Demonstrating that while the nation is nervous about immigration, voters are cool with people like Suozzi who claim there can be a grand compromise that will calm things down. And perhaps crucially, that people are beginning to notice that boring is not, in fact, necessarily bad. "Let's send the message to our friends running the Congress these days, stumbling around for Trump - to start running the country," the congressman-elect told his cheering supporters. It was, to be honest, a pretty dull victory speech. But that's the message, right? We've had enough drama. Let's just get some stuff done, quietly.

The New York Times

# China’s propaganda push in Spanish fails to impress

Wenhao Ma & Jaime Moreno

**CHINA has been scaling up its influence campaign in Spanish-speaking countries in the past few years by producing and publishing tens of thousands of videos through the three largest Spanish-language YouTube channels of its state media, a recent study finds.**

However, the study also shows that most of the videos have very few views and have failed to make an impact among the Spanish-speaking public. The report, released Tuesday by Chile's Center for Analysis for Democracy, examined the YouTube channels of CGTN Espanol, Xinhua Espanol and Hola China. The target audience is mainly viewers living in Latin America and Spain.

Since 2009, the three channels have run up a combined total of more than 800,000 subscribers and have published more than 80,000 videos, the study found. But it said most of those videos are seen by no more than a few hundred people. The Center of Analysis for Democracy analyzed about 5,000 videos from each channel.

The report said videos promoting the People's Republic of China system, infrastructure, and development were prominent, as was news emphasizing Chinese culture and poverty alleviation in Xinjiang. The most common topics were related to China and Xi Jinping, followed by issues such as the US competition with China, and US crises such asentanyl addiction and migration waves. The videos often portray topics related to the United States with a negative tone.

The report said Xinhua acts as "an amplifier for China's foreign

policy in the region," highlighting Chinese activities, projects and the relationship between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and local governments, and promoting "policies or candidates in the region that align with China's ideas of governance." Sascha Hannig Nunez, author of the report, told VOA that most of the content on the official media channels is consistent with what the Chinese government says, and independent thought is almost nonexistent.

"The whole system of channels is clearly guided toward enhancing Beijing's soft power and public diplomacy through Chinese content," she said. "These are institutions of the CCP first and media outlets second." Victoria Chonn-Ching, a nonresident fellow with the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center, said the purpose of China's media operations in Latin America is often to persuade regional countries to choose Beijing instead of Washington. "A lot of messages come into building China's image, in that it is a friendly partner, a partner that wants to work with many countries in the region. And at the same time, it also comes with the message, 'This is how we do better vis-à-vis the United States,'" Chonn-Ching said during a panel discussion on Monday at the Atlantic Council. The Chinese Embassy in Washington told VOA, that China "was not aware of the specifics" of state media's operations on YouTube in Spanish-speaking countries.

"Chinese media conduct journalism in an objective and truthful

manner," the embassy said. Nunez's report also said that Xinhua manipulates information by finding supporters and generalizing their opinions or exaggerating their authority. A video titled "China's new growth and welfare goals are praised in Argentina" uses an expert to discuss China's development goals, but the expert is the president of the China-Argentina Friendship Association, who is known for his close ties to the CCP and is not a mainstream, influential figure in Argentina. Hernan Alberro, an international relations and human rights consultant and a member of China in the World at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told VOA that China's strategy is to muddy the water. "By flooding the field with information ranging from good and nice stories to pure and simple disinformation, what they end up doing is generating ... a kind of generalized skepticism towards all kinds of news," he said.

"Beyond the fact that disinformation continues to seep into our society, there is a phenomenon that is starting to happen that I am beginning to notice, which has to do with the generalized attitudes of many educated people, who say they no longer believe in anything ... to avoid getting sucked into fake news." So, they say they do not believe anyone. The problem with this is that not believing anyone is simply a fantasy." The Nunez report states that Xinhua also helped promote disinformation from Russia in 2022. It claimed that a US laboratory in Ukraine had produced a very dangerous virus.

The Spanish-language channels of Chinese state media have often broadcast content from Russian state media in the past two years, which YouTube blocked following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The report said the Chinese state media's approach on YouTube is "aimed at engaging audiences with a high volume of content" and acquiring a following, then periodically pushing more political content to recurrent viewers. However, the vast majority of their videos published since 2016 have received fewer than 500 views each, according to the report.

"The truth is that the impact is quite moderate, not to say minor, because few people see it," Alberro said. "In general, it is content that tends to be quite unattractive to the Latin American audience. Yet, like any initiative, this has a learning process, and we do not know if in five years the landscape changes radically. And Latin America is massively consuming this type of content. But today, that is not happening."

Nunez said even if the influence of state media is small, political propaganda and false information still pose a certain threat to the Spanish-speaking public, because when it comes to understanding China, Spanish netizens don't have many other sources of information. "Since YouTube is such an important platform for younger audiences, and since there aren't many alternatives to know about China in the language, the [Chinese state media have] advantages in its lack of competition with alternative sources in the language."

VOA

# For the first time in my life, I’m now beginning to think Britain is finished

Allister Heath

**BRITAIN'S decline over the past 25 years has been staggeringly rapid. Almost everything is getting worse, and almost nothing is getting better. Our public and private institutions are broken, presided over by an incompetent, selfish and narcissistic ruling class. Living standards, when adjusted properly for living and property costs, are declining.**

Even the simplest things don't work any longer. Queuing, scarcity and congestion are rife, our infrastructure is embarrassingly poor, and the honest and hardworking face endless bureaucratic battles to obtain what they are due. Free riding, crime, disorder, fraud, littering and generalised rule-bending are rife, and all too often tolerated by apathetic citizens and an indifferent state. Britain's residual virtues, our individualism, independence of mind, tolerance and openness, uniquely appealing features of our national character, are fading. Like a frog in boiling water, few saw the full scale of the decline coming until it was too late, and those who did were ridiculed by the bien-pensant. Yet even in 2024, when millions now realise that Britain is on the wrong track, there is no hope of meaningful improvement. The Tories have been abysmal, but Labour will be even worse: Keir Starmer will double down on the social-democratic and culturally nihilistic policies tested to destruction by the Conservatives.

In the 2000s, Britain had a particular idea of itself: a country of post-Thatcherite property-owners which reconciled modernity and tradition, globalisation and national self-determination, low-tax dynamism and fairness, where you didn't need IDs to vote, where MPs weren't

attacked by screaming mobs, and where, finally, racism was increasingly a thing of the past. We saw ourselves as a socially mobile, law-abiding land of high trust, low corruption, the rule of law, improving race relations and religious toleration: a uniquely open society and a model to the Western world. Such a vision is now largely obsolete. An Englishman's home was his castle, making a huge difference to our national psyche, until our deliberate policy of rationing new housing at a time of mass immigration robbed the under-40s of the chance of owning anything of their own. "This is a free country", we used to maintain when presented with another idiotic proposal to control us, but that too is over, killed off by the woke war on free speech, the jailing of Christian preachers, the sugar tax, the surveillance society and the Covid lockdowns.

In narrow GDP growth terms, we continue to outperform the true laggards on the continent, as Brexiters correctly predicted, but that should be no consolation. Our manufacturing sector is being priced out of global markets by the rush to net zero, our energy policy is a hideous farce, our misregulated City is in decline, and our tax system an absurd conspiracy against hard work and merit, with marginal tax rates back at 1970s levels for some. The socialist NHS, despite massive increases in funding, is a horror show, and one of the main reasons not to live in the UK. Some 5.6 million adults are on out-of-work benefits, and yet immigration is running at extraordinary levels. Our Armed Forces have been slashed, and are now being subject to a woke

takeover.

Yet while all of these instances of national enfeeblement are tragic, they pale in comparison with the most terrifying regression of them all. We thought that we had progressed decisively as a society, that we had vanquished racism and religious discrimination, that the institutions of our liberal state would prevent a minority from facing persecution, and that our ruling class would never allow any subset of the population to be openly hated and othered again. How wrong we were. That anti-Semitism, the oldest of hatreds, is back on the streets and screens of Britain, is terrifying enough; but the fact that this explosion of prejudice is being treated in such a cavalier fashion by the authorities and the mainstream broadcast media - and in some cases is even being rationalised and normalised - is a catastrophic development that casts doubt about Britain's very future.

This is the worst moment for Britain's Jews since the pogroms that disgraced Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester in the summer of 1947. The double-standards, the never ending "pro-Palestine" marches that are inevitably marred by egregious, open, anti-Semitism and evil slops, the bullying, the victim blaming, the spreading of fake news, the wilful, blatant lies and denialism of Hamas's atrocities, the obsessive interest in, and delegitimisation, of Israel, a state that accounts for just 0.25 per cent of the Middle East's landmass, is its only multi-religious democracy and which is fighting for survival against neighbours that reject its very existence, stink of a replay of the 1930s. The return of

anti-Semitism is not just an existential threat to Britain's tiny, 292,000-strong Jewish community, but a damning indictment of a Britain that is regressing into darkness. As Lord Sacks put it in 2016, "the hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews ... the appearance of anti-Semitism in a culture is the first symptom of a disease, the early warning sign of collective breakdown."

Already a non-Jewish MP has resigned out of fear for his own safety. Traditional British democratic norms are being upended by far-Left and Islamist extremists. Cranks, conspiracy theorists and racists appear to have entered mainstream politics in significant numbers, and many seem attracted by the Labour Party. Anti-Semites never just target Jews. They are full-service, equal opportunity bigots who oppress and impoverish and destroy all that they touch, and despise freedom and human flourishing.

Starmer is genuinely committed to fighting anti-Semitism, but he has proved unforgivably slow in his attempts at rooting out prejudice in recent days. He rightly purged the Corbynites, but the rot in his party evidently goes far deeper, having contaminated even "centrist" or "Right-wing" circles. Some in his party are seeking votes among far-Left and Islamist extremists: a morally righteous party would announce that they are not interested in such voters, and terminate all relevant candidates, even if such a stance costs them power. In the absence of such a step, we face the prospect of many new Labour MPs being, at the very least, soft on anti-Semitism. The Tories have failed, but Labour will be infinitely worse, Britain is hanging on by a thread.





# PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 1,133 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Thursday, losing 1,133.78 points, a negative change of 1.82 percent, closing at 61,020.06 points against 62,153.84 points the previous trading day.

A total of 345,126,091 shares valuing Rs.11.873 billion were traded during the day as compared to 303,886,073 shares valuing Rs.14.687 billion the last day.

Some 344 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 85 of them recorded gains and 238 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 21 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 33,326,471 shares at Rs 4.3 per share, PIAC(A) with 28,606,500

shares at Rs 10.61 per share and Media Times Limited with 22,428,500 shares at Rs 1.98 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 223.75 per share price, closing at Rs.8,500.0, whereas the runner-up was Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited with a Rs 11.50 rise in its per share price to Rs 740.00.

Mari Petroleum Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 54.67 per share closing at Rs2,267.11, followed by Mahmood Textile Mills Limited with Rs 42.02 decline to close at Rs.518.28.

**Rupee sheds 06 paisa against dollar:** The Rupee on Thursday weakened by 06 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.37

against the previous day's closing of Rs279.31.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs279.15 and Rs281.95, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 95 paisa to close at Rs299.85 against the last day's closing of Rs298.90, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen gained 01 paisa to close at Rs1.86, whereas an increase of 05 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs350.50 compared to the last closing of Rs350.45.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 paisa each to close at

Rs76.06 and Rs74.49.

