

Seven terrorists held

BAHAWALPUR (DNA): The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) arrested seven terrorists from Bahawalpur during a significant intelligence-based operation conducted across various cities of Punjab. Those arrested included Muawiya, the main commander of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. The security personnel also recovered explosives, hand grenades, and weapons from the arrested individuals.

Alleged election rigging Rawalpindi commissioner quits

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha resigned from his post on Saturday, admitting that elections in his division were "rigged".

Speaking at a press conference at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Chattha revealed that he had attempted suicide earlier in the day due to overwhelming guilt. He stated that he was turning himself in to the police, taking responsibility for the incident.

Chattha expressed remorse for forcing his subordinates to engage in wrongdoing and admitted that winning candidates were made to lose on 13 seats in the Rawalpindi division. The commissioner accused Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja of being complicit in the rigging and asserted that he, along with the CEC and Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa, deserved punishment, even the death penalty, for their injustice.

Chattha disclosed that after attempting suicide during the Fajr prayer, he decided to come forward with the truth. He confessed to experiencing sleepless nights due to the betrayal of trust toward the people and the country. Chattha said army conducted elections in a fair manner and there was no need for reelection. Chattha noted that he witnessed presiding officers crying over the situation.

Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chattha admitted that the rigging took place in election and candidates who were leading in their constituencies with over 70,000 votes were converted to losers with the help of fake seals under his watch. He apologized to his subordinates for compelling them to rig elections saying that they were crying when they were directed to carry out the rigging.

Following his confession, Chattha was arrested by security forces and taken to an undisclosed location. The Rawalpindi division comprises Attock, Murree, Rawalpindi, Jhelum and Chakwal districts.

PTI calls for probe into allegations

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Senior PTI leaders, including Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Omar Ayub, call for a thorough investigation into the allegations of electoral fraud made by the Rawalpindi commissioner.

Expressing grave concern over the matter, Barrister Gohar remarked that the office of the commissioner was a very responsible position, adding that conducting fair and transparent elections was the responsibility of the election commission.

Furthermore, Barrister Gohar highlighted the party's stance that elections should be overseen by members of the judiciary to ensure fairness and integrity. He urged authorities to investigate the matter seriously, especially considering the severity of the allegations. He said that as per the commissioner's allegations, it was a serious matter that winning candidates had been made to lose. "The matter of these seats should also be probed."

Omar Ayub echoed these sentiments, citing the commissioner's statement as evidence of the widespread fraud. He emphasized the need to scrutinise not only the incidents reported in Rawalpindi, but also other regions across the country. "The commissioner is the biggest proof for us. His statement proves massive fraud," he exclaimed, adding that this was just about Rawalpindi, while rigging had taken place all over the country.

Integrity of 2024 elections compromised: HRCP

F.P. Report

LAHORE: In a report released earlier today, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has called into question the integrity and credibility of the 8 February elections.

According to a HRCP statement on Saturday, reports from HRCP's election observers, who carried out spot-checks across 51 constituencies, indicate that the countrywide internet and cellular services shut-down on polling day and arbitrary changes in polling information compromised voters' access to polling stations. This was particularly true for women with restricted mobility, persons living with disabilities, the elderly, and low-income voters. Of particular concern is the protracted delay in announcement of election results by the returning officers.

Broadly, the polling process itself remained transparent and peaceful. Polling staff were generally well-prepared and well-equipped. In almost all cases, polling agents and candidates were shown the empty ballot boxes prior to polling and the presiding officer was observed stamping and signing the back of each ballot paper before giving it to the voter. The ballot box was in everyone's sight at all times and voters were allowed to stamp their ballot papers in secret.

However, the post-

CJP demands evidence; ECP rejects rigging allegations

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa Saturday demanded evidence of his involvement in the rigging of the February 8 elections after Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatha levelled serious allegations against the top judge and other authorities.

"You level baseless allegations. There is no truth to it nor is evidence presented. You can level allegations all you want, it is your right but present evidence to back it. Whether good or bad, it will be determined later," the top judge said in reaction to today's dramatic development. He went on to say that his role was only restricted to the facilitation of the conduct of elections. "If someone did not want election, that's another story," he said.

The CJP questioned his and apex court's connection to the polls, saying that the court only receive and decide upon petitions linked to elections. The CJP said that the apex court did not order the elections; instead, it asked both constitutional authorities — the president and the election commission — to stage the elections after arriving at a consensus on the date.

Meanwhile, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Saturday rejected Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatha's allegation regarding rigging in the general election 2024.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has flatly rejected the rigging allegations put forth by Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatha against the Election Commission and the Chief Election Commissioner.

The spokesperson said in a statement that neither the ECP nor any of its officials instructed the Rawalpindi commissioner to change election results under his jurisdiction. He stated that the ECP would soon conduct a comprehensive inquiry to confirm the facts. Commissioners of any division do not have a direct role in conducting elections; they are neither District Returning Officers (DROs), Returning Officers (ROs), nor Presiding Officers (POs).

Allegations 'baseless': PML-N

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb has said that the Commissioner's name should be placed on the Exit Control List (ECL) immediately.

In a press conference, she said, "It is our responsibility to ensure that anarchy and chaos does not ensue in the country." She said, as she slammed the commissioner for his "baseless" allegations. She noted that a commissioner is neither a returning officer nor a district returning officer — the two crucial office holders who are responsible for the consolidation of results. "The commissioner will not have any authority that would give him access to the preparation of election results," she said, calling for a strict punishment to be granted to Chattha if his allegations were proven false. Marriyum Aurangzeb recalled that "no candidate won with a 50,000-vote lead" as per the claims of the commissioner. Aurangzeb wondered where the top official was for the last eight days and whom he met to "grow a conscience". "We demand that his activities during these eight days be probed," she said, claiming that there is an entire group that does not want stability in the country.

PPP demands probe

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on Saturday demanded an investigation into the allegations made by Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chattha regarding rigging in Feb 8 general elections.

PPP leader Faisal Karim Kundi said the commissioner had made startling revelations that need to be investigated, saying his party has reservations regarding the elections. He said facts must be made public after conducting a probe into the allegations.

polling process was clearly unsatisfactory. In a fifth of all polling stations observed by HRCP, the presiding officer did not affix the statement of the count in a conspicuous place for public display or was not seen transmitting a photograph of the result to the returning officer and ECP. It was alleged in many instances that the returning officer's announcement did not tally with the presiding officer's count. Worryingly, reports of candidates, polling agents and observers being denied permission to witness the provisional consolidation of results, also surfaced.

HRCP recommends an independent audit of the 2024 elections under the supervision of a parliamentary body. Security and intelligence agencies should play no role in managing the electoral process or its outcomes. Parliament must also debate the utility of the caretaker government scheme. Seamless cellular and internet services must be available on polling day, including after polling has stopped. The ECP must publish all Forms 45, 46, 48 and 49 in accordance with the Elections Act 2017. On receiving petitions from aggrieved political parties or candidates, the ECP should order ballot recounts in close contests and especially in cases where the number of rejected ballots exceeds the margin of victory.

The integrity of the 2024 elections was compromised, not only by lack of competence on the part of the ECP but also by constant pressure from extra-democratic quarters and questionable decisions by the caretaker government, all of which HRCP has documented in the year preceding the polls. It is now critical for all parties to collectively uphold and protect civilian supremacy through consistent, meaningful and inclusive political dialogue. Indeed, the biggest casualty of these elections has not been any one individual or political party per se, but democratic values, the rule of law and the aspirations of ordinary people.

However, on a week-on-week basis, prices of eggs fell by 29% to Rs280/dozen, chicken farm (live) by 4.23% to Rs449/kg, onions by 3.5% to Rs202/kg, LPG 11.67kg cylinder by 2.85% to Rs3,246. Similarly, the gur price was reduced by 1.13% to Rs208/kg, wheat flour bag of 20kg by 0.32% to Rs2801. Tomatoes price was also reduced by 0.3% to Rs108/kg and masoor pulse was reduced by 0.28% to Rs336/kg over the previous week.

In the previous week, the SPI on a year-on-year basis was 39.22%. The PBS's latest SPI snapshot which gauges mostly kitchen items and its data from 17 urban centres, revealed an increase in prices of 22 items, a decline in 11 items and no change in 18 items.

In a span of one week, prices of bananas went up by 4.64% to Rs127 per dozen, potatoes 2.8% to Rs56/kg, matchbox 1.31% to Rs6.18/box, long cloth 1.3% to Rs573/metre, cooked dal 0.8% to Rs144/plate, shirting (average quality) 0.63% to Rs421/meter, moong pulse 0.56% to Rs309/kg, rice basmati (broken)

0.56% to Rs225/kg, mutton (average quality) 0.5% to Rs1751/kg, cooked beef 0.39% to Rs276/plate and mash pulse by 0.35% to Rs549/kg.

reflect the socioeconomic reality, citing the fact that Pakistan's minimum wage is Rs35,000 per month. They advocate for a revision of these income brackets to better capture the true economic landscape.

A significant feature of the weekly bulletin was that the year-on-year increase in the prices of some necessities and kitchen items was exorbitant. Notable among these are gas charges for Q1 (1108.6%), tomatoes (134%), chillies powder (81.7%), cigarett (77%), wheat flour (66%), gents' sponge chappal (58%), sugar (55%), gents' sandals (53%) and gur by 49%. Similarly, salt powder price



LAHORE: Cricket fans showing their tickets as they arriving to ground for watching Pakistan Super League (PSL-9) Twenty20 cricket match between Lahore Qalandar and Islamabad United.

9 terrorists killed, soldier martyred in operation

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: At least nine terrorists have been sent to hell by security forces in two separate operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

In an intelligence based operation conducted by the security forces in Tank District, two terrorists; HVT Terrorist Rehmat Ullah @Badar Mansur and Ts Amjad @Babri were killed. In an another operation conducted in South Waziristan District, after intense fire exchange, seven terrorists were sent to hell.

Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area against the security forces as well as extortion and target killing of innocent civilians. However, during the operation, a brave son of the soil, Sepoy Shahzeb Aslam (age 29 years; resident of district Haripur), having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat. Security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism from the country and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve.

Siraj to continue holding JI's reins

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The central consultative council of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) on Saturday unanimously dismissed the resignation tendered by party Emir Sirajul Haq as its head.

JI spokesperson Qaiser Sharif said the council rejected the resignation and expressed "full confidence" in Siraj. The JI chief would continue performing his duties as per the party constitution, he said. Qaiser said Siraj would shortly address the central consultative council's meeting and hold a press conference later in the day.

He said the JI failed to yield better results in the elections not because of Siraj but due to rigging, adding that the party rejected the February 8 poll results and demanded the chief election commissioner step down immediately. After facing setbacks in the February 8 general elections as the JI failed to show any electoral progress, Siraj announced to step down from the party office on February 12.

reflect the socioeconomic reality, citing the fact that Pakistan's minimum wage is Rs35,000 per month. They advocate for a revision of these income brackets to better capture the true economic landscape.

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PM: Polls step towards promoting democracy

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Saturday said the recently conducted General Elections in the country had been a step towards promoting democracy.

In a statement, he said, "Significant turnout from all segments of society, including both genders, has been acknowledged internationally." "Post elections, it is imperative that all stakeholders realise that victory and defeat are inherent aspects of demo-

cratic processes," he added

He said that parties and individuals who harboured any concerns regarding electoral irregularities were encouraged to pursue legal recourse through the available channels. "Pakistan's legislative, judicial, and executive branches are resilient and stand ready to deliver impartial justice to all."

PM Kakar said, "While peaceful protest and assembly are fundamental rights, any form of agitation, violence, or incitement for vigilantism will not be condoned and law would take its course without any hesi-

tation." "Anarchy and disorder will not be tolerated at this crucial time. This only serves to advance the agenda for hostile forces, both domestic and foreign, to exploit and create grave law and order challenges."

"The caretaker government implores patience, as political parties engage in consultations to form governments at both the federal and provincial levels, in accordance with democratic traditions and norms. We hope that this process concludes as early as possible with mutual understanding and respect," he added.

PTI's countrywide protest against electoral rigging

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Saturday held protests across the country against what it called poll rigging.

In Lahore, the police arrested and then released PTI leader Salman Akram Raja. A rally was taken out from F-9 Park Islamabad. PTI workers also protested at Ghanatgar (clock tower) Chowk in Faisalabad. PTI workers gathered in the park in front of National Press Club Islamabad. Sher Afzal Marwat, Shoaib Shaheen, Shehryar Riaz and others also participated.

Protestors raised slogans while capital police did not arrest anyone during the protest. It is noted that the police sent back the van and water cannon. However, Safe City and CCTV cameras monitored the protest.

In Karachi, PTI workers protested outside the Election Commission office, slogans were raised against the ECP. In Gujranwala, PTI protested in different areas against the rigging. Roads were blocked due to the protest.