**Gold rates up by Rs.300 to Rs.211,100 per tola:** The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.300 and was sold at Rs.211,100 in the local market on Thursday against its sale at Rs. 210,800 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.257 to Rs.180,984 from Rs 180,727 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.165,902 from Rs. 165,666, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs2,580 and Rs.2,211.93 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$3 to \$2,013 against its sale at \$2,010 the previous day, the Association reported.



RAWALPINDI: Vendors displaying dry fruits on roadside in Rajabazar area to attract customers.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships, America, Lady Dimine, Taho Australia and Khairpurcarrying Containers, Wheat, Rape seeds and Mogas, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Grain Terminal and Oil Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Rong Da Chang Sha, Al-Jassasiya and Evrialiwith General cargo, LNG and Wheat also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during last 24 hours.

A total of 09 ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, two Ships, Lokoja and Alcyone-I left the port on Thursday morning and four more ships, America, Stockholm Eagle, Bow Endeavor and Epic Sunter are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Throughput during last 24 hours stood at 131,788 tonnes, comprising 94,315 tonnes imports cargo and 37,473 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,710 Containers (660 TEUs Imports and 2,050 TEUs export) was handled at the port.

Here are 11 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, MU Dan Song, Al-Jassasiya and Marin Aman & two more ships Maersk Cape town and Sea Span Beacon carrying Iron ore, LNG, Palm oil and Containers are expected to take berth sat MW-2, EEETL, LCT and QICTon Thursday.

# CCP approves two mineral sector

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has granted approval to two mergers in the mining of copper and minerals sector in Balochistan. In this regard, CCP approved the acquisition of cumulative 66.66 % shareholding in M/s. National Resources (Private) Limited by two public listed companies.

National Resources (Private) Limited is a private limited company engaged in exploration, survey, extraction, excavation, mining and boring of minerals. Its primary purpose is the potential development of the mineral sector in Balochistan. The infusion of investment in this sector will give a boost to mineral exploration.

M/s. Lucky Cement Limited, a public listed company engaged in the manufacturing and marketing of cement, sent a pre-merger application to acquire 33.33 % shares in National Resources (Private) Limited from M/s. Y.B. Pakistan Limited.

Similarly, M/s. Fatima Fertilizer Company Limited, a public listed company, engaged in the manufacturing, producing, buying, selling, importing, and exporting of fertilizers and chemicals, sent a pre-merger application to acquire 33.33 % shareholding in National Resources (Private) Limited from M/s. Reliance Commodities (Private) Limited.

CCP approved the mergers as the proposed transactions did not lead to the acquirers' gaining dominance in the relevant market post-transaction. Lucky Cement and Fatima Fertilizer's interest in investing in the mining sector signifies a positive shift towards economic diversification and growth, promising to unlock new opportunities and drive innovation.

## Elevating Pakistani interiors: IMARAT Builders Mall welcomes Z Homes partnership



F.P. Report

KARACHI: IMARAT Builders Mall (IBM), a haven for all things construction and home improvement, and Z Homes, the premium furniture and home décor brand of Zakaria Brothers, today announced a strategic partnership in a contract signing ceremony held at IBM.

This collaboration marks a significant step forward in providing customers with a wider selection of exceptional furniture and enhanc-

ing the overall homeownership experience in Pakistan.

"This partnership signifies a groundbreaking leap towards offering our customers an extensive selection of premium, modern furniture and home décor options at IBM," stated Farhan Javed, Group Director IMARAT, who signed the MoU on behalf of IBM. "By bringing Z Homes' renowned commitment to quality and innovation to our platform, we are enriching homes with style, comfort, and functionality.

This aligns with the essence of IMARAT Builders Mall to cater to user preferences, and ultimately, empower individuals to create their dream living spaces."

Echoing the sentiment, Abdul Wasay, Managing Director, Zakaria Brothers, who signed the MoU on his company's behalf, said, "We are thrilled to collaborate with IMARAT Builders Mall, a name synonymous with trust and innovation in the construction industry. This partnership allows us to showcase our exquisite Z

Homes collection to a wider audience, making premium quality and contemporary designs accessible to all."

IMARAT Builders Mall, known for its curated selection of building materials and home improvement solutions, has established itself as a one-stop destination for homeowners and builders. By partnering with Z Homes, IBM adds a new dimension to its offerings, providing customers with a seamless experience to furnish their homes with high-quality furniture that complements their construction needs.

Z Homes, recognized for its dedication to craftsmanship and design innovation, brings a diverse range of premium furniture to the table. This collaboration between IMARAT Builders Mall and Z Homes promises to significantly enhance the home shopping experience for customers in Pakistan. By combining their expertise and strengths, both entities aim to set a new standard for quality, affordability, and design excellence in the industry, ultimately contributing to the creation of homes that are not only functional but also reflect individual style and personality.

# Asian markets mostly up, tracking Wall Street gains

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Most Asian markets rose Thursday, tracking a rebound in Europe and New York and following positive remarks from a

senior Federal Reserve official that US inflation was headed in the right direction.

Figures on Tuesday showing the US consumer price index slowed less than expected in January dealt a body blow to hopes of an early interest rate cut and sent Asia indices mostly lower.

But investors returned to buying on expectations borrowing costs will be reduced this year, while traders also cheered strong earnings releases that soothed any worries about companies' bottom lines.

"Over time we think it will become clear that January was more one-off vs a new CPI trend," 22V Research strategists led by Dennis DeBusschere said.

Traders will be closely following the release of the producer price index, which is due at the end of the week.

Stephen Innes, of SPI Asset Management, added that the US stock market's rebound "offers some respite following the bolt from the blue delivered by inflation figures" on Tuesday.

"Notwithstanding inflation, which is still too high versus arbitrarily defined targets, the US macro picture continues evolving consistently with a soft landing," he added.

The Fed's vice chair for supervision, Michael Barr, said the central bank should be "careful" about the timing of interest rate cuts but added that he was "confi-

dent" inflation was heading back to the target of two percent.

"We need to see continued good data before we can begin the process of reducing the federal funds rate," Barr said.

In Tokyo, official data released Thursday showed Germany overtook Japan last year as the world's third-biggest economy, primarily because of a sharp fall in the yen.

Japan's economy grew 1.9 percent last year, though it contracted for a second straight quarter in October-December, pushing it into a technical recession.

Japan's nominal 2023 gross domestic product in dollar terms was \$4.2 trillion, government data showed, compared with \$4.5 trillion for Germany, according to figures revealed last month.

Still, Tokyo's Nikkei rose, while there were also gains in Hong Kong, Sydney, Singapore, Manila and Bangkok.

Taipei's Taiex stocks hit a record high, fuelled by a surge in chip giant Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) after it reported strong sales that lifted optimism for the sector and demand for chips used for artificial intelligence.

The Taiex briefly jumped as much as 3.5 percent at the opening, surpassing a January 2022 peak, as traders returned from the Lunar New Year holiday.

"The migration to bigger large language models will boost demand for higher-end chips, which benefits TSMC's leading-edge foundry business," according to a note from analysts including Charlie Chan.

## Tokyo stocks close higher

TOKOY (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher Thursday, supported by a bounce on Wall Street, with attention turning to the release of fresh US inflation data at the end of the week.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 1.21 percent, or 454.62 points, to 38,157.94 while the broader Topix index ended up 0.28 percent, or 7.26 points, at 2,591.85.

"The Japanese market bounced back after US and European major indices rebounded," IwaiCosmo Securities said.

Traders were cheered by another batch of healthy US earnings results, and the brokerage added that Tokyo was supported by a "positive evaluation of Japanese companies' earnings reports" in recent days.

The release of the US producer price index, which is due Friday, will be closely followed after data showing consumer prices came down slower than expected in January.

Investors were also digesting preliminary figures for October-December, which showed the Japanese economy expanded 1.9 percent last year.

However, the data showed a second straight quarter of contraction, pushing it into a technical recession. The figures also showed Germany had overtaken Japan as the world's third-largest economy. The dollar fetched 150.12 yen Thursday, against 150.60 yen in New York.

Among major shares in Tokyo, SoftBank Group advanced 3.59 percent to 8,502 yen, chip-making equipment manufacturer Tokyo Electron surged 5.01 percent to 35,210 yen and Mitsubishi Electric rose 3.60 yen to 2,201 yen.

# Soybean promotion imperative to cut \$1200m

FAISALABAD (APP): The agriculture experts said that promotion of soybean cultivation was imperative to curtail soybean import bill worth \$1200 million.

They were addressing the soybean conference arranged at the Center for Advanced Studies in Agriculture and Food Security, University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqar Ahmad Khan said that the UAF would establish 1000 demonstration/ trial spots of high-yielding soybean at farmer's fields this year while last year, 170 farms were demonstrated in a bid to encourage the crop cultivation. He said that China is the world's largest importer of the soybean whereas the US is the largest exporter of this commodity.

He said that Pakistan is importing essential commodities worth \$10 billion per annum and half of this import comprises of edible oil. He said that cultivation of the soybean would address the nutrition crisis. India, in order to promote the local soybean cultivation, imposed the import duty on this commodity and we should also adopt such strategy, he added.

He said that soybeans are a major global commodity and contribute significantly to international trade. Soybeans are an

excellent source of protein and source of vegetable oil worldwide.

He said that UAF established soybean farms across the country and soybean can be cultivated in Pakistan with different varieties.

He said that the industry should take the lead for its promotion and address the market issue.

He said that we have to curtail the misconception about GM crops prevailing in some segments of society. The GM/non GM both varieties will help address the challenges of food insecurity. The law of the land permits introduction of GM-crops including soybean. There are unfair hurdles that need to be removed on urgent basis, he added.

Director CAS Dr Sultan Habib Ullah said that the university was taking the technologies to the farmers' field so as to strengthen the sector with scientific work. The tangible research work on agriculture was being carried out that will help food security, he added.

Dr Zaheer Ahmed said that the university was working on 5000 lines of the soybean. He said that soybeans can be cultivated in different environments and soils of the world. However, genetic screening is required on demand. He said that soybean can be cultivated in the different seasons in Pakistan.

He said that in summer,

the sowing should be carried in standing water. He added that a maximum yield of more than 50 mounds can be achieved. It can be grown all over Pakistan. He said that every year 10 farmers will be added at each demonstration site under the ongoing soybean campaign by UAF.

President Anjum-an-e-Kashkaran Punjab Rana Iftikhar Muhammad said that if the demands of soybeans are met at the local level, it will improve the performance of the poultry industry. Pakistan Agriculture Research Council In-Charge Oil Seed Dr. Mohammad Arshad, emphasized joint efforts to tackle agricultural challenges by strengthening linkages between industry and research institutions. Chairman Kissan Ittehad Council Shaukat said that food security should be ensured by developing agriculture on a scientific basis while solving farmers' problems.

Mumtaz Feed CEO Amir Mumtaz and Jahangir from APSEA, CEO Soybean Okal China Center, Dr. Khalid Shouq and other notables also spoke.

The different organizations, businessmen, industrialists and progressive farmers participated in the conference whereas soybean valued added food product exhibition was put on display that remained a center for attraction for the food lovers.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Sidra Jalal Civil Judge-III Matta Swat. Case # 124/1. Institution 3/7/2023. Next Hearing date 15/03/2024. Shafiq Ullah etc.Vs. Abdul Ghaffar etc. Notice to (2) Arsalan Khan s/o Muhammad Akbar (9) Sardara d/o Gul Khan (18/1) Saeed Ullah (18/2) Raheed Ullah (18/3) Shakir Ullah sons Haya Khan (18/4) Mst samaat Bibi (18/5) Mst. Tasleem Bibi (18/5) Mst. Hina Bibi d/o Haya Khan (18/7) Mst. Khaneda Haya Khan (23) Jahangir Bacha (25) Muhammad Zaib Bacha sons Gul Bar Mian (35) Muntazir Bibi d/o Gulbar Mian (52) Msts. Rukhsana (52) Saeeda d/o Dolat Mand (53) Mst. Bar Haleema (54) Bacha Mahal (55) Bakht Haram (56) Jameela d/o Muhammad Ameen (57) Msts. Jehanzeb (58) Amna (59) Hameeda (60) Naseem Akhtar (61) Razia d/o Muhammad Akbar (63) Msts. Shahi Sultan (64) Chand Bibi (65) Shaista Bibi d/o Mian Muambar r/o Lalkoor Tehsil Matta Swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 15/03/2024/ Ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this Court.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Sidra Jalal Civil Judge-III Tehsil Matta District Swat. Case # 92/1. Institution 23/05/2023. Next hearing date 8/03/2024. Liaqat Ali etc. Vs. Gul Rehman etc. Notice to (1) Bacha Rana d/o Noor Rehman (10) Mir Alam (11) Khurshid sons Aziz ur Rehman (12) Mst. Bakht Mahal (13) Bibi Aiesha (14) Nazoo d/o Azizur Rehman (15) Mian Gulshy Qalam widow Mian Khan (16) Muhammad Farooq (17) Akhtar Ali (18) Asghar Ali sons Mian Khan (19) Mst. Nadia (20) Zakia (21) Naseem Akhtar d/o Mian Khan r/o Khareri Tehsil Matta District Swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 8/03/2024 ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this Court.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Jauhar Ali Safi Civil Judge-I/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No. 611/1, Institution 7/2/2023. Date of hearing 23/12/2023. Saifur Rehman Vs. Gul Zada etc. Notice to Sheren Zada s/o Peer Zada resident of Torwarsak Tehsil Daggar District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 27/2/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.





## In brief

## Haughey wins first world swim gold

DOHA (AFP/APP): Siobhan Haughey of Hong Kong won the first long-course world title of her career by taking gold in the women's 200m freestyle.

Haughey, the Olympic silver medalist at both the 100m and 200m free in Tokyo, also gave Hong Kong the first world gold in its history. She touched first in 1min 54.89sec, ahead of New Zealand's Erika Fairweather and Brianna Throssell of Australia. Haughey, 26, who has won three short-course world golds in her career, grabbed her chance with the three medalists from the Fukuoka world championships last year missing from the lineup in Doha. "It means so much to me, especially since in the past few times I just missed out on the podium. So it is really special," she said. "I hoped the time would be a little better but I think there is a lot to learn from this race." There was also a first world title in the pool for Ireland, thanks to Daniel Wiffen's win in the men's 800m freestyle, in a time of 7:40.94.

## Rizwan Javed banned

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United Kingdom-based club cricketer Rizwan Javed has been banned from all cricket for 17 and a half years after he was found guilty of five different breaches of the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) Anti-Corruption Code for Participants (the 'Code'). Rizwan was among eight players and officials charged by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on behalf of the ECB (in its capacity as the Designated Anti-Corruption Official under the Code) in September last year in relation to the 2021 Abu Dhabi T10 Cricket League and attempts to corrupt matches in that tournament, which attempts were disrupted, said a press release. Michael J Beloff KC, Chair of the ICC Code of Conduct Committee (acting as the ECB's Disciplinary Panel), came to the decision after Rizwan failed to respond to the charges and was, therefore, deemed to have admitted that he had committed the offences charged, to have waived his right to a hearing and to have acceded to the imposition of a sanction. Rizwan was found guilty of Article 2.1.1, Article 2.1.3, Article 2.1.4, Article 2.4.4 and Article 2.4.6.

## Rohit, Jadeja steer India to 185-3

RAJKOT (AFP/APP): Skipper Rohit Sharma stood unbeaten on 97 to help steer India to 185-3 at tea alongside Ravindra Jadeja after a top-order stutter against England in the third Test on Thursday. The pair lifted India from 33-3 in Rajkot and put on 152 runs for the hosts' first century partnership in the five-match series, which is level at 1-1. The left-handed Jadeja (68 not out) and Rohit combined the right dose of caution and aggression to thwart the England attack in a wicketless second session. After India won the toss, England pace bowler Mark Wood struck two early blows to put the home side on the back foot in the first hour of play. Rohit kept calm to guide India to 93-3 at lunch and kept up the charge in the second session, prompting England skipper Ben Stokes to rotate his bowlers in his landmark 100th Test. Jadeja, promoted up the order to number five ahead of debutant Sarfaraz Khan, raised his fifty on a hot afternoon. Wood came in as the only change for England and had the left-handed Yashasvi Jaiswal caught at slip by Joe Root for 10 in the fourth over.

## Nadal puts return on ice, admits 'not ready to compete'

MADRID (AFP/APP): Rafael Nadal on Wednesday was forced to shelve his plans to return to action at next week's Qatar Open, admitting he is "not ready to compete".

The 37-year-old missed most of last year with a hip injury sustained at the Australian Open before making his comeback at last month's Brisbane International.

However, a small muscle tear then forced the 37-year-old to pull out of this season's first Grand Slam in Melbourne.

The 22-time Grand Slam title winner now hopes to return to the tour at the Indian Wells Masters in California from March 6-17. "I would have loved to play in Doha, where the tournament team, as well as the amazing Qatar fans have always supported me greatly," Nadal said in a statement on X.

"Unfortunately I am not ready to compete and I won't be able to come to Doha where I really wanted to be and play again.

"I will focus on keep working to be ready for the amazing Indian Wells tournament," Nadal was named on the entry list last month for the Qatar Open, to be held February 19-24, and where he was champion in 2014. Earlier Wednesday, the former world number one, whose ranking has

plummeted to 646, admitted he had been suffering "some discomfort these past few weeks and I'm a bit on the limit". "At this point every blow I take, every injury, is a setback not only in tennis and physically, but also mentally," he told La Sexta television.

He added: "I am 100% confident of being in Indian Wells, it's a very special tournament for me. I don't know if it's going to be the last time I play in it, so I would like to be in Indian Wells, for sure."

Nadal reiterated that his "main goal is to try to get to the clay season as healthy as possible, to at least give me the chance to enjoy this part of the season", which the Spaniard has dominated in his career. He has won a record 14 French Open titles and holds an astonishing 112-3 win-loss record at Roland Garros.

Nadal won two matches in Brisbane in January after a year on the sidelines but felt pain in his upper left thigh during a quarter-final loss to Jordan Thompson.

**Australian Open champion Sinner breezes through in Rotterdam:** Newly-crowned Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner eased into the second round of the Rotterdam Open on Wednesday.

The 22-year-old Italian beat Dutch player Botić van de Zandschulp 6-3, 6-3 and

has now won his past 11 matches. Sinner will face two-time champion Gael Monfils in the next round after the Frenchman beat Denis Shapovalov in straight sets, 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5). "I've been working a lot in Monaco but I wanted to come here and feel the court. I'm happy to get my first win here over a really great player," Sinner said.

"It's a little bit different (playing as a Grand Slam champion) and you have to be prepared for your opponents to know you better and know your weaknesses more, so you have to be prepared to work hard and be ready." Sinner has now won 25 of his past 27 matches, a run that includes three wins over Novak Djokovic, including in the semi-finals of the Australian Open.

The Italian will rise to three in the world rankings should he win the title on Sunday. Elsewhere on Wednesday, Danish third seed Holger Rune needed three sets to see off Roman Safiullin of Russia 6-4, 2-6, 6-1.

French seventh seed Ugo Humbert, who was champion in Marseille on Sunday, slumped to a 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-3 loss to Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori.

Marseille runner-up Grigor Dimitrov, seeded sixth, saw off Italy's Lorenzo Sonego 7-6 (7/4), 6-3.

## Sixth Sindh collages games competitions

HYDERABAD (APP): The sixth Sindh College Games competitions were held at Bilawal Sports Complex on Thursday. Male and female students of colleges of the region Shaheed Benazirabad participated in different games competitions.

The games session was jointly inaugurated by Director General Colleges Sindh Syed Saleh Abbas Rizvi, Director Colleges Inspection Bashir Ahmed Shaikh, Regional Director Colleges Shaheed Benazirabad Prof Dr Saifullah Joyo and Principal Govt Girls Degree College SBA Lala Rukh Baloch by lighting the lamp.

Addressing the occa-

sion, Director General Colleges Sindh Syed Saleh Abbas Rizvi said that on the special directives of caretaker Provincial Education Minister Mrs Rana Hussain, the sixth Sindh College Games for girls and boy students were initiated at division level with the objective to provide opportunity of extra curricula activities side by side with curricular activities.

He said that winner players and teams would represent in sixth Sindh games from the division. Earlier Regional Director Colleges SBA welcomes the guests of honour and said that Department of College Education Sindh

has conducted separate competitions among girls and boy students of colleges in different games separately.

He said that teams representing their colleges would also represent their colleges in Sindh Games. The session was also attended by Additional Director Colleges Abdul Sattar Pirzada, Principal Govt Boys Degree College Naushehro Feroze Khalifa Afzal Ahmed, Prof Aurangzeb Bhangwar of Sachal College, Principal Govt Degree College Tharushah Prof Naimatullah Soomro, Principals of different colleges, lecturers, teachers and girls and boys students in large number.

## South Africa extend lead past 200 as Bedingham eyes maiden century

HAMILTON (AFP/APP): South Africa's David Bedingham was approaching a maiden Test century as the Proteas extended their lead over New Zealand to 217 at tea on day three of the second Test. Bedingham had 88 off 108 balls and Keegan Petersen was on 33 as South Africa, needing a win to level the two-match series, reached the interval at 186-4 in Hamilton.

Bedingham and Petersen put on 65 off 19 overs in untroubled fashion following the departure of Zubayr Hamza for 17, caught in the deep when pulling Neil Wagner. Bedingham, playing his fourth Test, hit 10 fours and two sixes as he unleashed a variety of shots. The 29-year-old was the only member of

South Africa's inexperienced tour squad to play both Tests in the recent 1-1 home series draw against India.

He scored a half-century on debut at Centurion and followed that up with an attractive 87 in the first-Test loss to New Zealand at Mount Maunganui. Bedingham and Petersen frustrated a New Zealand attack lacking a specialist spinner in conditions which suit slower bowlers.

South Africa took a 31-run first innings lead after dismissing the home side for 211 late on day two but they began their second innings in shaky fashion, slumping to 39-3.

The experiment of opening the batting with wicketkeeper Clyde Fortuin again failed when,

after struggling to three off 24 balls, he was trapped leg before wicket by spinner Rachin Ravindra.

New Zealand pace bowler Will O'Rourke continued his eye-catching Test debut with two wickets.

The lively left-arm, who took four wickets in South Africa's first innings, prompted a mis-timed hook from Raynard van Tonder, on one.

South Africa captain and opener Brand had reached 34 when his inside edge off O'Rourke flew to wicketkeeper Tom Blundell. The under-strength South Africans need a win to deny New Zealand, who won the first Test by 281 runs, a first Test series victory against the Proteas.

3/15, Waheed Khan 2/24.

In the last Quarter Final Zone-IV Whites beat Zone-V Whites by 1 wickets at Landhi Gymkhana Ground. Zone-V Whites 165 allout in 33.3 overs, Junaid Khan 60 10x4, Fawad Shah 23. Hazrat Bahadur (mf) 5/26, Muhammad Iqar 2/18.