In Arifwala and Chiniot PTI workers raised the party flag and protested against the Election Commission and the caretaker government. A protest rally was held in Sialkot under the leadership of NA-71 candidate Rehana Dar who lost the election. Rehana Dar said that Commissioner Rawalpindi spoke the truth. In Peshawar, PTI held a protest. Different leaders participated in the meeting.

A protest demonstration was also held in front of the Quetta Press Club against

Gandapur promises development, justice in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) nominee for Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur promised to put the province on the path of development.

Addressing the party's protest demonstration against the alleged rigging, Ali Amin Gandapur said that justice would also prevail in the province, if elected as the chief minister. He said that as per Forms 45, the PTI-backed independent candidates won the majority of seats across the country. "The ECP should declare the party's candidates winners from the constituencies where they lost after massive rigging," he said. The PTI leader said that Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Chhatta confessed to rigging the elections. "The confession of Commissioner Rawalpindi is tantamount to the fact that the nation has woken up," he added.

the alleged rigging of the elections by the PTI. Workers raised slogans against ECP. The PTI workers protested in front of the Swat Press Club against the alleged election rigging. MPA Akhtar Khan on the occasion said that they won 180 seats in the National Assembly.

A protest was held at Dir Bala against election rigging, and a protest was held at Farid Gate Chowk in Bahawalpur, where a heavy police force was also present. PTI workers protested at MA Jinnah Road in Okara. In Hyderabad, the PTI protested outside the press club. MQM London workers also raised slogans in the protest while police detained two workers.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has announced the locations in Punjab for its protest against alleged rigging in the general elections.

In a post on X on Saturday, the PTI said the protests would be held at F9

increased by 40%, tea Lipton by 33%, garlic by 32%, and rice IRRI-6/9 by 30%.

Besides, mash pulse and garlic were expensive by 32% each, basmati rice broken by 27%, potatoes by 25%, powder milk by 22%, fresh milk and masoor pulse by 20% each, and electricity charges for Q1 were expensive by 15.44% over prices in the same week of last year. Whereas, year-on-year prices witnessed a decrease in bananas (18%), mustard oil (16%), vegetable ghee 1-KG (15%), cooking oil and vegetable ghee by 10%. LPG was more expensive by 8.5% over last year.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Chief Minister KP Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah inaugurating dispensary at KP House Islamabad.

CM Mohsin Naqvi orders probe into rigging allegation

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi took notice of the rigging allegations, levelled by the commissioner Rawalpindi division, and ordered carrying out an impartial probe in this regard.

The CM ordered for formation of a high-level committee to investigate the rigging allegations. He said the real facts should be brought to light regarding the allegations about rigging during general election.

CM visits headquarters of Elite Force, Patrolling Police: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid a visit to the Provincial Headquarters of the Elite Force Punjab and the Punjab Highway Patrolling Police on Saturday.

The CM inspected the Elite Police Force Officers Block, Punjab Highway Police Patrolling Officers Block and other sections.

Mohsin Naqvi visited the Control Room of the Punjab Highway Patrolling Police and monitored the Highway Patrolling System. He met with police officers and directed them to perform their duties with great dedication and in a professional manner.

The CM apprised that a crackdown had been launched against those driving their vehicles and motorcycles without a licence, adding that every possible step was being taken to ensure road safety. The Patrolling Police has to take a lead regarding road safety, he added. Mohsin Naqvi also visited the cafeteria of the Punjab Highway Patrolling Police and lauded its quality.

IG Police Dr. Usman Anwar and Additional IG Punjab Highway Patrolling Police gave a briefing about the Control Room.

The Secretary

Communication & Works, CCPO, Additional IG Elite Force, Additional IG Punjab Highway Patrolling Police, DIG Elite, DIG Punjab Highway Patrolling Police and officials concerned were also present.

CM inspects remodeling of Babu Sabu Toll Plaza: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited Babu Sabu Toll Plaza and inspected its remodeling project.

The CM directed to make the toll plaza spacious and reviewed progress being made about the ongoing construction activities on both sides, said a handout issued here on Saturday. He directed to make the toll plaza spacious along with accelerating the pace of work on the remodeling project. He underscored to utilise all possible resources for an early completion of the project, saying that

labour force should be increased at night.

Mohsin Naqvi maintained that the long overdue problem of traffic bottlenecks would be resolved on a permanent basis by making the Babu Sabu Toll Plaza spacious along with undertaking its remodelling. Citizens face numerous transportation problems with the traffic getting stuck at the Babu Sabu Toll Plaza. We will make our utmost effort to complete this project at the earliest, he said.

The Commissioner/DG LDA gave a briefing about the progress being made on the project. Provincial Ministers Amir Mir, Azfar Ali Nasir, Bilal Afzal, Chairman P&D Board, Secretary Housing, Commissioner Lahore, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Engineer LDA and officials concerned were present.

LCCI demands crackdown on beggars

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Saturday expressed deep concern over a surge in the number of beggars at traffic signals and urged the authorities concerned to accelerate crackdown on professional beggars.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar also appreciated Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Ammara Athar for taking a swift action on the LCCI letter, requesting empowerment of traffic wardens to take action against beggars on traffic signals. He said that the beggar mafia was exploiting citizens and looting them financially by any possible means.

He said that the number of beggars is on the rise with every passing day, adding that hordes of beggars were a common sight at various places such as traffic signals, etc. need to be controlled on priority basis. The LCCI president said that the department concerned should make sure that there were proper laws in practice to curb the beggar mafia.

CM pays tribute to Karachi Police Office attack martyrs

KARACHI (APP): Provincial Caretaker Chief Minister, Justice (Rtd) Maqbool Baqir offered heartfelt tributes on Saturday to the brave souls who lost their lives in the tragic Karachi Police Office attack.

Reflecting on the solemn occasion marking the attack's first anniversary, the interim CM emphasized

the enduring remembrance of our fallen heroes.

He underscored the invaluable significance of these martyrs, noting their unwavering courage in confronting and defeating terrorism. Justice (Rtd) Maqbool Baqir expressed unwavering confidence in the prowess of law enforcement agencies, affirming their pivotal role in ridding

the nation of terrorism and paving the way for its progress and prosperity.

It is noteworthy to mention that on February 17th, 2023, the Karachi Police Office fell victim to a terrorist attack resulting in the martyrdom of 5 personnel, while 18 Rangers and Police personnel, and one Edhi volunteer sustained injuries.

MQM-P to table LG constitutional amend in Parliament's first session

KARACHI (INP): MQM-P leader Mustafa Kamal said on Saturday that the election instead of bringing stability increasing chaos.

MNA-elect Mustafa Kamal in a conversation with said that political parties leveling allegations,

which could create an untoward situation in country.

He said that the MQM-P will table the constitutional amendment draft in the first session of the parliament with support and vote from the PML-N.

Kamal said, "We will

hold dialogue with all parties of the parliament including the PTI and the People's Party for approval of the constitutional amendment.

He said the MQM had also objections over the results of 2018 general elections.

CED organizes training workshops for college teachers

KARACHI (APP): The College Education Department, Govt. of Sindh, recently orchestrated a mandatory training workshop aimed at bolstering the calibre of English education within college settings. The workshop titled "Review of Grade XII, English," convened 35 dedicated college educators coming from across the Karachi region.

The gathering, held at the APWA Government College for Women Karimabad, Karachi, was graced by the esteemed presence of Education Minister Rana Hussain. Her attendance underscored the government's commitment to fostering excellence in English language instruction throughout Sindh.

Info minister participates in family fair

KARACHI (PPI): Provincial Minister of Information, Minority Affairs, Social Protection, and President Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi, Muhammad Ahmed Shah, participated in a family fair organized in celebration of the 75th birthday of Gul Rana Nusrat Community Centre.

On this occasion, Minister Muhammad Ahmed Shah also cut the cake for Gul Rana Nusrat Community Centre's 75th anniversary. Speaking at the ceremony, Provincial Minister of Information, Minority Affairs, Social Protection, and President Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi, Muhammad Ahmed Shah, extended congratulations on the completion of 75 years of Gul Rana Nusrat Community Centre.

He remarked that these sisters have been working tirelessly for fifty years. Begum Gul Rana laid the foundation of this community center in 1948; He acknowledged the significant contribution of the centre, stating that these efforts are not new but have been ongoing for 75 years.

KMC establishing endowment fund of Rs10 crore: Murtaza Wahab

KARACHI (PPI): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said on Saturday that KMC is establishing an endowment fund of Rs10 crore for global warming and green energy.

"We will continue to promote clean and green energy in the entire city, as PPP has also in its manifesto made this promise to provide free electricity to citizens. We will also shift KMC building to solar system," he said while talking to media representatives after inaugurating a 100KW Solar Plant at Kidney Hill Park on Saturday. Mr Wahab said that the solar plant would provide electricity to Kidney Hill, adding such type of solar plants would also be installed in other

parks of the city. "A technical review is underway to run the streetlights from the solar plant. The solar plant will save KMC in paying electricity bills and we will sell this electricity to K Electric," he said.

He said that Pakistan State Oil had given Rs40 crore to the KMC out of Rs50 crore, adding the rest would also be received soon. Wahab said that KMC had the largest land in Karachi, but due to lack of work, this land had come under China Cutting in the past. He said that we want to use these assets wisely for clean and green energy. He said that we have not asked for money to anyone, KMC budget has been invested here, we will make

more such projects, those who want to help can also become our part, neighboring countries have installed solar panels on the drains. Yes, we have more than 500 canals we can work on it, 106 road poles are there, playgrounds, 46 parks are with KMC which we want to switch to solar, we have flyovers and bridges, we have created this model, let us join hands with KMC, for climate change and global warming.

He said that there is a 72 km water line coming from Kenjhar Lake to Karachi, 650 MW of electricity is needed for this line, think that if all this can be done, the people of Karachi will be able to get cheap electricity.



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

NOTICE FOR PUBLIC HEARING

1. This notice is published for the information of all stakeholders, general public and concerned departments that EPA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has admitted the application of following project to accord Environmental Approval required under section 13 of the khyber pakhtunkhwa Environmental Protection Act, 2014

Name of Project	Location	District
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) For United Foundry Limited	Mashelic Koghuzi	Lower Chitral


2. The Public Hearing will be conducted as per following schedule: all interested parties are invited to attend the hearing proceedings:

Title	Date	Day	Time	Venue
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for United Foundry Limited	March 05, 2024	Tuesday	11:00 am	Mashelic Koghuzi


3.. All stakeholders, general public and concerned departments are invited to submit their comments / suggestions on the EIA report: which may be submitted to the office of director General, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa EPA, 3rd Floor, SDU Building, Khyber Rd, Peshawar, Cantt, Within a period of 15 days from the date of publication of this Notice.

4. The EIA report is available at KPK-EPA office Peshawar, in case, anyone intends to review the report, the concerned may visit the said office.

DIRECTOR GENERAL
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Climate Change, Forestry, Environment & Wildlife Department,
Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,
3rd Floor, SDU Building, Khyber Road, Peshawar Cantt.
Ph: 091-9210263, Fax: 091-9210280
M/S United Foundry Limited, Mashelic Koghuzi District Lower Chitral
Ph: 0300-5740034, 0343-1707771



Government of Pakistan
NATIONAL DATABASE REGISTRATION AUTHORITY



Walk-In Test/Interview

Residents of respective Tehsils are invited for Walk-in-Test/Interview as per details mentioned below. Selection shall be on Trainee basis for one year and upon successful completion of trainee period (based on performance assessment), 5x year's contract including six month probation period shall be awarded. Salary and benefits shall be revised as per NADRA Employees Service Regulations-2002:-

Post & Age	Qualification, Experience & Salary	Tehsil	Number of Positions	Test Date, Day & Registration Time	Interview Date, Day & Time
Junior Executive (Trainee) Age (Maximum): 25 Years	Intermediate or Equivalent + Preferably 1x Year Experience of Data Entry Rs. 35,000/- Per Month (Lump Sum)	Kohat	7	26-Feb-2024 (Monday) 8:30 AM to 12:30PM	27-Feb-2024 (Tuesday) 8:30 AM onwards
		Kohat (female only)	4		
		Lachi	7		
		Karak	2		
		Takht Nusrati	1		
		Banda Daud Shah	1	27-Feb-2024 (Tuesday) 8:30 AM to 12:30PM	28-Feb-2024 (Wednesday) 8:30 AM onwards
		Bannu	18		
		Dossali	4		
		Miran Shah	2		
		Shewa	1		
		Datta Khel	3		
		Lakki Marwat	4		
		Sarai Naurang	7		
		Daraban	5		
		Kulachi	5		
		Paharpur	3		
		Tank	5		
		Toi Khulla	4		
		Wana	7		
		Doaba	4	29-Feb-2024 (Thursday) 8:30 AM to 12:30PM	01-Mar-2024 (Friday) 8:30AM onwards
		Hangu	2		
		Sadda	5		
		Thall	4		
		Kalaya	3		
		Parachinar	3	01-Mar-2024 (Friday) 8:30 AM to 12:30PM	02-Mar-2024 (Saturday) 8:30 AM onwards
		Sewak	2		
		Barawal	6		
		Dir Upper	7		
		Dir Upper (female only)	4		
		Kalkot	5		
		Shiringal	6		
		Wari	5		
		Wari (female only)	4		
		Booni	1		
		darosh	1		
		Chitral	1		
		Chitral (female only)	2		
		Garam Chashma	1	05-Mar-2024 (Tuesday) 8:30 AM to 12:30PM	06-Mar-2024 (Wednesday) 8:30 AM onwards
		Chota Lahore	2		
		Razzar	5		
		Razzar (female only)	2		
		Marghuz	3		
		Swabi	6	06-Mar-2024 (Wednesday) 8:30 AM to 12:30PM	07-Mar-2024 (Thursday) 8:30 AM onwards
		Swabi (female only)	1		
		Haripur	2		
		Havellian	3		
		Khanpur	2		
		Abbottabad	4		
		Tanawal	7		
		Nathlagali	7		
		Baffa	4		
		Balakot	1		
		Battagram	4		
		Battal	6		
		Darband	2		
		Judbah	2		
		Mansehra	2	07-Mar-2024 (Thursday) 8:30 AM to 12:30PM	08-Mar-2024 (Friday) 8:30 AM onwards
		Lassan Nawab	4		
		Oghi	3		
		Shinkhari	2		
		Besham	4		
		Kohistan	7	08-Mar-2024 (Friday) 8:30 AM to 12:30PM	09-Mar-2024 (Saturday) 8:30 AM onwards
		Martoong	1		
		Pattan	2		
		Chakdara	2		
		Swat	12		
		Swat (female only)	2		
		Bahrain	4		
		Barikot	1		
		Charbagh	1		
		kabal	1		
		Kalam	7		
		Khwazakhela	3		
		Matta (female only)	5		
		Dargai	5		
		Malakand	2		

Venue for Test & Interview: **NADRA REGIONAL HEADQUATER Peshawar (Kpk) EOBi Building, Plot No. 31 Sectors B-1, Phase-(V) Hayatabad, Peshawar Kpk**

Term and Conditions:
1. Resident from respective Tehsil as per CNIC/Domicile will be allowed for one location only.
2. Interested candidates must bring original documents i.e. Personal, Educational & Professional.
3. Candidates shortlisted after test shall be interviewed.
4. Selected candidate shall provide Medical Fitness and Character Certificates.
5. Appointment is being made against a specific NADRA Registration Centre; therefore, no request for transfer shall be entertained.
6. 05 years age relaxation is already included in above age limit.
7. Electronic gadgets such as mobile phone, smart watch etc. will not be allowed during test/interview.
8. No TA/DA will be admissible for Test & Interview.
9. Females, Minority, Transgenders and Differently-abled candidates are encouraged to apply.
10. Sample test is available at <https://careers.nadra.gov.pk/> which can be viewed for guidance.
Note:- Selected candidates shall neither confer any entitlement of permanent appointment nor be regularized.

Human Resource Section, NADRA Regional Head Office Peshawar
NADRA REGIONAL HEADQUATER Peshawar (Kpk) EOBi Building, Plot No. 31
Sectors B-1, Phase-(V) Hayatabad, Peshawar Kpk, Phone: 091 9217735

PID(I)4929/23



PEHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Ali Amin Gandapur addressing a protest rally on Ring Road against rigging in general elections-2024.

Ghulam Khan, Kharlachi border posts: Businessmen call for commercial activities

PESHAWAR (APP): Businessmen dealing in Pak-Afghan trade have demanded Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Ministry of Commerce to open Ghulam Khan and Kharlachi borders with Afghanistan for full-fledged commercial activities in the wake of the excessive transportation burden on the Torkhem border post.

In a joint press statement issued here on Saturday, Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi and former Senior Vice President (SVP) Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Engr Manzoor Elahi said due to closure of Chaman border for the last three months and limited operation at Ghulam Khan and Kharlachi border posts, all the workload of trade between Pakistan and

Afghanistan has been shifted to Torkhem border.

“Excessive transportation of goods from Torkhem to Afghanistan and Central Asian Countries (CARs), ensued in prolonging travel duration of goods laden trucks from ten days to around one and a half month and excessive increase in charges,” they explained.

Transportation charges for trucks nowadays has been hiked to an exorbitant level of Rs. 1.1 million (1100,000) because of prolonged travel duration of around one and a half months which makes it almost impossible for businessmen to bear the expense, they went on to say.

Zia said a truck carrying goods to Afghanistan returns to Pakistan after around 45 days and the owners are now preferring local transportation within the country, instead of

sending their vehicles to Afghanistan which is creating an acute shortage of vehicles.

He said the Chaman border has been closed for the last three months, Kharlachi is confined to only import and export operations which does not allow the transportation of transit goods, while the Ghulam Khan border is operational only for a few hours till 5:00 p.m.

In such circumstances, all the burden has been shifted to Torkhem resulting in the accumulation of huge traffic, prolonged travel duration, and exorbitant increase in transportation charges.

As a result of workload and accumulation of loaded trucks, the return of empty trucks from Afghanistan is also held, exacerbating the problem, they added.

Both Zia Sarhadi and Engr. Manzoor also sug-

gested shifting the entry of trucks carrying soapstone and coal from Afghanistan to Kharlachi and Ghulam Khan.

They said daily around 70 to 80 trucks of coal and around 150 to 200 trucks of soapstone arrive from Afghanistan through the Torkhem border which creates traffic jams in the parking areas and on the main highway. Ongoing work on the NLC terminal at Torkhem is also creating space shortage and delays in the passage of trucks, they added.

Both the businessmen reiterated their demand from FBR and the Ministry of Commerce and Trade to take notice of hardships being faced by the business community due to excessive transportation charges and prolonged travel duration due to the rush of vehicles at the Torkhem border post.

All Pakistan Clerks Association elects new cabinet for AG Office



F.P. Report Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elected new cabinet. The All Pakistan Clerks Association (APCA) Advocate General Office

senior vice president, Muhammad Ilyas Gul as vice president, Nasir Ali as general secretary, Mian Sadaqat Shah & Subhan as Additional General Secretary and Hafeez ur Rehman Deputy General Secretary.

Moreover, Muhammad Zubair Gul elected as finance secretary, Ijaz Ullah, Wilayat Khan, Kashif Hameed and Akhtar Waqas as office Secretary. Three press secretaries named Muhammad Saeed, Nadeem Sohail, Naik Muhammad and Shakeel Ahmad respectively.

The newly elected cabinet of All Pakistan Clerks Association (APCA) has been directed to serve their respective offices with immediate effect.

Khattak steps down as PTIP chairman

PESHAWAR (PPI): Perviz Khattak on Saturday stepped down as chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarian (PTIP) days after his party showed unimpressive performance in general elections 2024.

In his resignation letter, the former defence minister said he was resigning from

the position due to health issues. He also resigned from the membership of the party. It is recalled that Khattak suffered defeat in NA-33 Nowshera constituency, which was considered his stronghold.

Provision results showed the PTI-backed independent candidate Shahid Ahad

Khattak defeated him by securing 90,145 votes. Mr Khattak had bagged 25,258 in the polls.

Earlier this week, Jahangir Khan Tareen announced his resignation from the position of chairman of the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP).

He had announced his

decision on social media platform X, stating: “I would like to thank everyone who supported me in this election and want to offer my congratulations to my opponents. I have immense respect for the will of the people of Pakistan. Therefore, I have decided to resign from my

Successful independent candidate from PK-83 joins PML-N

PESHAWAR (INP): The successful independent candidate from PK-83 Peshawar, Malik Tariq Awan on Saturday announced to join the Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

The announcement was made by Malik Tariq Awan after holding a meeting with PML-N President Mian Shabbaz Sharif in Lahore.

Provincial president of the PML-N, Ameer Muqam, was also present on the occasion.

Independent candidate Malik Tariq Awan secured the victory while contesting election from PK 83.

Excise Police seizes 10kg of hashish, one arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): Police Station Excise Peshawar Region Saturday foiled an attempt of smuggling large quantities of drugs to the down country, a spokesman of the Excise Police said here.

He said the Excise Police recovered more than 10 kg of hashish from the vehicle number LEB 5307 during the search at Gol Chowk towards the Motorway Toll Plaza and succeeded in arresting drug smuggler Hafiz Babar Bashir, son of Bashir Ahmed, resident of Sheikhpura on the spot.

A case has been registered in Excise Police Station Peshawar Region for further investigation, the spokesperson said.

Weather to be cold and partly cloudy in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The weather in most districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be cold and partly cloudy with forecast of rain in the upper districts of the province and snowfall on the mountains in the evening hours, an official of the Meteorological Department said here Saturday.

The minimum temperature has been recorded as low as 11 degree Celsius and chance of rising to a maximum of 22 degrees Celsius with humidity ratio in the air up to 44% recorded, the official of the Department of Meteorology said.

Rains, strong winds and snowfall in upper districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are likely to start from February 18, the official said. PDMA has also issued a new notification to all district administrations to stay alert.

Risk of landslides due to snowfall and rains and rains and snowfall are likely to continue intermittently till February 20, the official added.

PTI nears to form KP cabinet — new faces expected alongside veterans

PESHAWAR (INP): In the wake of recent electoral victories, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is currently engaged in consultations for government formation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Following the announcement of the chief minister and speaker nominees, the party has shifted its focus to selecting ministers for the upcoming provincial cabinet.

The PTI is poised to introduce new faces into the expected cabinet lineup along with some old faces, with Taimur Jhagra, Shaukat Yousafzai, and Kamran Bangash despite their electoral losses slated to be included as advisors.

Taimur Jhagra is expected

to oversee the health portfolio, while Shaukat Yousafzai is likely to handle information affairs and Kamran Bangash may be tasked with the sports and culture department.

Moreover, Mushtaq Ghani, the current Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly speaker, is expected to resume the education ministry, adding to the diverse array of expertise within the cabinet.

Several other names are also under consideration for ministerial roles, including former provincial minister Shakeel Khan, Khaliqur Rehman, Arif Ahmadzai, Fazal Shakur, Zahir Shah Toro, Meena Khan, and Syed Qasim Shah. Additionally, Babar Swati,

Akbar Ayub, Faisal Amin Gandapur, and Anwar Zeb are strong contenders for cabinet positions.

The ongoing consultations underscore PTI’s commitment to assembling a competent and inclusive cabinet to address the varied needs of the province. With a mix of experienced politicians and fresh faces, the party aims to deliver on its promises of governance, development, and progress in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Previously, the PTI had nominated former minister Omar Ayub as its candidate for the prime minister’s slot. A party leader had also announced that MPA-elect Aqibullah will be the party candidate for the KP Assembly speakership.



PESHAWAR: Secretary Information PPP KP Amjad Afridi addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

White Coat ceremony celebrated at PMC

PESHAWAR (APP): The students of Peshawar Medical College while welcoming the newly into medical profession by celebrating White Coat Ceremony held inside the premises with large numbers of old and new students attended.

Peshawar Medical College (PMC) witnessed a momentous White Coat Ceremony, a significant event symbolizing the initiation of new students into the medical profession.

Prof. Dr. Hafiz Ur Rahman, Dean of Peshawar Medical College, Dr. Iftikhar Husain, CEO, and Prof. Dr. Mohammad Aman Khan, Principal of PMC, and the newly enrolled students and their parents attended the ceremony.

Addressing the gathering, Prof. Dr. Hafiz Ur

Rahman emphasized the importance of cultivating a positive attitude, expressing gratitude, fostering professional competence, and striving for excellence. He encouraged the newly admitted students to take pride in their institution and contribute to the well-being of their country.

Further insights into cultivating cultural values, adhering to a dress code, and maintaining decorum were shared by Prof. Dr. Mohammad Aman Khan, Principal of Peshawar Medical College. He emphasized the significance of respecting elders and upholding the institution’s values.

The administration of the oath to the budding medical experts was conducted by Dr. Naumanulah Wazi, Associate Prof. of Anatomy, highlighting the

commitment to ethical medical practices and responsible conduct in their academic journey.

The event also featured alumni members, including Dr. Mohsina Haq, Dr. Nomanullah Wazir, Dr. Sulaiman, and Dr. Salman Afridi, who shared cherished memories and insights from their time at PMC, offering inspiration to the aspiring medical professionals.

The White Coat Ceremony served as a poignant reminder of the responsibilities that come with a medical education and the values that form the foundation of a successful medical career.

It was a day filled with motivation, guidance, and the promise of a bright future for the new batch of students at Peshawar Medical College.