Zone-IV Whites 166/9 in 44.4 overs. Ayan Khan 63 8x4, Daniyal Niazi 38, Rizwan ullah (mf) 3/31, Saifullah 2/40.

## Muhammad Hafeez resigns as director cricket team

LAHORE (INP): Former Pakistan cricket team captain Muhammad Hafeez on Thursday resigned as director of the national team.

Sources said Hafeez's contract had expired on Dec 15. He applied for extension in contract which was not extended. Consequently, he has resigned from his office as director cricket.

According to some reports, he has been



informed through board high-ups that his services would no more be required in near future.

Hafeez also could not get any positive response despite his endeavours to contact the persons concerned. Hafeez has also received a message from Chief Executive Salman Naseer that the chairman is not interested to give him more time as director. He rather intends to hire foreign coaching staff with some novel ideas.

## PCB terminates Haris Rauf's central contract

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Thursday terminated the central contract of ace fast bowler Haris Rauf and refused him 'No Objection Certificate (NOC)' for foreign leagues till July 2024.

The fast bowler Haris Rauf has been penalised following a probe into his refusal to join Pakistan's Test squad for the tour of Australia 2023-24. The PCB asserted that refusal to be part of Pakistan's Test squad in the absence of any medical report or justifiable reason is a material violation of the central contract.

A PCB press release read: "After a thorough hearing process conducted by a PCB committee and taking into consideration the views of all stakeholders involved in the matter, Haris' central contract has been terminated from December 1, 2023 and no NOC

to play any foreign league will be granted up to June 30, 2024."

The PCB management provided a chance for a personal hearing to Haris Rauf on January 30, 2024 in line with

the principles of justice and fair play but his response was found unsatisfactory. The PCB maintains that playing for Pakistan is the ultimate honour and privilege for any sports person.



## Jansher, Jehangir, Qamar Zaman honored at PSA

PESHAWAR (APP): Squash wizard Jansher Khan, legendary Jehangir Khan and Qamar Zaman are among world top 5 ranking players for 100 consecutive months, a list of the Professional Squash Ranking released here revealed.

Among top five world ranking players who got the honor of being in the list for 100 consecutive months, three of the legendary Pakistani players including Jansher Khan, Jehangir Khan and Qamar Zaman among them. Jansher Khan is the first with 135 months, Jahangir Khan is second with 129 months and Qamar Zaman is third with 128 months. They are followed by Al-Shorbaji in fourth place, Peter Nicol in fifth place and Nick Mathew in sixth place.

Squash legend Qamar Zaman said that this is a great honor for Pakistan. Three of Pakistan's top squash players are on this list. Today's players

should learn from it and work hard to maintain their ranking. He said due to a lack of hard work and commitment toward their game, they could not achieve the much desired status after him, Jansher and Jahangir Khan.

**National women, boys U15 squash championships from Feb 19:** The National Women Women and Boys Under-15 Squash Competitions will be commencing here at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex from February 19, Member Executive Committee and Director Blue Tone Squash Academy Wazir Gul told APP on Thursday.

He said that the smooth conduct of the championships for both women and boys in the Under-15 categories, arrangements have been completed and top-ranking players from all across the country will be coming to Peshawar to participate.

He said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Squash Association led by legendary Qamar Zaman as Chairman and Dawood Khan as President with Secretary General Mansoor Zaman, is holding more than 25 tournaments for both male and female squash players that is why they are winning the President Pakistan Squash Federation Trophy from the last five to six years consecutively.

He disclosed that the National Women Senior and Boys Under-15 Junior Squash Competitions are being held from February 19 to 22 at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex Peshawar. It is being organized with the support of the Directorate of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 32 players participating in each category and the prize money for each category has been set at Rs 200,000. He expressed the hope that these competitions will give opportunities to the players to show their best skills.

## Multan gears up for PSL Season 9

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the cricket fever spreads across the nation, Multan prepared to embrace the excitement of Pakistan Super League season 9, reported a private news channel. The stage is set for the inaugural match between Multan Sultans and Karachi Kings, two formidable teams ready to showcase their skills on the pitch.

Ahead of the match, both teams were diligently participating in prac-

tice sessions, gearing up to deliver electrifying performances for their fans. Cricket lovers in Multan were buzzing with anticipation, eager to witness their favorite players in action. Amidst the excitement, strict security measures have been put in place to ensure the safety of all attendees. It must be noted that the ninth season of the PSL is set to commence on February 17, 2024.

The opening match will feature

the two-time champions and current titleholders, Lahore Qalandars, facing off against Islamabad United, winners of the 2016 and 2018 editions. During the course of the competition, Karachi will host 11 matches, including the qualifier, two eliminators, and the final. Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore and Pindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi will each host nine matches. Multan will witness five matches.

## Karachi Kings on the hunt for their second HBL PSL title

PESHAWAR (APP): The HBL PSL-9 edition is around the corner with some of the leading stars of limited-

overs cricket racing to light up cricket grounds in Pakistan. With a new coach and captain, Karachi Kings enter HBL PSL-9 with oodles of optimism and they'll show faith in their local talent as well as global star power to rebound. Karachi Kings will get their campaign underway on Feb 18 against Multan Sultans at the picturesque Multan Cricket Stadium.

They've snapped up West Indies superstar Kieron Pollard in their squad who will try to swing their fortunes with his all-round capabilities. They have also secured the services of Australia all-rounder Daniel Sams as well as retained seasoned campaigner Shoaib Malik. Pace bowling is further stacked with Mir Hamza and Anwar Ali who will provide squad depth given their vast domestic experience and international exposure as well.

Karachi Kings managed to bag only three wins in the 2023 season and despite having the firepower in their ranks to spring more surprises, they could not coalesce as a unit. The team's ethos includes resilience and a fighting spirit, and they'll be aiming to rejuvenate this season and give Karachi fans a lot to cheer about.

The 2020 HBL PSL champions are determined to hit the ground running early on as the highly experienced Shoaib Malik will be looking to shine at the twilight of his career. Phil Simmons comes with a wealth of coaching experience. He coached West Indies and is at present the head coach of Trinbago Knight Riders in the Caribbean Premier League (CPL)

and LA Knight Riders in Major League Cricket (MLC).

"The decision to bring in Phil Simmons as head coach was influenced by his impressive credentials, including being a T20 World Cup-winning coach. His experience in guiding teams to success at the high-level adds a valuable dimension to our coaching setup, and we look forward to harnessing his expertise for a successful campaign in the upcoming HBL PSL edition and to build a team for the future", said Salman Iqbal, owner of Karachi Kings.

Kings retained Shan Masood as their captain who currently leads the Pakistan Test team. Karachi Kings' director Haider Azhar shed light on the decision to appoint Shan as skipper of the side. He said: "Securing Shan Masood for Karachi Kings was nothing short of a coup for us. His leadership qualities and captaincy feats are well-documented and we are proud to have a local boy from Karachi lead the team. On a personal note, having worked closely with Shan in the past, I believe he is the ideal captain for our team that will be undergoing a transitional phase and we expect him to be central to our project."

On the objectives set for this year's HBL PSL, Haider Azhar said, "Our first objective for this year has been to set up a platform and building blocks for the future, all the while assembling a squad that would be competitive in the upcoming edition of HBL PSL. We have a healthy mix of experience and youth in our squad with five players under the age of 24 years, supported by seasoned campaigners and proven performers." Salman Iqbal, highlighting the

importance and progress of the HBL PSL, said: "The progress of the HBL PSL over the years has been phenomenal, not only elevating the standard of T20 cricket but also playing a pivotal role in the development of Pakistani talent. The league has become a significant platform for showcasing local talent, providing them exposure and opportunities at the international level."

Talking about Karachi's fortunes for the upcoming season, Salman said, "Karachi Kings fans can anticipate a major turnaround this year. With a strategic rebuild, a balanced squad, experienced leadership, and a focus on exciting yet measured cricket, we are optimistic about our prospects in the upcoming season. The team is geared up for a competitive campaign, aiming to deliver performances that will make our fans proud and contribute to a successful journey in the ninth edition of HBL PSL."

Karachi Kings fixtures for HBL PSL 9

18 February v Multan Sultans, Multan Cricket Stadium  
21 February v Peshawar Zalmi, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore  
24 February v Lahore Qalandars, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

28 February v Islamabad United, National Bank Stadium, Karachi  
29 February v Quetta Gladiators, National Bank Stadium, Karachi  
3 March v Multan Sultans, National Bank Stadium, Karachi  
6 March v Quetta Gladiators, Pindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi  
7 March v Islamabad United, Pindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi  
9 March v Lahore Qalandars, National Bank Stadium, Karachi  
11 March v Peshawar Zalmi, National Bank Stadium, Karachi





## In brief

### Three outlaws held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) arrested three outlaws on Thursday who were allegedly involved in a shooting incident involving a Dolphin police official in Sector E-11 Islamabad. An ICP public relations officer said that Islamabad Capital Police's Dolphin Squad personnel came under gunfire in Sector E-11. During the incident, one police officer sustained injuries and was promptly shifted to the hospital for immediate medical assistance, a public relations officer said. He said that the Dolphin Squad received information of gunfire in Sector E-11 and rushed to the spot. Upon seeing the police, the accused opened gunfire on Dolphin personnel from a vehicle, injuring one police officer. While the accused managed to flee from the scene, a case had been registered at Shalimar Police Station, and Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO), Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, had issued directives to senior police officers for the swift apprehension of the accused.

### Police seize huge cache of arms

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police have foiled a bid to smuggle a huge quantity of weapons and arrested a culprit during an operation here on Thursday. According to a police spokesman, Westridge police managed to recover a huge cache of arms being smuggled in a private vehicle by a smuggler. He informed that the Westridge police party set up a special picket and stopped a suspected vehicle. He said that a suspect identified as Waqar Younas was apprehended whereas more than 12 pistols and 600 bullets were recovered from the possession of the arms smuggler. A case has been registered against the suspect while further investigation is underway, he added. The Spokesman said that City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani while appreciating the performance of the Superintendent of Police, Potohar, ASP Cantt and the Westridge police team directed to accelerate operation against illegal weapons and aerial firing.

### NUST article writing competition

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National University of Science and Technology (NUST) has called on all voices of Pakistan to become part of its efforts to amplify the importance of Women in Climate Action by participating in an 'Article Writing Competition'. According to an official of NUST, the article writing competition, being arranged in collaboration with the Gender Intersectionality and Climate Change (GICC), is aimed at stimulating thoughtful discourse on the intersectionality of gender and climate resilience. The last date for submission of the articles is February 29. The details of the event can be accessed through the website: gicc.nust.edu.pk. The article writing competition is part of the "Women in Climate Action - Celebrating Resilience" event being arranged by the NUST and GIZ Pakistan on the occasion of International Women's Day (March 8) in Islamabad. This empowering event aims to recognize and applaud the significant contributions of women in climate action, emphasizing their leadership, innovation, and impact on creating sustainable and climate-resilient communities.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Dr. Gohar Ejaz chairing a meeting on Integrated Sanitation And Water Supply System for Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

## Police devise crackdown plan on Basant

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police have devised a plan to foil possible plans to celebrate the banned festival of Basant and control aerial firing.

According to a police spokesman, more than 1500 police personnel had been deployed on different rooftops in densely populated areas to check kite flying on Thursday night and Friday, where they would be equipped with binoculars as well as other resources to apprehend those violating the law by flying kites.

Drone cameras would also be used to track potential aerial firing and incorporation of chemical string in kites. The spokesman informed that police had finalised a plan to put a stop to expected activities that may take place despite the clear-cut ban on Basant.

"Keeping in mind the need to protect the citizens from any untoward incidents, more than 1500 police officials have been deployed

to thwart any plans for Basant and drone operators will be monitoring potential kite-flying," he said.

Police officials have reiterated time and again that flying kites is a potentially dangerous sport that can lead to the loss of life, and those found disregarding its cost to human lives will be prosecuted according to law.

Parents, teachers, scholars and civil society were also been asked to play their role in preventing the celebration of Basant. The Rawalpindi police had also launched an awareness campaign about the hazards of the risky sport with the help of religious scholars, who were asked to make announcements from their respective mosques' sound systems about the demerits of kite-flying.

The police have finalized arrangements for live monitoring of all densely populated areas, while all Station House Officers (SHOs) have been directed to ensure strict surveillance of kite sellers in

their areas. The police teams are trying to trace and arrest culprits involved in buying and selling strings and kites through social media.

Monitoring of courier services and passenger vehicles coming from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was also being tightened, so that kites and chemical strings being brought to the city for Basant could be seized.

It is pertinent to mention here that just like last year, the Rawalpindi Kite Flying Association had announced two separate illegal Basant celebrations in the city and cantonment areas.

Despite a government ban on Basant celebrations, the Kite Flying Association Rawalpindi had defiantly declared plans to celebrate the festival. The association had also initiated preparations for the event. The association had also urged the kite lovers not to use metallic strings in kite flying, highlighting the inherent risks it poses to human lives.

## ANF recovers 122 kg drugs in nine operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover 122 kg of drugs and arrested two accused including a woman, said an ANF spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 2 kg of Ice was recovered from a Bahrain-bound passenger netted at Lahore Airport.

660 grams of weed was recovered from two parcels sent from Thailand and the UK at a Rawalpindi Courier Office while 99 kg of hashish was recovered from the Pasni Road Turbat area. 1 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a woman arrested near M-1 Motorway Islamabad.

800 grams of Ice was recovered from a parcel sent to Mirpur Khas from a courier office in Karkhano Market Peshawar.

17 kg hashish was recovered from the Zakhakhel Khyber area in two different operations and 1 kg hashish was recovered from Dera Ismail Khan. Separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

## Gohar visits FIA headquarters

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Interior Minister Dr. Gohar Ijaz along with Interior Secretary Aftab Akbar Durrani on Thursday visited Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) headquarters.

On arrival at the headquarters, Director General FIA Ahmad Ishaq Jahangir along with senior officials of the Agency welcomed the Minister. The Minister presided over a high-level meeting of FIA officials where he was briefed on institutional issues. All Additional Director Generals, Directors and other senior officers of FIA attended the meeting.

In the briefing, the report on the annual performance of all the wings was presented to the Federal Minister.

The minister appreciated the performance of Wings saying that the FIA "has a very important leading role in homeland security and safety."

The initiation of projects to modernize FIA is welcoming, said the minister adding that the importance of modern technology has increased to cope with the modern day challenges and effective use of technology to prevent human trafficking and cyber-crime is the need of the hour. It is also very important to enhance the capacity of investigators and align them with modern requirements, said the minister adding that the overseas Pakistanis are our valuable asset who are playing an important role in the country's development. He said that all resources should be utilized to improve public service delivery.

Meanwhile, Federal Interior Minister Dr Gohar Ejaz said on Thursday that water supply and sanitation were basic needs and

an integrated, comprehensive and effective system must be devised so that quality facilities could be provided to the people of twin cities.

He said this while presiding over a meeting held regarding water supply and sanitation in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi also participated in the meeting. Representatives of Chief Commissioner Islamabad, the Local Government Department, Rawalpindi Development Authority and the Cantonment Board also attended the meeting. The existing system of water supply, sanitation and waste disposal in the twin cities was reviewed in the meeting.

The meeting was informed that 8,000 sanitation workers disposed of 2,300 tons of waste daily with an annual budget of Rs 7 billion but still, the sanitation situation in both cities could not be described as satisfactory. The meeting was informed that currently, the twin cities were facing 47 per cent water scarcity.

"We want the capital to be an example for other cities," the interior minister said adding decisions will have to be made today to meet the needs of tomorrow. He said in this regard, the implementation of all necessary actions should be ensured as soon as possible. Ensuring good sanitation is essential for improving water supply systems, he maintained. Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi said that improvement of groundwater level was very important for better water supply and attention had to be paid to this issue.

## Khanpur canal de-silting project; citizens requested to use water carefully

RAWALPINDI (APP): The citizens have been requested to use water carefully as the supply of water from Khanpur dam to Rawalpindi city and cantonment areas has been reduced due to the de-silting project which started on Feb 12 and may lead to a shortage of water in many localities.

According to the Managing Director, of the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA), Muhammad Saleem Ashraf, the Khanpur dam canal de-silting project would be completed till Feb 21.

He urged the residents to use water judiciously in their daily routine to avoid shortage as water supply to city areas from the Khanpur dam had decreased due to the de-silting project.

He informed that the water supply had decreased to 6 million gallons from 8 million gallons per day, adding that WASA was trying to meet water demand through tube wells.

The agency was also taking all possible measures to ensure supply from bowsters and tube wells to fulfil the needs of the locals while the citizens could use the toll-free number 1334 or register their complaints at the nearest complaint centre, he added. The project was being completed jointly by the Capital Development Authority, WASA and the Cantonment Board. Water supply to the residents would normalize after completion of the de-silting project, he added.

He informed that during the de-silting project, water supply would be affected in different city areas including Pirwadhai, Dhok Mingtal, Dhok Hassu, Khayaban Sir Syed, Shamsabad, Double Road and other areas. Meanwhile, Rawalpindi Cantonment Board spokesman also urged the Cantt residents to avoid washing floors and cars, watering their lawns every day, and storing water to avoid facing difficulties.

## Cinemas struggle for survival in twin cities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Once bustling with families seeking weekend movie treats, the cinema business in Rawalpindi and Islamabad now stands on the brink of collapse as a once-thriving industry is grappling with a decline in viewership, closure of cinemas, technological advancements, low-quality films, and the rise of home entertainment options are cited as major contributors to this downfall.

In the past, cinema-goers eagerly awaited the cinematic experience on big screens, but today, the landscape has changed. The cinema owners, facing financial challenges, are converting their theatres into commercial plazas to stay afloat. While this may provide a business solution, provincial laws mandate the establishment of mini-cinemas alongside commercial spaces converted from cinemas.

A senior official at the Censor Board highlighted the diminishing appeal of cinema due to low-quality films and outdated infrastructure. The families no longer find cinemas fit for entertainment, further exacerbating the industry's decline.

In the capital city almost three or four years back Nafdac 1 and Nafdac 2 at Blue Area were two good cinema houses and later a modern cinema had also been established in Centaurus

Mall, Cinepax World Trade Centre, Raiha CineGold Plex and Jacaranda Family Club Cineplex that offered high-quality entertainment to families in the twin cities.

Meanwhile, in Rawalpindi, the number of cinema houses has come down drastically over the last decade. The shopping malls have come up in place of the cinema houses.

The masses rush to the cinema when they have the facility to watch quality movies, as people like films that are close to their real life and happenings, if they have a facility of good quality movie then they would go to watch movies said an office worker while talking to APP on Thursday.

The advent of modern devices including Android entertainment apps like YouTube, Netflix, Amazon, modern HD fibre cable networks, TV, DVD and CD players diminished the cinema trend, keeping people away from cinemas however, all these are the major factors, however, the government should support cinema owners in this regard, a cinema owner said.

When Pakistan gained independence in 1947, the film industry flourished with Indian and English films being shown in Pakistani cinemas. However, the ban on Indian films in 1965 marked a turning point. Today,

the cinematic landscape is vastly different, with cinema houses being replaced by shopping malls in Rawalpindi. The viewers lamented the lack of family-friendly entertainment in cinemas, emphasizing the importance of quality movies and well-maintained cinema houses. The advent of modern devices and entertainment apps like YouTube, Netflix, and Amazon, coupled with HD cable networks, has shifted the audience away from traditional cinemas.

A citizen Zoima Ejaz argued that the government should play a pivotal role in supporting cinema owners during these challenging times. The absence of educated individuals in the film industry and the production of low-quality films have further contributed to the decline in the cinema business. The struggle of cinemas in Rawalpindi and Islamabad reflects a broader trend of shifting entertainment preferences and the impact of technological advancements. To revive the once-thriving industry, a collective effort from producers, cinema owners and government support is deemed crucial, ensuring that quality movies and well-maintained cinema houses become a necessity in contemporary times.

## Railways set to open Shahdادر Railway Station platform

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has almost completed the upgradation and rehabilitation work of the Shahdادر Railway Station platform and set to open it for the passengers of the area very soon.

"The government has already allocated around Rs 2 million more funds for completing the renovation of the platform of Shahdادر Railway Station, official sources in the Ministry told APP.

They said Shahdادر Railway Station, operating with three platforms, is one of the important stations situated on the mainline where most of the mail and express trains have their stoppages.

The sources said the contractor had stopped the construction work due to non-payment of bills and funds but now the funds have been arranged for the remaining rehabilitation work.

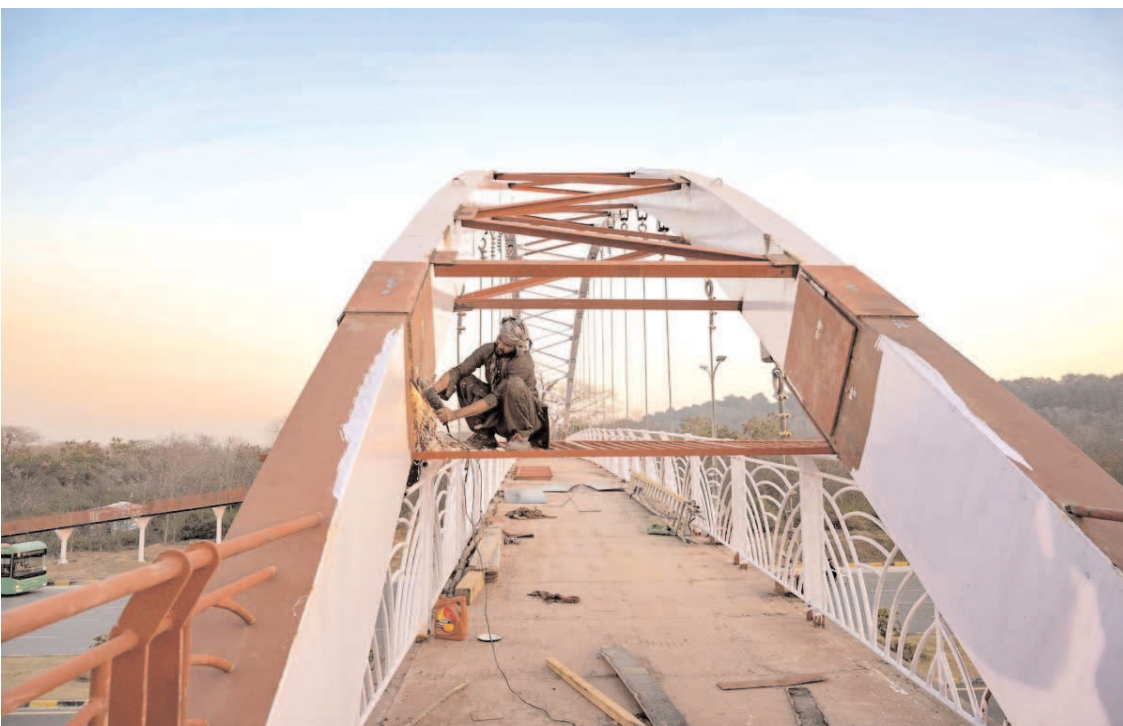
They said the platform condition on the downside was dilapidated and therefore it was decided to carry out its repair under the head of improvement and welfare expenditure. To a question, the official said Pakistan Railways was a big organization comprising around 63,000 employees and its network stretched across the country.