Scientists grow meaty rice hybrid food for protein kick

F.P. Report PESHAWAR: Scientists have created a new type of hybrid food - a “meaty” rice that they say could offer an affordable and eco-friendly source of protein.

The porous grains are packed with beef muscle and fat cells, grown in the lab.

The rice was first coated in fish gelatine to help the beef cells latch on, and the grains were left in a petri dish to culture for up to 11 days.

The researchers say the food may serve as “relief for famine, military ration, or even space food” in the future.

It remains to be seen whether consumers would take to it if it gets to market.

The hybrid rice is apparently a bit firmer and brittle than regular rice, but packs more protein, Matter journal reports.

According to the team at Yonsei University in South Korea, it has 8% more protein and 7% more fat.

And, compared to regular beef, it has a smaller carbon footprint, since the production method eliminates the need to raise and farm lots of animals.

For every 100g (3.5oz) of protein produced, hybrid rice is estimated to release under 6.27kg (13.8lb) of carbon dioxide, while beef production

releases eight times more at 49.89kg, they say.

Researcher Sohyeon Park explained: “We usually obtain the protein we need from livestock, but livestock production consumes a lot of resources and water and releases a lot of greenhouse gas.”

“Imagine obtaining all the nutrients we need from cell-cultured protein rice.”

“Rice already has a high nutrient level, but adding cells from livestock can further boost it.”

She said: “I didn’t expect the cells to grow so well in the rice. Now I see a world of possibilities for this grain-based hybrid food.”

Rice appears to provide a scaffold or structure for the meat cells to grow in, and also gives them nutrients.

The team is not the first to explore lab-grown or cultivated meat products.

Since the first lab-grown burger was unveiled in London in 2013, dozens of companies around the world have joined the race to bring affordable cultivated meat to the market.

Singapore recently started selling the world’s first cultivated chicken product to customers.

Meanwhile, Italy has backed a bill to ban laboratory-produced meat in order to safeguard the country’s food traditions.

Critics point out there is

nothing synthetic about lab-grown meat - it is made by growing natural cells.

Prof Neil Ward, an agri-food and climate specialist at the University of East Anglia, said this type of research holds promise for the development of healthier and more climate-friendly diets in future, but that some people needed convincing.

“While data on cost and climate impact look very positive, a critical test is around public appetite for these sorts of lab-developed foods,” he said.

“With lab-based alternative meats in general, the greatest potential is probably in replacing processed meats rather than prime cuts.”

Bridget Benelam from the British Nutrition Foundation said: “Developing a diet that supports health for both people and planet is a major challenge. This study demonstrates an innovative new approach that could contribute to the solution.”

But she added: “The findings represent a relatively small increase in the protein content of rice, which isn’t a high protein food. So further work would be needed if this technology were to be used as an alternative protein source to traditional animal products.”

Gene therapy blocks painful hereditary disorder

F.P. Report PESHAWAR: Gene therapy has transformed the lives of people with a genetic disorder that causes painful and unpredictable swelling attacks.

Angiodema, thought to affect 50,000 people worldwide, can be seriously debilitating, affect airways, and occasionally prove fatal.

Patients treated with a single dose of gene therapy Crispr-Cas9 showed little sign of further symptoms.

The therapy also has big potential as a treatment for other genetic conditions.

“It looks as if the single-dose treatment will provide a permanent cure for my hereditary angioedema patients’ very disabling

symptoms,” principal investigator Dr Hilary Longhurst, from the University of Auckland said.

Angiodema causes swelling in the soft tissues and can affect many parts of the body.

Cleveland Firman, from Suffolk, who received the treatment in the UK said: “The randomness, unpredictability and potential severity of the attacks has made trying to live my life almost impossible. I spent my life constantly wondering if my next attack would be severe.”

“The swellings are painful and disfiguring. I was embarrassed to go out in case of an attack. I’ve been hospitalised with swellings on my neck and

throat that have affected my ability to breathe.

“Since the treatment, I’ve not had a single attack. I’ve had a radical improvement in my physical and mental wellbeing.

“I am very positive about the future. I am now volunteering where I can meet like-minded people. The freedom has opened up my world and improved my self-confidence.”

Crispr-Cas9 is a DNA cutting and pasting system that scientists have borrowed from nature. Bacteria use it to protect themselves against foreign DNA from viruses.

Scientists have been using it in the lab to target and cut out faulty DNA in human cells that cause illnesses.

However, the edits are

not always perfect and the cuts can end up in the wrong place.

In the trial, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, angiodema symptoms were reduced by 95% among a small group of patients from the UK, New Zealand, and the Netherlands given a single infusion - targeted at cells in the liver - to reduce the KLKB1 gene’s ability to produce plasma prekallikrein.

Just one of the patients continued to show symptoms, which were only minor.

Dr Padmalal Gurugama, who led the UK branch of the research, at Cambridge University Hospital, said the therapy could significantly improve lives.

“Hereditary angioedema can cause patients severe swellings and intense pain, which can be life-threatening as well as restricting normal activities, such as going to work or school,” he said.

“Because it is often misdiagnosed, many patients undergo unnecessary treatments and invasive procedures.

“This is not the only condition in which Crispr-based gene editing is being tried.

“There are a lot of clinical trials targeting various other conditions that are producing similar results.”

The patients will be followed up for 15 years - to monitor the treatment’s long-term safety and efficacy.



In brief

Traffic police crackdown F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Traffic police Abbottabad Saturday have intensified their efforts to curb the operation of vehicles without proper route permits and those found outside designated areas. Police also impounded 87 vehicles at the Police Lines Ground as a result of the crackdown. The crackdown has resulted in the impoundment of several vehicles including two Suzuki vans operating without the required route permits. These vehicles were seized at the Police Lines Ground as part of the ongoing enforcement actions. Under the supervision of Superintendent of Police (SP) Traffic, Suleman Zafar PSP, traffic police teams headed by Inspector Wasim Khan targeted Suzuki carriers, and Toyota Hiaces operating without route permits and beyond designated areas on various local routes within Abbottabad. The operations aim to ensure compliance with regulations and maintain order on the city's roads. Additionally, the authorities are also cracking down on illegal bus stops, stands, and unauthorized parking as their commitment to ensuring road safety and adherence to traffic regulations in Abbottabad.

Two drug dealers arrested F.P. Report

MARDAN: City police Station On Saturday arrested two drug dealers along with a large amount of drug hashish and heroin while taking action against drug dealers. Totally more than 04 kg of hashish and 402 grams of heroin were recovered from the arrested drug dealers and the accused were arrested given. According to the details, City Police Station under the orders of DPO Najibur Rehman, instructions of SP City Division Inam Jan Khan, supervision of DSP City Circle Ejaz Khan and the leadership of SHO Muqadam Khan, conducted a major operation against 02 drug dealers. Noorul Islam resident of Shahi Bagh and Abdul Hameed resident of Rorya Jaded were arrested. A total of more than 04 kilograms of hashish and 402 grams of heroin were recovered from the possession of the two drug dealers. Cases under the Narcotics Act were registered against the arrested drug dealers in the city police station.

Three children die of pneumonia

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Three more children died of pneumonia in Bahawalpur Victoria Hospital in 24 hours, hospital sources said on Saturday. According to MS Bahawalpur Victoria Hospital Dr. Amir Bukhari, as many as 37 children have died of pneumonia in the BVH during ongoing year. Dr. Amir said that 34 more children affected of pneumonia were still under treatment at emergency and children wards of BVH. Meanwhile, a seminar was organized here to raise awareness about the importance of diabetes screening to save people from the disease. According to a press release issued here, the seminar was jointly organized by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Getz Pharma and others here at Bahawal Victoria Hospital. On the occasion, over 100 faculty members were provided with free-of-cost laboratory tests including diabetes screening, lipid profile, blood sugar and HbA1. Speaking on the occasion, Professor of Medicines, Prof-Dr. Qazi Masroor Ali urged people must have their diabetes screening test to remain aware of this disease.

PTI workers take to streets against poll's rigging in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Like other parts of the province the Pakistan Tahreek Insaf workers staged different protest rallies against poll's rigging in parts of the district here on Saturday. The workers took out protest procession at Chakdara, Timergara, Maidan, Khall and Munda and chanted slogans in favour of the PTI founder.

Speaking on the occasion the PTI activists including district general secretary Ghulam Hussain, tehsil chairman Fairoz Shah and others alleged the party had won over 170 national assembly seats in the country but the results were manipulated by returning officers and district returning officers late at night.

They said that record rigging was witnessed in

poll's result just to steal the PTI mandate. The speakers lauded the party workers for their excellent participation in general elections on Feb 8. The speakers said the series of protest rallies would continue until the PTI public mandate was returned. Later the protesters dispersed peacefully.

Malnutrition termed main cause of diseases in women and children:

Speakers at an awareness session have termed malnutrition in women and children the main cause of many complicated diseases. They asked all members of the society to play their role in identifying malnourished children. The categori D hospital Talash arranged the awareness session at the facility in collaboration with the UNICEF.

The hospital medical superintendent Dr Arshad

Ali chaired the event. Scores of local Lady Health Workers, Lady Health Ssupervisors and other women were present on the occasion. The UNICEF Communication Officer Haris Khan, Nutrition Assistant Rasheel and others also spoke. Dr. Arshad Ali said that with the support of UNICEF, the facility was providing its services for children suffering from malnutrition in 7 different health centers across the district.

He said that those centers had ensured the supply of the best food materials and medicines for the children suffering from malnutrition. He said that malnutrition was also causing many diseases in milk feeding mothers for which all stakeholders had to play their active role in prevention and social awareness.

PTI supporters hold protest in Buner

F.P. Report

BUNER: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was held a peaceful protest demonstration at Buner Press Club on Saturday. Newly elected MPA from PK 27, Advocate Abdul Kabir Khan, Newly elected MPA from PK 26, Syed Fakhar Jihan Bacha, Nazim Tehsil Gadizai Salarzai Sher Alam Khan, former National Assembly candidate Mian Moinuddin Bacha and Advocate Waqar addressed the protest demonstration.

They said that in Sindh and Punjab as well as in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf mandate is being hijacked by taking Form 45 from our elected members and casting wrong votes in Form 47, which will harm democracy.

They named Muqam seat in Shangla and Arabab seat in Peshawar which they claimed were won by PTI affiliated independent candidates but rigged in form 47. The speakers said that the country cannot afford such a situation at the moment, saying that political stability is very important for desired stability. Therefore, this mistreatment of our newly elected representatives should be stopped. Otherwise, this series of protests will continue unabated.

District convention on women rights held:

A one day convention on the rights of women was held in a local hotel in Swari on Saturday. The convention was held under the patronage of C, I, P. There was a strong demand for solving the problems related to the political, social and electoral process faced by

women.

A local organization - Rural Development Organization Buner organized it with the support of RAMP. In the convention CIP (Coalition For Inclusive Pakistan) women members of the district network members of Buner participated in large. Besides the district officers (NADRA, Women's Rights Commission, Social and Women's Welfare, Election Commission, Human Rights Commission, Benazir Income Support Program officials heads of political parties, media and civil society representatives also participated.

The convention introduced the organizations and the members of the newly established district level (C, I, P) District Network. In the convention, CIP District Representative Member (RDO) Buner Director Madam Noor Bastiya Bibi said about the non-availability of women's rights and inequality that Pakistan is ranked 142 out of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2023 Global Gender Gap Index. And in Human Development Report's Gender Inequality Index 2022, Pakistan ranks 161st out of 191 countries, which is mainly due to social, political and social attitudes towards women. Women's participation in the labor force is 25 percent.

The number of girls students who do not go to school is also very high as compared to boys. Similarly, the rate of sexual harassment, domestic violence and sexual violence against women is also increasing. There are lack of opportunities for women

to participate in the political process in the political parties. The Political parties mostly nominate women as candidates for the seats of rare chance of winning.

Thus, women are elected to certain seats in the assemblies, but they are not treated equally to male parliamentarian. The Women are not inducted in the highest forums such as central executive committees of any political party and parliament in Pakistan, while women's membership at the lower levels (village, mohalla, tehsil, district) of political parties is almost non-existent. The Madam Noor Bastiya Bibi on behalf of members presented a charter of demand regarding the political-economical-electoral-health and education-related problems faced by women and demanded that public representatives and government officials implement these problems in their own way.

The officials and representatives assured efforts will be made to solve them. All the members involved in the convention demanded the government officials and the representatives of the political parties to try to solve all the problems. The government and political officials in their speeches promised that they will raise their voices at all levels for the solution of women's problems and political parties to power by including them in their manifesto. Finally, the head of the CIP district network, R.D.O. and Ramp Project Coordinator Ahmed Hussain thanked all the participants.

Five kidnapped Punjabi workers rescued

QUETTA (INP): Five kidnapped Punjabi employees of a telecom company were rescued from district Kech of Balochistan on Saturday.

According to details, the said workers had gone

to Sajidi Bazar in Hoshab tehsil of Kech district in Turbat on January 28, to install a mobile tower, from where they were abducted near Dandar Dhale Bazar some 7 km away from Awaran.

The district administration said that the abducted workers of telecom company were rescued were district Kech. The rescued kidnapped Punjabi workers included a technician and labourers.



HYDERABAD: Passengers traveling on the rooftop of Suzuki van in a risky way may cause any mishap and needs the attention of concerned authorities at Hala Naka Road.



HYDERABAD: Supporters of PTI holding a protest in favour of their demands.

Certificates distributed among teachers F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Women can get their own livelihood in respectable manners but also enable to play their vital role in progress, prosperity and strengthen national economy while the Punjab government is implementing on different programmes for welfare of women and for making them self-reliance.

These views were expressed by the Principal Government Vocational Training Institute for women Sukheki Mandi Madam Khalida Rafiq during parents meeting arranged after med term examination. Commendations certificates were gave way to teachers and students showing the best performance.

Madam Khalida Rafiq said that government was imparting vocational training to women for not only enabling them to get jobs but also to provide skilled manpower to industrial units because skilled workforce was made quality industrial products which prerequisite for importing industrial products. She took feedback from parents regarding performance of the vocational training institute and urged the parents to get impart vocational training to their daughters from vocational training institute instead of sitting them idle in the homes.

Kohat Police arrested 6 gamblers F.P. Report

KOHAT: Kohat Police have arrested 6 gamblers for gambling and also recovered 20,600 rupees worth for gambling money during a raid here on Saturday.

According to the details, a Kohat Police spokesman said that the gamblers were busy in a house and the Police party raided the area based on information they received. The Kohat Police spokesman said that

SHO Gumbat Riaz Hussain led the raid along with other team members and arrested all six gamblers on the spot along with gambling's money of Rs. 20,600. All the six gamblers were taken into custody and a case was registered against the detained gamblers in Gumbat Police Station.

Galyat snow festival starts F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Director General Galyat Development Authority, Shahrukh Ali Khan on Saturday inaugurated Galyat Snow Festival at Abbottabad.

Director Tourism, Tamas Khan, Director Administration, Fawad Khattak and other concerned officials were also present in the inauguration ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, Shahrukh Ali Khan said that the event was aimed to attract tourists and inform people about the tourism potential of Galyat.

He said that the festival would also impact socio-economic conditions of area people by creating growth opportunities.

11 police officials reshuffled in Lakki

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Eleven subordinate police officials including four SHOs were reshuffled in Lakki Marwat district, said an official. He said that the transfer/posting of police officials was issued by district police officer Tariq Habib.

Ghaznikhel police station SHO Inspector Ibad Wazir and Shaheed Asmatullah Khan Khattak police station SHO Abdul Samad Quraishi replaced each other while sub inspector Qudratullah was made the SHO of Saddar police station.

ASI Waseeullah who was working as in charge officer of Wanda Banochi check post has been made the SHO Shaheed Haibat Ali Khan police station of Darra Pezu town. His predecessor ASI Naqeeb Nawaz and Saddar police station

SHO ASI Mudassir Hayat were directed to report to the police lines.

ASI Faruiddullah was transferred from police post rescue 15 and posted to the police post Manjiwala. Head constables (HC) Manzoor Ahmad, Hameedullah and Wahid Khan were transferred and posted to the police posts rescue 15, Lakki city and traffic staff Naurang.

Seminar held: Speakers at a seminar acknowledged the vital role of paramedics in health service delivery and asked the government to implement the upgradation policy for them. The seminar was arranged at the district health offices in Lakki Marwat by the local chapter of paramedics association to mark national paramedics' day.

The health officials and office bearers of the association also cut a cake on the

occasion. The association's president Ayyub Khan, deputy DHO Dr Kifayat Bitanni and other health officials were present. Ayyub and other speakers said that the paramedics played a front line role in provision of healthcare services to people during emergencies, epidemic and pandemic.

They said that the health professionals always offered their services to fight Corona, polio and other diseases effectively. They said that the health delivery system would collapse if the government ignored the paramedics, considered an important segment of the health sector. They asked the provincial government to allocate a quota for paramedics in management cadre posts and allow them to serve the ailing community by carrying out private practice.

Gang busted, 2 arrested, 5 stolen bikes recovered

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Dera Police in their on-going operations against car and bike lifter gangs busted a gang and rounded up their 2 members be-sides recovering 5 motorcycles, and Rs 3.7 million cash of stolen vehicles from their possession in the limits of Cantt police station here on Saturday.

According to the police spokesman, on the direction of District Police Officer Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, Police Station Cantt under the leadership of SDPO City Muhammad Adnan along with SHO Gul Sher Khan conducted a successful operation and succeeded in busting a bike lifter gang. The police arrested Akram and Ikram along with recovering 5 stolen motorcycles from their possession. Police also recovered cash amounting to Rs 3.7 million of stolen bikes and cars from the accused.

DSP City Muhammad Adnan told the media persons that while taking action on the rising incidents of motorcycle theft in the city, District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani directed to launch of a comprehensive crackdown against criminals involved in numerous bike lifting and robbery activities.

He said that a special police team was formed, after which the team traced the accused and arrested 2 criminals who were involved in various incidents of robbery in the city. He said the team was successful in recovering 5 stolen motorcycles and cash from the accused.

WSSC cleanliness drive under 'Khushal KP Programme' reviewed: A cleanliness drive under the Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Programme launched by The Water and Sanitation Services (WSSC) DI Khan was in full swing to keep the city neat and clean.

Under the program, the main drains of the city got cleaned, and garbage was also removed from different localities. On the special instructions of Deputy Commissioner (DC) of DI Khan Mansoor Arshad, Assistant Commissioner (AC) of DI Khan Muhammad Faseeh Ishaq Abbasi, and WSSC staff, they reviewed the sanitation arrangements at various places in the city, including Tank Adda, Wensum College, Mufti Mahmood School, and other different places.

On this occasion, the AC said that drains should be cleaned before expected rains. He called for the cooperation of the citizens and urged them to refrain from dumping garbage in the drains to ensure cleanliness and the elimination of encroachment. He appealed to the citizens not to throw garbage in drains, but that it should be placed in designated places so that it could be disposed of easily.

District and Sessions Court Sujawal gets Digital law library

F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: The first ever digital law library of the district was inaugurated by Advocate Supreme Court and head of Mangrio foundation Saleem Ahmed Mangrio on Saturday at District and Sessions Court Sujawal.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by office bearers and members of district bar association Sujawal. Speakers at the ceremony termed it a substantial headway in the field of legal research. Addressing the gathering secretary general DBA Sujawal Abdul Latif Khattak expressed his gratitude to Advocate Saleem Mangrio and his team for taking commendable measures to promote legal education.

He said that it was a revolutionary move in the history of Sujawal district an otherwise remote area of Sindh. The initiative he said would encourage young lawyers to explore new dimensions of law and undertake quality research

work. Mr Saleem Mangrio said that he and his team had played a vital role in launching digital law libraries in remote areas of Sindh to make legal research easy.

Rise in the standard of advocacy was only possible if all bar associations of province would get equal facilities; He suggested and added that this step would paved the way for authentic and verified research in the field of law. Former Vice President of DBA Mr Ayaz Ali Khawaja highlighted the importance of book reading in the life of a lawyer and said that since young lawyers were much inclined towards technology digital library would help them work more effectively.

President of District Bar Association Sujawal Advocate Liaquat Ali Jamari during his speech said that his team had made the opening of digital law library possible in Sujawal. " We will take measures to make district Bar Association a hub of learn-

ing for young lawyers"; he vowed. It is pertinent to mention here that Sujawal was declared a separate district in 2013 but it's courts were under administrative control of sessions judge Thatta till 2023. In March last year it also got the status of separate judicial district. Towards the end traditional gift Ajrak was presented to all guests and contributors.

3 injured

MUZAFFARGARH (INP): Three including a woman and a child were injured in collision between a passenger van and a car near Jalu Mor here on Saturday. An over speeding passenger van hit a private car at Kot Addu-Layyah road.

Three including 36-year-old Shazia Bibi w/o Zulqarnain hailing from district Layyah, 35-year-old Muhammad Nadeem s/o Muhammad Baksh hailing from Kot Addu and his three-year-old son Abdul Basit were injured in the accident.



Over 110 people detained across Russia at rallies in memory of Navalny

MOSCOW (Reuters): More than 110 people had been detained at events in Russia in memory of Alexei Navalny, Russian President Vladimir Putin's most formidable domestic opponent, who died on Friday, according to rights group OVD-Info.

Navalny, a 47-year-old former lawyer, fell unconscious and died on Friday after a walk at the "Polar Wolf" Arctic penal colony where he was serving a three-decade sentence, authorities said. OVD-Info, which reports on freedom of assembly in Russia, said more than 110 people in 13 cities across Russia had been detained at spontaneous rallies as of 0736 GMT on Saturday.

At least 69 people had been detained in St Petersburg, OVD-Info said. "In each police department there may be more detainees than in the published lists," OVD-Info said. "We publish only the names of those people about whom we have reliable knowledge and whose names we can publish." Reuters could not immediately verify the count. The hundreds of flowers and candles laid in Moscow to honour Navalny's memory were mostly taken away overnight in black bags. Russians paying their respects spoke of their despair and apathy after Navalny's death.

Meanwhile, Russian state media tend not to give much or any airtime to critics of the government, and their initial treatment of Alexei Navalny's reported death continues in this vein. On state TV channels, the media outlets with the biggest audiences in Russia, there has been minimal coverage of Navalny's death, and the first reports were largely slow to come and perfunctory. On two of the most popular channels - Channel One and Rossiya 1 - it took almost 45 minutes and an hour respectively after the announcement, before it was mentioned.

These reports provided no contextual information of who Navalny was, nor why he was in prison. One didn't even mention his full name, referring to him only as "Navalny" - despite telling viewers "the most thorough investigation" into his death would take place. When a liberal politician appearing on another popular

state TV channel tried to express his condolences on Navalny's death, he was cut off by the programme's host, who asked him what this had to do with the topic they were discussing.

On social media, however, it is quite a different picture. The news has been all over platforms like X (formerly Twitter) - where it was a top trending topic - and Telegram, an increasingly popular source of news. Posts on Navalny were among the most viewed on Telegram, garnering hundreds of thousands - sometimes over a million - views, in hours.

And while Navalny's team says it has not yet confirmed the news, many prominent figures sympathetic to his cause voiced incredulity and sadness. "If this is true, then, regardless of the formal reason, Vladimir Putin personally bears responsibility for the premature death," Mikhail Khodorkovsky, former Russian oligarch turned Putin critic, wrote on Telegram. Other opposition figures echoed those remarks. Several pro-government figures have insinuated it is the West or Russian opposition, rather than President Vladimir Putin, who stand to benefit from the sudden death of Putin's most prominent critic in Russia.

Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of state international broadcaster RT, was quick to ridicule Western reaction. "I won't even begin to explain to them that everyone has long forgotten [Navalny], that there was no point in killing him, especially before the elections, that it would be beneficial to completely opposite forces," she said. President Putin is expected to be re-elected next month for a fifth presidential term, having cracked down on opponents. Channel One presenter Anatoly Kuzichev also claimed Navalny had been "safely forgotten even by his associates", and speculated that his death may have been "an accident" or perhaps an act of "terrible sabotage". In a similar vein, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova suggested there was something "self-revealing" about the swiftness of Western leaders' response. "There has been no forensic examination yet, but the West's conclusions are ready," she said.

President Sall vows poll 'as soon as possible'

DAKAR: Senegal's president says the delayed election to choose his successor will be held "as soon as possible", after the top court ruled that his attempt to delay it was unconstitutional. President Macky Sall has served two terms in office.

The Constitutional Council annulled President Sall's decree moving the vote to December. It also voided the contentious bill passed by parliament which had backed the president's decree. The move will go some way to restoring Senegal's reputation as a bastion of democracy in West Africa.

Ever since he announced he wanted to delay the elections two weeks ago - just hours before campaigns were meant to kick off, President Sall has been under immense pressure to reverse his decision. Now that pressure appears to have yielded results, with a statement from the presidency saying Mr Sall will comply with the court ruling - and will also hold talks with all relevant stakeholders without delay, in order to hold elections as soon as possible. The original date was 25 February - so there is not enough time to hold it then.

A new date for the elections has not yet been given, but in its ruling the Constitutional Council said the president could not stay in power beyond the end of his term on 2 April. The West African body, Ecowas, France and the European Union all urged

Mr Sall to comply with the decision. Senegal's judiciary has been praised exerting its independence, with a leading opposition figure hailing court ruling as "a great day for democracy".