They said the employees are well-cared

under the welfare activities like health facilities through a wide network of hospitals, dispensaries and child healthcare units. Elaborating, the sources said the provision of government accommodation according to entitlement and priority list, staff benevolent funds, benefits and incentives were provided through the Prime Minister's Family Assistance Package policy for families of deceased employees.

They said the other welfare activities included benefits and incentives provided through policy for disabled employees' families, monthly grants to widows scale-wise, the establishment of primary and high schools, industrial schools to teach handicrafts, sports activities through the constitution of Pakistan and pick and drop facility for schools/offices.

The sources said the installation of water filtration plants, a special provision of five medical seats in Ripha Islamic Universities with a reduction of 50 percent in admission and tuition fees, loans on easy instalments, availability of all recreational facilities, payment for burial and ambulance charges, marriage grant, farewell grant, free passes and concession in railways fares.



ISLAMABAD: A welder finishing grills of a new pedestrian bridge over the Srinagar Highway in the federal capital.



Shaheen meets head of team

KABUL (BNA): Sohail Shaheen, head of IEA's political office in Doha, announced his meeting with head of ICRC delegation in Afghanistan. Shaheen wrote on his X handle that he and Katharina Ritz discussed humanitarian aid, alternative projects for farmers, and support for people with disabilities in Afghanistan. The ICRC praised the efforts of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in meeting the needs of people with disabilities and hundreds of thousands of returnees.

13 including 5 women flogged

BAMYAN (Khaama Press): The Taliban's High Court has stated that 13 individuals, including five women, in Bamyan province have been sentenced to flogging. According to the court's announcement, these individuals were flogged in the center of Bamyan. Sources indicate that the flogging sentences for these individuals were executed by the primary court's judicial department in Bamyan after confirmation by the appellate court of this province.

IEA will skip Doha meeting if their conditions aren't met

KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi said Wednesday in a meeting with Russia's ambassador Dmitry Zhirnov that if the Islamic Emirate's conditions are not taken into consideration ahead of the Doha meeting, then the IEA would prefer to sit this out.

In answer to a question by Zhirnov on whether the IEA would attend the Doha gathering of special representatives to Afghanistan, along with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Muttaqi said they were in close contact with the relevant UN agencies and had shared their views on whether to attend.

Muttaqi said it would be good to attend the meeting but only if it is an opportunity for high-level meaningful consultations between the IEA and the UN, and if the IEA is able to fulfill its responsibility as the official representative of Afghanistan.

Muttaqi said if the IEA's conditions are not taken into consideration, non-participation would be preferred.

Zhirnov said he understands the IEA's stance and would convey this to Moscow.

The two diplomats also discussed other issues of bilateral importance.

The IEA has reportedly set conditions for them to attend the meeting. However they have not given details.

On Tuesday, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, Iran's ambassador and special representative in Kabul, said the Islamic Emirate has two "important conditions" in order for a delegation to participate.

Qomi did not however say what the two conditions were.

The second meeting of the special representatives of the countries on Afghanistan affairs is scheduled to be held on the 18 and 19 of this month in Doha.

The meeting will be hosted by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and participants will discuss the recommendations in the "Afghanistan Independent Assessment" report based on UN Security Council Resolution 2721.

Kabul responds to reports of China need for copper

KABUL (TOLONews): An op-ed published on region-focused news outlet EurAsian Times, which cited other news reports, said that China needs Afghanistan's lithium and copper mines to dominate the supply chains of components needed to make electric vehicle batteries and smartphones.

According to the op-ed, since the Islamic Emirate came to power, China has established positive political and economical interactions with the country.

The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, Homayoun Afghan, said: "In the lithium sector, many companies, including the Chinese company, came and showed their interest in this sector, but no contract has been signed with anyone yet."

Meanwhile, the officials of the country's economic and trade sector also said the economic and trade relations between China and Afghanistan are developing.

Abdul Latif Nazari, the deputy minister of Economy, said: "The Islamic Emirate has extensive economic and trade relations with countries -- including China -- based on the country's national interests. Our effort is to consider the economic growth and development of the country in our economic relations."

Economic analysts said the country's mines are the nation's capital. Analysts said that China has a serious need for Afghanistan's mines.

"China, as a large and powerful economic country in the world with its work capacities, plays a very big role in every country and every region it interacts with," said Qutbuddin Yaqubi, an economic analyst.

According to information provided to TOLONews, the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum has currently signed exploration and extraction contracts with foreign companies for the exploration and extraction of three large oil mines in the Qashqari Block of the Amu river and the Herat iron mine.

Women demand gender equality at Doha Conference

KABUL (Khaama Press): Women's rights activists assert that Afghanistan's current state stems from the Doha Agreement, which overlooked the need for gender equality. They insist that the upcoming United Nations meeting on Afghanistan must implement measures to avoid repeating this detrimental oversight.

The second Doha meeting is set to take place on February 18th and 19th, initiated by the United Nations in Doha, the capital of Qatar. Criticisms of holding this meeting have peaked for various reasons, and it is expected that there will be demonstrations by human rights defenders to oppose the convening of this meeting.

Taranum Saeedi, leader of Afghan women's participation, linked the agenda of the second special United Nations meeting for Afghanistan to her discussions with the press, saying that women and girls had expected confirmation of their fundamental rights and gender equality in Afghanistan's future at the Doha meeting in 2021, which was held to discuss the future of Afghanistan.

According to Saeedi, Afghanistan has experienced significant changes in recent years, and the political and social conditions in the country are complex. However, achieving fundamental rights and gender equality in Afghanistan requires further and continuous efforts from both the international and domestic communities.

She adds, "The Taliban not only did not commit to any of the conditions stipulated in the Doha Agreement, but upon their entry into Afghanistan, their entire effort has been to completely exclude women and girls from society. Based on this, they issued more than 52 written orders and dozens of unwritten orders to deprive women and girls of all their rights and freedoms and impose various restrictions on them."

The second Doha meeting is expected to be held in the presence of representatives of specific countries for Afghanistan and representatives of international organizations, on February 18th and 19th, with the participation of a representative from the Taliban in Doha.

Meanwhile, Saeedi criticized the fact that in the past two years, meetings and conferences on Afghanistan have had no fundamental impact on gender equality and support for human rights, emphasizing that the United Nations should strive to ensure the vulnerable segment of society (women and girls) in education, health, promotion of gender equality culture, and strengthening supportive institutions.

Sara Wahidi, an influential youth from Afghanistan, also considered the exclusion of women and youth from the Doha peace talks in 2020 as contributing to the current crisis in human rights, especially women's rights, and warned of the consequences of the Taliban's extremist policies towards women in Afghanistan.

Recently listed in Forbes magazine's under-30 influential youth, she added through a post on her social media account that Afghanistan is now the only country in the world where women and girls are deprived of the right to education.

According to Wahidi, the exclusion of women from the Doha peace talks has led to a blatant violation of their fundamental rights in Afghanistan.

Tajikistan to increase power exports

KABUL (Ariana News): Tajikistan's state-owned power company, Barki Tojik, has said it intends to increase electricity exports to Afghanistan, despite its own shortages.

According to the head of Barki Tojik, Mahmudumar Asozoda, Tajikistan will increase supply to Afghanistan this year by 17%.

Barki Tojik exported 2.7 billion kilowatt-hours in 2023, which was 124 million kilowatt-hours more than 2022. Of that total, some 1.6 billion kilowatt-hours were supplied to Afghanistan, Asozoda said.

Another 907.5 million kilowatt-hours of electricity was sold to Uzbekistan, and the remaining 144.6 million kilowatt hours went to Kazakhstan.

However, Asozoda also said that the increase to Afghanistan would come despite ongoing electricity rationing for Tajik households, Eurasianet reported.

A rationing regime has been in force for a number of winters in Tajikistan. When the temperature sinks below a certain level, output from the Nurek hydropower plant, which produces most of the country's electricity needs, grinds to a near-halt.

Under the current system, Tajik households outside the country's largest urban centers endure blackouts from 8 am to 5 pm and then from 10 pm to 5 am.

Asozoda noted that one factor that influenced their decision to increase power exports to Afghanistan was that the Islamic Emirate was proving to be a "reliable payer".

On February 1, Tajik Energy and Water Resources Minister Daler Juma announced that Afghanistan had fully paid off its debts for power delivered to date.

IEA officials also confirmed that they had paid off their electricity bills — to the full amount of \$627 million — to all its suppliers, which also include Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Azerbaijan to open embassy in Kabul



KABUL (Ariana News): Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Afghanistan Ilham Mammadov paid a courtesy call to Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi to present the official letter from Azerbaijan's foreign ministry regarding the opening of their embassy in Kabul, the ministry said in a statement Thursday.

IEA's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi said in a post on X that the meeting focused on the commencement of diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, economic cooperation and several other issues.

According to Balkhi, Muttaqi called the opening of the Azerbaijan embassy in Kabul and the appointment of an ambassador an important achievement in bilateral relations between the two countries and a sign of the two countries' friendship.

Muttaqi also welcomed the Azerbaijani ambassador and assured him of all necessary support to the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Kabul.

Touching on a range of bilateral opportunities, he said that the Lapis Lazuli route holds special importance for Afghanistan, adding that with the activation of the corridor, Afghanistan can be connected to Europe.

He said that IEA seeks to upgrade its diplomatic presence at the Afghan Embassy in Baku.

Expressing gratitude for Afghanistan's support of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Mammadov said that Azerbaijan respects Afghanistan's sovereignty and independence and does not interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

He said this is the first time in history that Azerbaijan has opened an embassy in Kabul and commended the achievements of the Afghan government in ensuring security, stability, countering narcotics and economic development.

Mammadov also said that there was good space for cooperation between the two countries in several domains that could benefit both countries.

Salang massacre remembered on anniversary of Soviet withdrawal

SALANG (TOLONews): The massacre of 1,200 people by Soviet Union soldiers in the Salang district of Parwan province in the final days of the Soviet presence is among the most bloody events in Afghanistan's recorded history.

On January 24, 1989, when the Red Army troops were on the verge of defeat and were crossing the Salang highway, they massacred the people of Salang district. The residents of Salang district said that so far, many governments have come to power, but no government investigated the massacre of the 1,200 people.

"1,200 people were martyred. When the Soviet Union was defeated in Afghanistan, they killed animals, children, youth, the old and every one," said Agha Shireen Omari, the deputy of Salang district.

Abdul Zahir, who was 22 years old at that time, said that the Soviet Union troops killed six members of his family, including three women.

"When the Soviet Union forces saw men and women, they started firing and threw a grenade at them too," he told TOLONews.

Some of the victims of this bloody event were buried in a mass grave.

"They killed 16 members of our family. So far, no one has asked us about them," Agha Mohammad, a relative of the victims told TOLONews.

"When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, we were fighting them because they were pagans, we did not have a salary," Ghulam Hazrat, a relative of victims, told TOLONews.

The Red Army ultimately faced defeat and much of their weaponry remained in Afghanistan despite their advanced weaponry and air and ground strikes.

The remains of the Soviet weapons from the previous government were moved to Tapa-Surkh in the Parwan area of Jabal Saraj.

Faiz Mohammad, who battled against Soviet soldiers at the time, said that the presence of these weapons shows the resistance of Afghans against the Soviet Union.

"It was a horrific day, they were targeting houses with tanks without considering that there were children and women in it," he told TOLONews.

Previously, some of the Soviet-era weaponry were sent to Kabul by the Defense Ministry for maintenance. Parwan's residents, however, requested that the Islamic Emirate build a museum in this province dedicated to the remnants of the Soviet Union's weapons.

20 children die every month in Paktia: Officials

PAKTIA (TOLONews): Officials at the provincial hospital of Paktia said that about twenty children die in the hospital every month due to seasonal diseases.

According to the officials, 45 beds have been allocated to children at this hospital but due to the high number of visitors, they cannot handle them properly.

Mohammad Asil Khan, chief physician of Paktia provincial hospital, said: "Up to 22 children die in the children's ward every month. In the past, when there were few visitors, in the spring and fall, there were not many patients and around 5 to 10 people were losing their lives." A number of patient's families asked the officials of the Islamic Emirate and aid organizations to equip this hospital with advanced medical equipment.

Rohullah, a patient's family member in Paktia said: "There are many problems, many children have died so far. A girl and a boy died last night. Five to six children died yesterday. There is only oxygen in the hospital and that's it."

"It's been four days since my child was hospitalized at the provincial hospital with pneumonia, there are no facilities for children here," said Fazl Nabi, a patient's family member.

The children's treatment yard in Paktia provincial hospital has 45 beds. But now about 120 children are there.

In addition to Paktia, patients from neighboring provinces also visit this hospital.

Many of these families cannot afford to treat their children in private hospitals due to poverty and economic challenges.

"We cannot afford the serums that are ordered for us, and instead we buy them from outside pharmacies," said Halim, a patient's family member from Ghazni province.

"Our request to the organizations is to pay attention to this hospital in the revenue department," said Mohammad Hanif, a patient's family member from Paktia province.

According to reports, every year when weather gets colder, many children throughout the country suffer from illness, especially pneumonia.

Father's illness forces Salma to work in brick kiln

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Tired of a difficult life, 11-year-old Salma is forced by poverty to work in a brick kiln with her ailing father to support her family in eastern Nangarhar province.

Khan Mohammad, Salma's father, a resident of Sultanpur area of Surkhrod district has been suffering from a rheumatic disease.

Salma daily comes to the brick kiln with her father in the morning and works there until evening.

Tired of her miserable life, Salma says her father's ailment has forced her to work in order to support family.

"I go to work at 7:00am with my father and a little brother, we make 1,000 bricks daily, but the income is not enough," Salma said.

She is hopeful t the government and donor agencies will help her so that she can get rid of the heavy work and reach her dream of going to school.

"It is hard, when we come in the morning, my fingers and feet freeze due to severe cold, but I have to work. I want to go to school. I want to be helped so I no longer work here..." she added.

Similarly, Salma's father, Khan Mohammad, said there was no one else in the family to earn money and that was why Salma had to work with him in the kiln.

"We make around 1,500 bricks a day. They pay 350 afghanis per 1,000 bricks. I can't do my work. I have rheumatism. My hands are weak," he explained.

Khan Mohammad earns very little money per day, which is not enough to meet his daily needs. He also cannot afford his treatment.

"I have been working here for the last 16 years. But my income is not enough to cover family expenses."

On the other hand, Nangarhar Labor and Social Affairs Department says the number of children working in brick kilns has decreased compared to the past.

Labor and Social Affairs director Maulvi Faridullah Haqqani told Pajhwok they had started providing education to working children in cooperation with charity organizations and aid agencies.

Mother seeks missing son amid unemployment and insecurity



KABUL (Khaama Press): Poverty and unemployment have created numerous challenges in the lives of people in Afghanistan. Rahela, dealing with these difficulties, is searching for her son who disappeared after the Taliban takeover. She says, "My son had no enmity with anyone, and we don't know if he is alive or not."

Rahela wanders from alley to alley, selling matches. Now she roams the streets, begging for her necessities and those of her grandchildren.

Rahela's weary eyes narrate her anticipation for the return of her lost son. This elderly mother now takes care of her three grandchildren and begs for their sake. Rahela's son, leaving her with three children, disappeared about seven months ago.

Sixty-year-old Rahela, accompanied by her daughter-in-law and grandchildren, lives in a crowded area of Kabul. She says, "I start each day with the hope of hearing news of my son."

This elderly mother complains of diabetes, calcium deficiency, and bone pain. Nevertheless, every morn-

ing she hits the streets in search of a piece of bread.

Rahela is a familiar face in her neighbourhood. Since her son's disappearance, she has become a familiar face, asking everyone about her son.

Rahela is left with a daughter-in-law and three children from her lost son, the youngest being nine months old.

As Rahela remembers her last conversation with her lost son, tears fill her eyes as she says, "I have no solution other than prayers and waiting." She adds, "My son said goodbye like every morning, then left for selling matches, said goodbye again, and never returned. God knows what I've been through during this time."

Rahela says she had only one child, and she has neither a sister nor a brother. Her only possession was her 30-year-old son, who never returned after saying goodbye.

The only thing Rahela has been doing since her son went missing months ago is saying, "I go to the streets and markets where my son used to sell matches and ask people and shopkeepers about my missing son."

She says her son was neither a government employee nor had enmity with anyone: "I don't know what happened to my son. With months passing since my 30-year-old son disappeared, I wonder what became of my helpless and labourer son."

While laden with the burden of waiting, Rahela still hopes for any clue or trace of her son's fate. She worries about her grandchildren and the wife left behind by her missing son.

She says at night, after buying 20 Afghanis bread and dry bread, she returns home to share a meal of bread and tea with five people, including herself, her daughter-in-law, and three children left by her son.

Rahela stands daily at a specific spot on the roadside, begging from people. She says she often faces humiliation: "Black-windowed cars hurl five Afghani notes from a distance onto the road and mock me."

While eight months overdue on rent, Rahela is constantly waiting for the landlord's response. She says, "The landlord has repeatedly demanded rent from me, but seeing

our dire situation, his son gave us a grace period, which has been months, but I couldn't pay the rent."

Rahela has leftover bread from yesterday in her hands. Her daughter-in-law and three grandchildren, left by her son, cough because of the cold and lack of heating.

She says they have neither food nor household items. If forced to leave their home, they have nothing but a mattress and a few pillows.

Rahela mentions that winter is approaching, but they will have to endure it without coal or firewood to warm their home.

It's worth mentioning that the security authorities of the Taliban government have not helped Rahela in finding her missing son.



# Alleged rigging in election Protest continue in Balochistan

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Rallies and protest demonstrations against rigged election continued for the seventh consecutive day in different cities of Balochistan, including Quetta.

A protest rally under the aegis of Pushtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Balochistan National Party (Mengal), National Party and Hazara Democratic Party was taken out on Thursday from the office of Deputy Commissioner, Quetta. Chanting slogans against rigging in election, tempering results and against state institutions, participants of rally marched through different roads and reached outside the office of Deputy Commissioner, Quetta / District Returning Officer. Similarly, protest demonstrations were held in Kalat, Khuzdar, Surab, Turbat, Panjgur, Chaman, Killa Abdullah, Loralai and Zhob.

Protest rally under the auspices of Pushtunkhwa

Milli Awami Party was taken out from Bacha Khan Chowk area of Quetta against rigging in election. Addressing the protest demonstration, speakers said that a particular party had been brought into power through a well planned conspiracy, adding that after taking like minded parties into confidence, protest movement would be launched. Diverting the attention of caretaker government and international institutions towards rigged election-2024, they demanded for conducting fair and transparent election afresh.

Protest demonstration was addressed by Master Naem, district President, Pushtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Hamai and others. Moreover, Pushtunkhwa National Awami Party (PNAP) staged a protest sit-in at Zarghoon Road near the office of Provincial Election Commissioner, Quetta against result tempering in NA-251-Zhob-cum-Killa Saifullah con-

stituency. Addressing the participants of protest demonstration, speakers demanded to declare Khushal Khan Kakar, Chairman, PNAP as winner from NA-251-Zhob-cum-Killa Saifullah constituency. Protest demonstration was addressed by Senior Deputy Chairman, PNAP, Raza Muhammad Raza, central Secretary Finance, Yousaf Khan Kakar, provincial President, Nasrullah Zarae, Provincial Secretary, Faqeer Khushal and others.

Separately, President, National Party, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch said that a conspiracy had been hatched to keep nationalist leaders away from parliament. Addressing the participants of a protest demonstration in Turbat, he said, "When election becomes the source of income, it weakens federation and democracy," adding that controversial election would weaken the roots of democracy in Pakistan.

## Turkish commander meets CJCSC

F.P. Report

RAWAPINDI: General Irfan Ozsert, Deputy Chief of General Staff Turkish Armed Forces called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi, on Thursday.

During the meeting, matters related to bilateral military engagements and cooperation were discussed. Both sides reaffirmed the commitment to forge deeper strategic ties. The dignity lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in fight against terrorism. Earlier, upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent presented 'Guard of Honour' to the visiting dignitary.

## PPP entrusts mandate to PML-N: Kaira

ISLAMABAD (INP): People's Party leader Qamar Zaman Kaira has said that the PPP has delegated mandate to the PML-N for formation of government. It is to be mentioned here that Kaira has been a member of the six-member committee of the People's Party that had been entrusted for talks with other political parties.

Kaira said that the PPP will not get ministries but field its candidates for the Parliament and the assembly offices. "We would have also work with the PTI, but the party's founder has closed that door," PPP leader said. "He has said that the PTI will not hold talks with three parties," Kaira said. Kaira stressed that Pakistan required collective decision-making.

He said Maulana Fazlur Rehman's antagonism towards Asif Zardari have no reason. "The PPP extending its reach to the JUI as well as other political parties," he said. "When the parties contest elections they criticize policies of other parties," he said.

"If the People's Party or the PML-N will stay away from government formation, Pakistan will enter into a new crisis," Qamar Zaman Kaira said. The PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari earlier said that the PPP would lend its support to the incoming government but would not join the federal cabinet. He said the party was constituting a committee in this regard. The PPP committee comprises of Qamar Zaman Kaira, Murad Ali Shah, Saeed Ghani, Nadeem Afzal Chan, Sardar Sanaullah Zehri and Shuja Khan.

## JI to issue white paper: Baloch

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Vice Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Liaqat Baloch has said that his party would issue a comprehensive white paper detailing the extent of election rigging. While addressing a press conference at Mansoorah on Thursday, he strongly denounced the recent elections, labelling them as massively rigged and controversial.

Liaqat Baloch said that the JI to express their discontent has planned to organize a protest demonstration on Friday, highlighting their commitment to upholding democratic principles. Expressing deep concern over the increasing polarization and instability within the country, he said the JI to engage with national leadership to foster stability and propel the nation forward. He called for a platform of political parties, advocating for a long-term partnership to steer the country back on track and unite the nation.

The JI vice ameer proposed the formation of a judicial commission to thoroughly investigate election rigging. He urged the caretaker prime minister to file a reference in the Supreme Court to initiate the establishment of such a commission. He also called for a re-evaluation of the overall caretaker setup designs by the next parliament to ensure transparency and fairness in future elections.