"We've been so ashamed by all this violation of the law and the constitution," former Prime Minister Aminata Touré told the BBC's Newsday programme. Anta Babacar, the only female candidate, agreed. "We are actually very, very proud of our Constitutional Council and it shows that there is at least a little bit of democracy and justice that's left in our country," she said.

There had been strong opposition to Mr Sall's decision to postpone the elections until mid-December. Protesters have taken to the streets and opposition politicians have lodged legal complaints against him. Religious authorities and regional bodies had also called for elections to be held as soon as possible.

However, the disputes that led to the polls being postponed in the first place remain unresolved, including allegations of corruption in the Constitutional Council and objections from opposition figures who had been excluded from the candidate list published last month. Holding the election using the disputed candidate list could spark renewed unrest and violence by supporters of those barred from contesting, in particular Ousmane Sonko, who has a large and

vocal following among young Senegalese. He is currently in jail after being convicted of various offences after prosecutions, which he says are politically motivated. Most candidates have not been campaigning since President Sall issued his decree earlier this month. Senegal is considered one of West Africa's more stable democracies and is the only country in the region never to have suffered a military coup. — Aljazeera

Polish PM wants changes on EU border policies

WARSAW (AP): Poland's prime minister said that his country will upgrade the wall on its border with Belarus to better insulate the frontier against unauthorized migration.

Donald Tusk also said that Poland and Finland both see the need for changes in the European Union's asylum legislation, which he called "inadequate" in the face of the current migration challenges and threats posed by Russia's and Belarus's policies that are pushing unauthorized migration into the EU. Tusk spoke alongside visiting Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo following their talks on regional security. Both nations share borders with Russia while Poland also borders Belarus and Ukraine, which is fighting a war against Russia's aggression.



Jailed former Thai PM to be freed today

BANGKOK: Thailand's jailed former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra will be freed on Sunday, just six months after returning to the country following more than 14 years in self-imposed exile. Speaking to reporters on Saturday, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said Thaksin's release would be "on the 18th" and handled "according to the rule of law".

Thaksin was granted parole earlier this week but it was not certain until now when he would be freed. Sunday is the first day of his parole eligibility. Justice Minister Tawee Sodsong said earlier this week that Thaksin, 74, would be among 930 prisoners granted early release. Thaksin could still face further legal troubles as public prosecutors are considering charging him for insulting the monarchy during a 2015 media interview. The billionaire who made his fortune in the telecommunications business was jailed for eight years on graft and abuse-of-power charges upon his return to Thailand in August. His sentence was reduced to one year by King Maha Vajiralongkorn and he has served six months in hospital detention due to an undisclosed health condition.

His homecoming coincided with his Pheu Thai Party returning to government in alliance with pro-military parties, leading many to conclude that an agreement had been struck to cut his jail time. The rumours grew stronger when he was transferred to a police hospital within hours of being sentenced because of his poor health, and it is not clear that he has spent any time in a prison cell.

Local media reported that Thaksin had been suffering from tightness in the chest and high blood pressure when he was admitted to hospital, and his family said he had undergone two operations in the following months. Srettha is from the Pheu Thai Party led by Thaksin's youngest daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra. It formed a government after last May's election, where the progressive Move Forward Party won the most votes but was blocked from taking power by still-powerful elements linked to the military and the traditional elite.

The former prime minister swept to power in 2001 on a populist platform that appealed to rural Thais who had long been neglected by the country's ruling elite. He was returned to office in a landslide five years later, but in September 2006, when Thaksin was in New York preparing to address the United Nations, the military seized power in a coup. Before being convicted for abuse of power and going into exile, mostly in Dubai, Thaksin was accused of serious human rights abuses amid a violent conflict in the country's largely Muslim southern provinces and a "drugs war", which killed thousands. — Aljazeera

Indian farmers strike to demand guaranteed crop prices

NEW DELHI (AP): Farmers blocked highways and held demonstrations in many rural areas in northern India to protest over a range of grievances that have also led tens of thousands to march toward the capital in tractors and wagons.

Farmers in the northern states of Haryana and Punjab held sit-ins near toll plazas on major highways in the strike, supported by some trade unions. Authorities advised commuters to plan routes carefully to avoid blocked roads. Tens of thousands of farmers began a protest march toward New Delhi earlier this week to demand guaranteed prices for their produce, but were stopped by the police about 200 kilometers (125 miles) away from the capital. The farmers are camping on the border between Punjab and Haryana after being blocked by concrete and metal barricades. Police detained some protesters.

Authorities have also suspended mobile internet service in some areas of Haryana, blocked social media accounts of some protest leaders and used drones to drop tear gas canisters on the protesters. The farmers' march comes two years after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government faced similar protests that continued for more than a year. At that time, farmers camped on the capital's outskirts to demonstrate against new agriculture laws that were later withdrawn.

At the heart of the latest protests is a demand for legislation that would guarantee minimum support prices for all farm produce. Currently, the government protects agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices by setting a minimum purchase price for certain essential crops, a system that was introduced in the 1960s to help shore up food reserves and prevent shortages. The farmers want legislation that will apply the protection to all produce.



The protesting farmers are mostly from Punjab and Haryana and are relatively better-off than farmers in other Indian states. But increasing cultivation costs and rising debts have led them to overproduce rice and wheat, crops for which they get a minimum support price, or MSP. However, those water-guzzling crops have also depleted the water table in the two states and forced farmers to look for other alternatives. Farmers say a guaranteed minimum support price for other crops would stabilize their incomes. Farmers are also pressing the government to follow through on promises to double their income, waive their loans and withdraw legal cases brought against them during the earlier 2021 protests.

Some economists say that implementation of the demands could risk food inflation. However, experts also point out that a key cause of the farmers' frustration is the lack of implementation of policies that are already in place. "The system of MSP is already there, but the government doesn't follow through on what it is promising," said Himanshu, an econ-

omist at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University who goes by his first name.

The system of guaranteed prices — which applies to 23 crops — has been in place for decades, but the government mostly pays those prices for crops like rice and wheat, he said. "For the remaining 21 crops, the government hardly buys at those prices. That's a problem. That's why they want a guarantee." Several meetings between farm leaders and government ministers have failed to end the deadlock.

Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda, who met farm leaders, said the talks were positive and the two sides will meet again Sunday. "We believe we will all find a solution together peacefully," Munda told reporters. The protests come at an important time for India with elections to be held in a few months. Modi is widely expected to secure a third successive term. In 2021, Modi's decision to repeal the agricultural laws was seen as a move to appease farmers, an influential voting bloc, ahead of crucial state polls.

Urgent measures to safeguard Rafah Top UN court rejects South African request

THE HAGUE (AP): The top UN court rejected a South African request to impose urgent measures to safeguard Rafah in the Gaza Strip, but also stressed that Israel must respect earlier measures imposed late last month at a preliminary stage in a landmark genocide case.

The International Court of Justice said in a statement that the "perilous situation" in Rafah "demands immediate and effective implementation of the provisional measures" that it ordered Jan. 26. It said no new order was necessary because the existing measures "are applicable throughout the Gaza Strip, including in Rafah."

The world court added that Israel "remains bound to fully comply with its obligations under the Genocide Convention" and the Jan. 26 ruling which ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza. Citing UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the court noted "the most recent developments in the Gaza Strip, and in Rafah in particular, would exponentially increase what is already a humanitarian nightmare with untold regional consequences."

Israel has identified Rafah as the last remaining Hamas stronghold in Gaza and vowed to continue its offensive there. An estimated 1.4 million Palestinians, more than half of Gaza's population, has crammed into the city, most of them displaced people who fled fighting elsewhere in Gaza. Israel has said it will evacuate the civilians before attacking, though international aid officials have said there is nowhere to go due to the vast devastation left behind by the offensive.

South Africa announced that it had lodged an "urgent request" with the International Court of Justice to consider whether Israel's military operations targeting the southern Gaza city of Rafah breach provisional orders the court handed down last month in a case alleging genocide.

South African foreign ministry spokesman Clayson Monyela said in a message on X, formerly Twitter, that the court "has affirmed our view that the perilous situation demands immediate and effective implementation of the provisional measures indicated by the Court in its Order of 26 January 2024 which are applicable throughout the #GazaStrip & has clarified that this includes #Rafah."

The court's statement was issued on the Jewish sabbath, when government offices are closed, and there was no immediate comment from the Israeli Foreign Ministry. Israel urged the world court to reject what it called South Africa's "highly peculiar and improper" request.

Israel strongly denies committing genocide in Gaza and says it does all it can to spare civilians and is only targeting Hamas militants. It says Hamas' tactic of embedding in civilian areas makes it difficult to avoid civilian casualties. The provisional measures ordered last month came at a preliminary stage of a case brought by South

Africa accusing Israel of breaching the Genocide Convention. The court also called on Hamas to release the hostages who are still in captivity. Hamas urged the international community to make Israel carry out the court's orders.

Man in Iran guns down 12 relatives

TEHRAN (AP): A 30-year-old man gunned down 12 of his relatives Saturday in a remote rural area in southeast Iran, the deadliest shooting reported in decades. Head of the justice department of the province of Kerman, Ebrahim Hamidi, told the semiofficial ISNA news agency the gunman opened fire on his father, brother and other relatives early morning in a village because of family disputes.

The report, which did not identify the assailant, stated he used a Kalashnikov assault rifle. Local media report on occasional shootings, but this attack has had the highest death toll in Iran, where citizens are only legally allowed hunting rifles, common in rural areas.

In 2022, an employee, who was dismissed from a state-owned financial conglomerate, opened fire at his former workplace, killing three people and injuring another five before killing himself in the country's west. In 2016, a 26-year-old man shot 10 relatives in a rural area in the south of Iran.

Hong Kong customs arrests 7

HONG KONG (AP): Hong Kong customs officials have arrested seven people linked to the territory's largest ever money laundering case, involving about 14 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$1.8 billion) some of it linked to a scam case in India.

The seven local residents, aged between 23 and 74, were part of a large-scale transnational syndicate that used various shell companies and bank accounts to transfer large sums from overseas to the city under the guise of running international trading businesses, customs officials said. One account once received as much as 100 million Hong Kong dollars (\$12.8 million) on a single day, they said.

Ip Tung-ching, the head of customs financial investigation bureau, said 2.9 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$371 million) of the total was suspected to be linked to a scam case involving a mobile application in India. But she did not say which application it was. Some of those arrested were non-Chinese residents of Hong Kong, she said without giving details.

Authorities believe the syndicate received remittances from India in name of exporting electronic devices, diamonds, gems and precious metals, Ip said. Proceeds were then transferred to bank accounts in Hong Kong for money laundering. "These acts of money laundering provide protective umbrellas for the illegal profits of criminals," she said. Law enforcement in Hong Kong, India and elsewhere cooperated in carrying out the operation, enabling its success, Ip said.

How songbirds of Rafah help Palestinians cope with the terror of war

GAZA STRIP: In downtown Rafah, near Al-Awda Mosque, a small bird flutters in a cage hanging on the outer wall of a school which is currently being used as a shelter for people who have been displaced by the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip. Its soothing song catches the attention of Hassan Abu Jazar who has come here in search of birds to buy, prompting him to stop. He approaches the seller and requests a closer look, then gently turns the cage left and right.

Abu Jazar has spent weeks searching for this particular bird, known locally as a "canar" - from the word, canary - birds named after the Canary Islands off the west coast of North Africa. Intrigued onlookers who are here to buy their own birds start to get impatient during his lengthy examination - checking the bird's singing pitch, hearing about the times of day it is most active and asking detailed questions about its overall demeanour. They want him to get on with his purchase, so they can have a chance to look at the birds, too.

But Abu Jazar needs to be thorough - he wants to find a canary which will

be chirpy, not quiet, and which sings at the right pitch before he commits to a purchase. And these birds do not come cheap - this one is priced at 150 shekels (just over \$41).

The 23-year-old can't suppress his smile. He has found the bird he wants. Once sought after for their vibrant colours and soothing melodies, these birds now serve a very important purpose. They help Palestinians endure the thunderous sounds of explosions during the relentless Israeli shelling. Their song can also partially drown out - or at least provide a little distraction from - the humming sounds of hovering missile-bearing drones.

Prolonged exposure to the horrors of war has taken a great toll on the mental health of the people of Gaza, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Abu Jazar, who has been struggling with anxiety since the start of the war, has found great solace in the singing of the canaries he keeps in cages in his bedroom.

"The songs of the canaries can shield any space against the terror that

comes with the violent sound of shelling," he tells Al Jazeera. "They give me a sense of comfort that helps me endure the fear." His five birds, including the latest acquisition, are not loud enough to drown out the sound of explosions, but their gentle tones help calm him.

Abu Jazar, who lives in Tal as-Sultan in Rafah, is one of thousands grappling with the terror that Israeli shelling triggers. The collapse of Gaza's healthcare system has left no room for the provision of any sort of mental health treatment. The remaining doctors in the enclave - who are most likely to have an idea about how to treat mental health problems - are struggling under a flood of physical injuries which they must prioritise as they labour around the clock in the remaining, partially functioning hospitals. Even before the war, Palestinians have long collected songbirds - canaries, goldfinches, lovebirds and sparrows - for their comforting melodies. Now, they're becoming go-to mental health allies.

"The sounds of explosions from Israeli shelling are terrifying and there

are no alternatives to calm the fear of children, except the sounds of canaries," says Raed al-Qudra, who has been displaced by the war from the centre of Khan Younis to an area south of the city. Al-Qudra's four daughters and two sons are among the more than one million children in the Gaza Strip who the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) estimates are in dire need of mental health and psychosocial support. "My daughters love birds because their colours make them feel safer, calmer and more alive. We consider their presence in the house as part of the few means of entertainment remaining since the war," he says.

Al-Qudra, who has been keeping birds for the past 10 years, first introduced his family to the power of bird-song two years ago, during Israel's 2022 bombardment of the city. It helped calm them, he says. Recently, he has been hoping to buy some more. Despite the harsh conditions of displacement, he has visited the Rafah markets repeatedly in search of birds. A few days ago, he managed to acquire three birds from a seller who

agreed to sell them at a lower price than usual because of the harsh economic situation in Gaza. Even though the cost of the birds' feed is an additional burden, he says: "The children's mental health is paramount."

Four months after the October 7 attacks on southern Israel by Hamas, Israel's military campaign has reduced most of the Gaza Strip to rubble. Aerial bombardments and ground invasions have resulted in the deaths of nearly 29,000 Palestinians, the majority of them children and women. Thousands more are feared buried in the ruins and are presumed dead. Rafah, the focus of Israel's latest military operation, has become Gaza's most densely populated area, according to the UN. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled the onslaught in the northern and central regions of the enclave are now packed into the southernmost city. Amid the sprawling sea of refugee tents that now line its streets, an unlikely market for songbirds is thriving.

While some sellers have set up stalls, others wander up and down carrying birds in cages. Bird seller Kamal

Dedar moves between potential customers, offering detailed accounts of the various species, colours and prices available. Dedar hails from the Zeitoun neighbourhood in Gaza City and now lives with his family of 10 in a shed in Rafah.

Some customers approach the cages displayed on the street or hanging on the nearby walls of the shelter, to inspect the birds up close. Dedar lists the local names of their species. His stock includes canaries, lovebirds, breeds of passer birds (sparrows) and more. Some potential buyers are dissuaded by the prices. Dedar also notes that birdfeed has surged in price from seven shekels (\$1.90) to about 80 shekels (just over \$22) per kilo. Regardless of this steep rise in the cost of keeping a songbird, their popularity appears not to have waned. "Customers are looking for breeds with soothing voices during this difficult time," says Dedar. "Many of them purchase multiple birds to ensure a variety of melodies throughout the day, as some birds sing better during the day while others prefer the night." — Aljazeera

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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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

Growing security concerns about Afghanistan

THE sixth annual meeting of Security Council secretaries of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) nations on Afghanistan kicked off in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on Friday. During the meeting, Russian representative Nikolay Patrushev urged the session that the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) need to work out extra border security measures to counter threats animating from Afghanistan to neighboring countries. According to senior Russian official, the unstable situation in Afghanistan demands necessary measures in advance to counter the export of instability to their countries. This problem can be resolved through multilateral comprehensive efforts, primarily, within the CSTO and the SCO architectures.

The Taliban-ruled Afghanistan is currently embattled with grave challenges relating to the Afghan economy, global diplomatic recognition, a lack of liquidity, absence of political inclusiveness together with the presence of transnational terrorist groups like the Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the ETIM, BLA and other terror outfits that enjoy safe havens, freedom of movement and conducive environment to flourish unhindered and implement their nefarious designs against foreign states in the region and beyond. Meanwhile, the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), the Afghan chapter of Daesh expanding its network and gradually shaped into a grave security risk for the interim Afghan government along with prompting a real threat to other nations in the broader Indo-Subcontinent including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka who fear a rise in extremism and militancy in their countries. At the same time, this state of affairs and assembly of nonstate bad actors in Afghanistan alarmed Bell in Central Asian Republics, who share a common border with Afghanistan and face serious security risks regarding across-border terrorism, drug trafficking, and transnational organized crimes in their countries. The recent Russia-led conference noted that Afghanistan has an important geographical position at the intersection of key trade routes linking European and Asian states. The development of Afghanistan as a peaceful, united, and independent state fulfills regional as well as global interests. The meeting discussed a broad range of measures requiring implementation in the sphere of border security, exchanging information on the activity of terrorist organizations and their supporters, identification and shut down of sources and channels of terrorism financing and drug trafficking through the relevant forums to augment collective efforts against the shared hazard.

Presently, Afghanistan's neighbors from East to West and North to South have grave concerns regarding the concentration of transnational criminals and terrorist outfits in their neighborhood amid a lack of interest and incapacity of the Afghan government, which shatters the regional peace and stability in the region. Although, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) repeatedly stated that no terrorist group exists there and Afghan soil will not be used against the security of neighboring countries. However, such flimsy media statements neither change the ground realities nor mitigate the risk of flourishing terrorism in that country. The Afghan interim rulers have not yet accessed the severity of the problem and the gravity of the risk that confronts their country and undermines the security of other nations in the region. The uncontrolled armed militias and terror outfits not only undermine the writ of the Islamic Emirate but can pose a serious risk to its survival when their interests contradict each other. Whilst, this situation is a persistent hazard to global peace and stability. There is a dire need for teamwork and cooperation with the Afghan government in counter-terrorism domain to effectively tackle this common threat, otherwise, no one can guarantee peace and stability in this region in the future.

Public service versus giant of corruption

THE Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has successfully launched a GIS-based Centralized Urban Immovable Property Tax Management and Information System (CUIPTMIS) to transform the whole property tax regime into an automated, transparent, and robust mechanism. As said, the initiative is an important step towards enhancing tax collection, improving the management of public resources, and facilitating taxpayers in the province. According to the report, the newly launched Management and Information System (MIS) has been completed at a total cost of Rs 95.898 million. Initially, the project was launched for two districts of the province; Nowshera and Abbottabad, and would soon be replicated in the rest of the districts of the province.

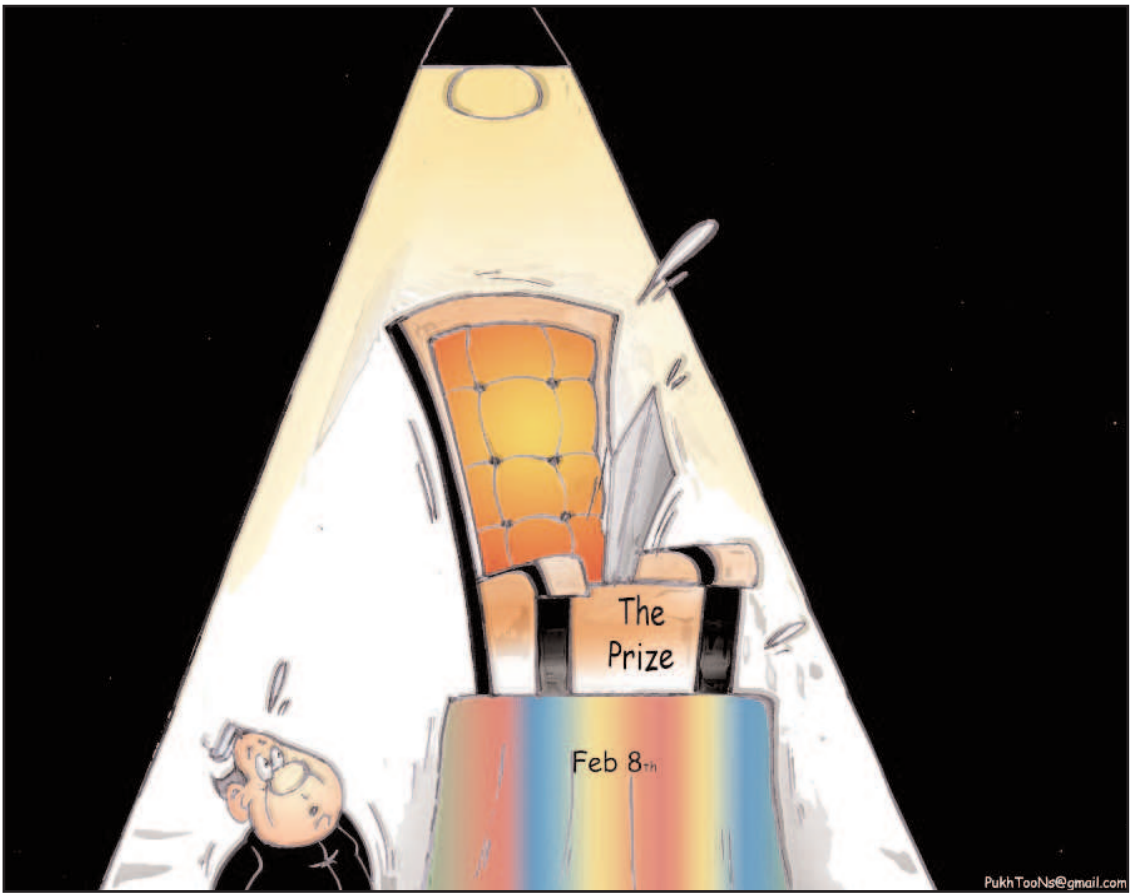
Historically, nature blessed Pakistan with great pro-publica and nation's saviours in the case of caretaker leaders, particularly in the center, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab as well. The incumbent Caretaker leaders have not only held peaceful and smooth elections in the country but reset the trajectory of the national economy and made remarkable progress in diverse fields of governance and administration. Previously, the KP interim government launched a province-wide initiative for service delivery, monitoring, and regulation of the government departments including the Police, Patwar, local authorities, and health and education sectors. Presently, they have come up with a digitized revenue system to facilitate government as well as the public, which is amazing and appreciable. As said the newly developed system will not only improve tax collection and management mechanisms but also facilitate the taxpayers through the provision of integrated online tax payment and grievances redress mechanisms.

In fact, the majority of Pakistani leaders were patriots and always endeavoured for the development of the country and the well-being of the public. Unfortunately, they failed in dealing with Bureaucracy and curbing institutional corruption, which enormously marred the national development and zeroed some all gains achieved over the past decades.

Wherein corrupt government servants foiled all sane legislation, regulations, and monitoring mechanisms together with CCTV cameras and digitization. The KP government has implemented diverse strategies in all walks of life in the past few months. Hence, they are requested to diagnose this long-held glitch and bring forth such a mechanism that has no human element altogether. So, robots and artificial intelligence deal in Taxation, calculate money, and submit to the national exchequer, otherwise dishonest elements and corrupt practices tactfully deceive the cameras and misguide computers making all arrangements null and void. Although, the puzzle is very simple but its solution has not been discovered so far.

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Biden's age could ultimately decide outcome of US presidential election

Dr. Amal Mudallali

ONE sentence in Special Prosecutor Robert Hur's report last week caused panic when it came to US President Joe Biden's campaign for reelection and ignited a firestorm within the Democratic Party. His report was the kind of nightmare scenario campaigns dread because of its timing and the sensitivity of the issue, the age of the president, and the questions it raised about his mental capacity.

Democrats have had a tough few months trying to prevent Biden's age from becoming the main issue in the campaign. Then the nightmare fully descended upon them, presenting Republican opponent Donald Trump with the perfect gift. Hur's report described Biden as "a sympathetic, well-meaning, elderly man with poor memory." This single sentence propelled the age of the president, who is 81 years old, to the top of the election agenda and created a crisis among Democrats, who are worried that the issue of age might cost them the presidency for the next four years. The special prosecutor was investigating the case of classified documents that were found in Biden's home. He concluded, following interviews with the president, that there was not enough to charge the president with any wrongdoing. He could have chosen to simply announce his conclusion but instead he decided to comment on the memory of the president.

The report handed Biden a legal victory but wounded him politically. It should have been good news for him but the political damage caused by the language Hur used to describe the president's state of mind and memory was huge, lending credence to existing concerns about his age. He described gaps in the president's memory when asked about specific events and documents, but most damaging for the president was perhaps the assertion that he did not even remember the date of his son's death. The report came at a critical time for the president and his

reelection campaign. Polls were already suggesting that Americans are worried about his age. Meanwhile, his approval rating has been declining, reaching 37 percent, the lowest it has ever been. Many Americans are not happy about his handling of immigration and border issues, or the economy, even though the economy is doing well. In addition, there is opposition to his stance on the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, as well as divisions within the Democratic Party on the issue. The publication of Hur's report provoked a storm of media coverage and debates about the age of the president. His allies defended him and refuted the comments about poor memory, accusing the special prosecutor of having a political agenda.