Highlighting the historical manipulation of the people's mandate, Baloch asserted that a ruling elite comprising feudal lords, corrupt imperialists, and elements within the establishment had been manipulating the fate of the country for decades.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi in a group photo with the winners and organizers of National Idea Bank Season III, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

# Israel raids main Gaza hospital as Rafah concerns grow

## Israeli strikes on Lebanon kill 11 civilians

BEIRUT: Eleven people, including six children, were killed by Israeli strikes on villages across southern Lebanon, a hospital director and three Lebanese security sources said, as Israel said it responded to a Hezbollah rocket attack that killed one of its soldier. Hezbollah and the Israeli military have been exchanging fire along the Israel-Lebanon border for more than four months, after the Lebanese armed group launched rockets across the disputed frontier in support of its Palestinian ally Hamas. A woman and her two children were killed in an Israeli strike on the village of Al-Sawana, two security sources said.

A strike on a building in Nabatieh killed four more children, three women and a man, according to the director of the town's hospital, Hassan Wazni, and three other security sources. Seven people were also wounded, Wazni told Reuters. Four Hezbollah fighters were killed in separate strikes, according to the group and security sources. Senior Hezbollah official and member of parliament Hassan Fadlallah said on Thursday that Israel would face reprisal after the two sets of strikes on southern Lebanon. "The enemy (Israel) will pay the price for these crimes," Fadlallah told Reuters when asked about the powerful Iran-backed armed group's reaction to the deadliest day for civilians in Lebanon since hostilities began along its southern border. — Arab News

majority of Gaza's medical facilities have caused particular concern throughout the conflict, including Israeli raids on hospitals in other cities, shelling in the vicinity of hospitals and the targeting of ambulances. As massive bombardment destroyed swathes of residential districts and forced most people from their homes, hospitals quickly became the focus for displaced people seeking shelter around buildings they thought more likely to be safe.

Israel accuses Hamas of regularly using hospitals, ambulances and other medical facilities for military purposes, and has aired footage taken by its troops that it says shows tunnels containing weapons below some hospitals. The Israeli military said on Thursday it had apprehended a number of suspects at the Nasser Hospital and that its operations there were continuing.

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said Israel's statement accusing the group of hiding fighters or keeping hostages at the hospital was "lies." He added that "all previous Israeli allegations against hospitals had proven to be false." Speaking about the hospital raid, Hagari said "this sensitive operation was prepared with precision and is being

conducted by IDF special forces who underwent specified training."

He said one objective of the operation was to ensure the hospital could continue treating Gazan patients and "we communicated this in a number of conversations we had with the hospital staff," adding there was no obligation to evacuate. Gaza health ministry spokesperson Ashraf Al-Qidra said Israel had forced doctors at Nasser hospital to abandon patients in intensive care there, putting their lives in danger.

Videos that Reuters verified on Thursday as having been filmed inside Nasser Hospital, though it could not verify when, showed scenes of chaos and terror. Men walked through dark corridors using the lights from their phones, with plaster dust swirling around and debris lying in the corridors, at one point wheeling a bed through a damaged area. At one point in a video gunshots rang out and a doctor shouted "Is there anyone still inside? There is gunfire, there is gunfire — heads down." Another man in a video said the Israeli army had surrounded the hospital and nobody could get out. The World Health Organization has previously said half the medical staff of Nasser Hospital had already fled.

# KP CM reviews law, order situation in D I Khan

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R)

Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, during his visit to DI Khan, presided over an important meeting at Commissioner's office to review the law and order situation, progress on development projects and public welfare initiatives under Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program with special focus on the development activities being carried out in the remote areas of the division and newly merged tribal districts.

Caretaker Provincial Minister for Communication and Works Engineer Ahmed Jan, Incharge Chief Minister's Complaint Cell Jamil Swati, Commissioner DI Khan Zafar-ul-Islam, Regional Police Officer D.I Khan Nasir Mehmood Satti,

Deputy Commissioner DI Khan Mansoor Arshad Khattak and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

The participants were briefed in details about the development projects in DI Khan division and told that a total of 496 development projects were being implemented across the division under the development plan of current fiscal year.

As per details, 215 projects are being executed in the district South Waziristan, 145 in district Tank and 136 in DI Khan. The Chief Minister, on the occasion, underlined the need to speed up work on all the ongoing projects of public welfare and directed the authorities concerned that all those projects be completed within the stipulated timelines but without compromising on their quality.

He directed them to have

special attention on the projects which are due for completion adding that the matter regarding release of funds for these projects should be taken up with the Finance and P&D departments. Regional Police officer apprised the chief minister of security arrangements made for maintaining law and order during the recent general elections.

He also briefed the chief minister about the proposed security plan for peaceful holding of re-polling on six polling stations of the constituency NA 43 which is scheduled for 17th of this month. The chief minister who visited DI Khan the other day urged upon authorities to complete all preparations and arrangements in this regard well in time, further directing them to have close coordination with concerned institutions for the purpose.

## Concerns loom over timely conduct of Senate polls

ISLAMABAD (INP): Concerns loom over the timely conduct of Senate elections due to the unresolved status of the Electoral College, potentially leading to a postponement of the crucial electoral process. As the term of the current Senate nears its end on March 11, the anticipated Senate elections slated for the first week of March face uncertainty, with speculation mounting over a delay until the establishment of all provincial governments.

Media reports suggest that the delay in the country's general elections has cast a shadow over the scheduled Senate elections, raising doubts about their timely occurrence. With the election schedule spanning a month, Senate elections might be deferred until the third week of March, pending the completion of necessary electoral procedures.

In preparation for the conclusion of the current Senate term, a final session has been convened on February 19, presided over by Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani. Senators are expected to bid farewell during this session, with a summary forwarded to President Dr. Arif Alvi for formal summoning.

Amidst legislative discussions, the Senate Standing Committee on Finance, chaired by Senator Salim Mandvi, convened to address pressing economic issues. Senator Sadia Abbasi raised concerns over exorbitant gas bills burdening citizens, attributing the surge to pressure from the IMF. Senator Kamil Ali Agha questioned the influence of the IMF on national policies, prompting Chairman Saleem Mandviwala to clarify that gas price hikes fall under the purview of the petroleum division, not the Ministry of Finance.

# PHC bars repatriation of Afghan's transgenders

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Waqar Ahmad barred repatriation of 16 Afghan transgenders and directed authorities to stop harassing of registered Afghan transgender migrants residing in Pakistan.

The order came in response to a writ petition filed by the transgender women against their potential deportation under a government decision to repatriate all Afghan nationals. Their lawyer argued that their lives would be in danger if they were sent back to Afghanistan, where persecution of transgender individuals is widespread.

PHC's divisional bench acknowledging the precarious situation of Afghan transgenders in their home country. However, the court also clarified that foreign nationals do not have the same rights as Pakistani citizens and can only stay if they have valid visas.

Despite this, the judges noted that even registered Afghan refugees with valid documentation, including Proof of Registration (POR) cards, were being harassed by authorities. PHC deemed such actions unacceptable and damaging to Pakistan's international reputation.

PHC directed authorities to halt the repatriation of the 16 Afghan transgender

## Court orders FIR against policemen including SP Cantt

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Additional Session Judge (ASJ) Peshawar Syed Arif Shah ordered Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Peshawar for registration of First Information Report (FIR) against Superintendent of Police (SP) Cantt, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Khalid Khan, Station House Officer (SHO) Gulberg Rafiq Khan and Chawki In-charge Umeedabad Azam Khan for involvement in illegal custody of citizen otherwise appear before the court on 17th February, on Thursday.

The complainant informed ASJ during hearing that his uncle named Khan Alam was taken into custody from motorway interchange on his return from Mardan without any allegation or offense and put him Gulberg police station. The abducted citizen Khan Alam is now put in Umeedabad police Chowki located in the jurisdiction of Peshakhara police station, the nephew informed ASJ Peshawar.

The court's bailiff recovered Khan Alam from Umeedabad Chowki and produced before ASJ Peshawar Syed Arif Shah. Khan Alam informed ASJ that SHO Gulberg Rafiq Khan took him into illegal custody from motorway interchange roamed in different stations from last 14 days as well as tortured him.

The abducted citizen argued that SP Cantt, DSP Khalid Khan, SHO Gulberg Rafiq and In-charge Umeedabad Chowki Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) Azam Khan tortured him for smuggling of 600 kilograms hashish from Bara area of district Khyber. He added that police snatched Rs25 thousand cash, precious watch cost Rs250 thousand, three mobile and one bank cheque of Rs1 million by force. ASJ Peshawar Syed Arif Shah ordered CCPO for registration of FIR against SP Cantt, DSP Khalid, SHO Gulberg Rafiq Khan and In-charge Umeedabad Chowki ASI Azam Khan for illegal custody of citizen otherwise appear in person before court.

women and keep their deportation on hold until further proceedings. The Court also ordered to end the harassment of registered Afghan transgender migrants as they are protected under Pakistani law and must be treated with

dignity and respect. This decision provides temporary relief to the affected transgender women and highlights the ongoing challenges faced by this marginalized community in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

the exercise is to plan and conduct naval operations as per wartime procedures to check operational readiness, major mobilisation of personnel and practice coordination between various elements of PN to undertake complex operations.

During operations at sea PN warships and aircraft also detected Indian Navy ships, submarines and aircraft, attempting to covertly observe the exercise and interpret PN war plans. Accordingly necessary safeguards were taken by PN.

During visit of Maritime Headquarters at Karachi,

Chief of the Naval Staff was given a briefing by the Orange and Blue Naval Force Commanders on the conduct of operations by respective forces. Thereafter, Naval Chief visited Ketu Bandar Post and Battalion Headquarters of Pak Marines at Shah Bandar where he was briefed on combat readiness for defence of Creeks areas which constitutes the South Eastern maritime boundary with India. During the visit, Naval Chief interacted with troops deployed in difficult marshy areas and appreciated their devotion and high morale.



KARACHI: Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf interacting with troops at forward post during exercise SEASPARK 2024.

# Canada, Australia, New Zealand call for truce in Gaza

SYDNEY (Reuters): The leaders of Canada, Australia and New Zealand on Thursday called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, according to a joint statement released in response to reports about Israel's planned military operation in Rafah.

"We are gravely concerned by indications that Israel is planning a ground offensive into Rafah. A military operation into Rafah would be catastrophic," the statement by the prime ministers of the three countries said. "An immediate humanitarian ceasefire is urgently needed."

Israel will press ahead with an offensive against Hamas in Rafah, the last refuge for displaced Palestinians in southern Gaza, after allowing civilians to vacate the area,

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday. The statement urged Israel not to conduct the offensive, however it said any ceasefire could not be "one sided," and would require Hamas to disarm and immediately release all remaining hostages.

The leaders also said the International Court of Justice's January ruling in a genocide case brought by South Africa obligated Israel to protect civilians and deliver basic services and essential humanitarian assistance. "The protection of civilians is paramount and a requirement under international humanitarian law," the statement said. "Palestinian civilians cannot be made to pay the price of defeating Hamas."

Meanwhile, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas

reaffirmed his commitment to running the Gaza Strip once the current conflict ends, but warned that there could be no peace with Israel's current government.

He told Ashraq Al-Awsat that the Palestinian Authority lacks an "Israeli partner for achieving lasting peace," describing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as "clearly a stumbling block to a political solution based on international legitimacy and law." Abbas said Netanyahu's "rejection of the two-state solution and his announcement of continuing the war on Gaza are clear evidence of his public refusal of the peace process and achieving security and stability. He believes only in the logic of occupation, power, and settlement."