Vice President Kamala Harris described the report as "gratuitous, inaccurate and inappropriate." Other high-ranking US officials insisted the president was sharp, tough and in control. Republicans naturally jumped on the opportunity to adopt "elderly man with bad memory" as a slogan in their campaigning against him. The president did not help his own case. During a press conference that was supposed to reassure the American people about his memory and debunk the picture the report painted of him, Biden described President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi of Egypt as the president of Mexico. This came hot on the heels of two other incidents this month in which he talked about conversations with French President Francois Mitterrand, who died in 1996, instead of Emmanuel Macron, and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who died in 2017, instead of Angela Merkel. The report and the repeated gaffes by the president have resulted in growing concerns among Democrats, strategists, donors and ordinary voters across the US, according to the American media.

The Washington Post captured the mood among Democrats when, after the president's ill-fated press conference, it said: "The broad conclusion, both

inside and outside Biden's inner circle, is that a dangerous and misleading caricature of the president's performance is at risk of setting in, pushed by the biting prose of a special prosecutor they suspected of seeking political revenge." If Hur's report was not enough, opinion polls after it was published added to the panic. An ABC News/Ipsos poll on Feb. 11 found an overwhelming majority of Americans that were questioned, 86 percent, thought Biden was too old to run for another term. A smaller majority, 62 percent, believed 77-year-old Donald Trump was also too old to be president again. Interestingly, 59 percent of those polled believed both Biden and Trump were too old to be president, suggesting that age will be a very important factor in the election. However, the poll also found that Republicans were not so concerned about the age of their candidate as Democrats were: 73 percent of Democrats said Biden was too old to be president, but only 35 percent of Republicans said Trump was too old to serve. Even among independents, 91 percent said Biden is too old, compared with 71 percent who said the same about Trump.

Republican candidate Nikki Haley, who is challenging Trump for the Republican nomination, criticized both him and Biden over their ages, describing them in a campaign video as "grumpy old men." She highlighted instances in which both became confused about facts, including one in which Trump mixed her up with Nancy Pelosi, former speaker of the House of Representatives. Haley, who has called for competency tests for candidates over the age of 75 and champions younger leaders, said this week that both Trump and Biden "would use the Oval Office" as a "taxpayer-subsidized nursing home." Political pundits close to the Democrats are worried that efforts to ensure the issue of age sticks to Biden is an attempt to distract from his

achievements in office, in a similar way to which Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign against Trump in 2016 was derailed by allegations about an insecure computer server and leaked emails. Others are speculating about whether it is still possible for the Democrats to nominate a different candidate, angering the Biden campaign. A headline in Politico magazine this week, for example, read "Democrats Might Need a Plan B."

Even though the article was exploring hypothetical scenarios, any such talk is damaging to the Biden campaign and to the chances of the Democrats securing the presidency. On a more practical level, it is unrealistic and difficult to imagine it could happen now. Democrats are rallying around the president, defending his mental faculties and record. They believe the stakes are too high for the party to consider alternatives this late in the game, as it would be a dangerous strategy to change horses at this point in the race. Biden believes he is the only Democrat who can defeat Donald Trump because he did it before. The rest of the party is circling the wagons and hoping Trump will implode and scare off voters, pointing to his latest statement about NATO this week, which angered Europe and alarmed Washington. However, there is no sign the former president has been negatively affected by any of his rhetoric, or his legal troubles. On the contrary, he is growing more confident - and now his campaign has been lucky enough to find fresh ammunition in the form of Hur's editorializing about Biden's age.

Biden and his campaign team are struggling to change the subject and ensure the election is a referendum on issues such as the future of democracy in America and, as his campaign ads say, his desire "to finish the job" he began four years ago. The Republicans, meanwhile, will do all they can to make sure the focus remains on Biden's memory and not his "sympathetic character."

If we fail to act on climate change, Iraq will be doomed

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

WHILE much of the attention in discussions about climate change often focuses on areas such as the Arctic or small island nations, the effects on regions such as the Middle East, and particularly Iraq, is often overlooked. Yet, the consequences of climate change in Iraq are profound and far-reaching, affecting not only the environment but also exacerbating existing social, economic and political challenges.

As the world grapples with the wider existential threat, it is critical that we shed light on the plight of Iraq and outline the actions both the country and the international community must take to address this pressing issue. In recent years, discourse about climate change has shifted from mere scientific concern to a global rallying cry for urgent action. And Iraq, historically considered "the cradle of civilization," is facing a climate crisis that poses a threat to its very existence.

The country is experiencing rising temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, and desertification, all of which have severe implications for its agriculture, water resources and public health. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which have sustained civilizations for millennia, are dwindling as a result of reduced snowpack in the mountains and increased demand for water from neighboring countries. This dwindling water supply not only threatens agriculture, which is the backbone of Iraq's economy, but also exacerbates tensions with neighboring countries over water rights. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani highlighted the critical nature of the situation when he said: "Our two rivers are exposed to the brunt of the effects of drought resulting from climate change. We have an urgent need to preserve rights to water resources and international river basins."

According to the Ministry of Water Resources, experts predict that the nation could face the dire prospect of the Euphrates being entirely depleted by 2040. The effects of climate change are acutely felt by Iraq's most vulnerable populations. Farmers, who rely on predictable weather patterns for their livelihoods, are facing crop failures and economic hardship. Displacements caused by drought and desertification are exacerbating social tensions and contributing to internal movement and migration. Additionally, extreme heatwaves pose significant risks to public health, particularly in urban areas where access to reliable electricity supplies and cooling systems is limited.

In the face of these challenges, both Iraq and the international community must take decisive action to mitigate the effects of climate change and build resilience. First of all, vulnerable communities and ecosystems ought to be prioritized in the implementation of climate-adaptation measures, to help protect them. Steps that can be taken include investment in water-efficient agriculture, the promotion of sustainable land-management practices, and enhanced early-warning systems for extreme weather events. Furthermore, Iraq

ought to focus on diversifying its economy away from dependence on oil and invest in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. By reducing its carbon footprint and embracing clean energy alternatives, Iraq can both mitigate the effects of climate change and foster economic development.

However, it cannot tackle climate change alone. The international community must step up its support and assistance to help Iraq build resilience and adapt to a changing climate. This includes financial assistance, the facilitation of technology transfers, and capacity-building support to help enhance the nation's ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Diplomatic initiatives, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, provide mechanisms for international cooperation and must be leveraged to improve dialogue and collaborations on climate action. Moreover, neighboring countries can engage in cooperative efforts to manage shared water resources and address transboundary challenges. More fundamentally, efforts to address climate change in Iraq require a holistic approach that takes into account the interconnected nature of environmental, social and economic issues. In other words, environmental conservation efforts must be integrated with initiatives to alleviate poverty, improve education, and enhance public health to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for all Iraqis.

This must include the empowerment of local communities, particularly women and marginalized groups, to participate in decision-making processes and help implement climate-resilient solutions that are tailored to their specific needs and circumstances. In addition, it is important to point out that efforts to tackle the root causes of conflict and instability in Iraq are crucial for building resilience to climate change as well. Ongoing conflicts and political instability in the region have exacerbated environmental degradation and hindered efforts to address climate change. The promotion of peace, stability and good governance in Iraq is therefore essential to the creation of an enabling environment for climate action and sustainable development. Finally, it is critical to recognize the fact that action to address climate change is not just an environmental issue but a moral imperative. It is about safeguarding the rights and well-being of future generations and guaranteeing they will have a planet that is habitable for all.

In Iraq, as in many parts of the world, the effects of climate change are already being felt and the window of opportunity to act is rapidly closing. Both Iraq and the international community must work together to address this existential threat by adopting a comprehensive and collaborative approach that integrates environmental, social and economic considerations. Failure to act now will not only jeopardize the future of Iraq but also threaten the stability and prosperity of the entire region. The time to act is now and the stakes could not be higher.

Greedy universities don't seem to care about white middle-class British kids

Allison Pearson

stream British values, don't we?

The blatant discrimination against some of our British candidates in our universities only reinforces the sense that preservation and promulgation of our culture is of negligible interest to our globalist leaders. Scores of parents and grandparents responded to my original article with tales of fuming injustice. Nicholas said his extremely bright and dedicated boy - 12 grade 9s at GCSE, predicted four A* at A-level - had worked in a medical laboratory before applying to Exeter to read medicine. "He wasn't even selected for interview," reports his father.

I believe this is what you call "widening participation", Nicholas, AKA social engineering at the expense of white middle-class kids. One university administrator confirmed this when she told me that a candidate "not speaking English at home" is

considered an advantage.

Big tick.

And reckless is the youth who dares admit on his application to being heterosexual. Some, I am told, now lie routinely and tick Bi(sexual). In case they manage to get in and are spotted with a girl- or boyfriend. Garlanded star pupils struggle to get onto STEM courses, which are dominated by Chinese and East Asian students. God help us. What do they think the effect of that tsunami might be on our overburdened services, let alone British teenagers who have worked their socks off? Clearly, they don't give a damn. All they see is £££ signs. But our government should be wary of tearing up the social contract between generations. I was alarmed by what Sasha, a worried mum, had to report. "Universities preferring high-paying, low-quality international candidates to bright British kids complete-

ly reflects the situation of my upper sixth son and his friends," Sasha wrote. "We made the mistake of going private - to a school where Will's cohort scored in the top 20 of GCSE results for the entire country. Yet, out of 15 boys applying for humanities subjects at Oxbridge, only one got an offer. These are all boys with 10/11/12 9s at GCSE and with at least three A*s predicted. Some have offers of AAA at Exeter, Leeds etc, but most are now waiting to hear from Durham and Edinburgh. But they aren't optimistic. How can you not be optimistic when you have achieved such great grades? It does make the boys wonder why they bothered working so hard."

Just wait until they graduate, Sasha, and discover that the highly educated white British male is knocked out of the recruitment process by top firms obsessed by DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion). "These are the same boys

who now read that, with World War Three forecast, they are expected to train up, enlist and head into battle," says Sasha. "Ironically, the same boys that they are excluding from our best universities are the ones who've done their CCF (Combined Cadet Force)."

The other day, around the family kitchen table, Sasha says it was fascinating to hear her son and his mates talk about conscription. "An absolute no-no as far as all the boys were concerned. They said, why would they fight for a country that doesn't support them, doesn't even appear to like them?" It's quite the feat to get middle-class boys to despise universities and their own nation in one fell swoop. Honestly, who can blame them? Memo to politicians counting on British kids enlisting: ask not what young people can do for you. Ask what you did for your own young people.

The Telegraph

Europeans might not like Trump’s views on NATO but beggars can’t be choosers

Khaled Abou Zahr

THERE is a saying in Arabic: "A beggar with conditions." It refers to someone who asks for charity but is picky about what forms of aid are acceptable or has specific demands while panhandling. This is exactly how many European politicians and heads of state that are reacting to Trump's comments this week about NATO appear to be: beggars with conditions.

Let me explain. Trump declared that he would not, as a US president, agree to help defend a NATO member that was "delinquent" in its financial contributions to NATO. His comments provoked outrage. In a message posted on social media network X, the German Foreign Ministry highlighted the NATO creed, "One for all and all for one," saying that it helps safeguard more than 950 million people, from Anchorage to Erzurum. Charles Michel, the president of the European Council, similarly criticized Trump for his "reckless" statements. He said they serve only the interests of Russian President Vladimir Putin by undermining NATO's security and the solidarity embodied by Article 5 of the treaty, which states that any attack against any single member is an attack against the entire alliance.

My question to the German Foreign Ministry, is if you believe in this credo - as I absolutely do - why is Germany not contributing its fair share of financing to NATO? Or is it a case of "one for all and an invoice for one?" While

NATO possesses common funds (that Trump wishes to increase) to which all members contribute, the predominant source of its strength arises from individual national defense spending by its members, who commit to allocating at least 2 percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annually for their own defense. Yet many countries have yet to meet this target and so in this regard, NATO is heavily supported by the US, which commits 3.49 percent of its GDP to defense and allocates these resources to protecting Europe. Countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Turkiye and Denmark continue to fall short.

Some will argue that this 2 percent target is only a guideline or recommendation. Yet the fact is that if you want to be "one for all and all for one," should you not show full commitment and abide by the guideline? Is this not the best way to show your enemies that you are all in this together? Or should you take a free ride on the back of others? So I candidly ask: What is wrong with what Trump requires from NATO member states? What is wrong with wanting all members to meet the financial guidelines and commit in the same way to the alliance? Do they want to be part of NATO and have the US or other members pay for it? Or do they want to commit strongly to the alliance? The reality is that what Trump said is absolutely not a sign of US unilateralism or abandonment to Russia;

it is asking for all countries to have the same level of "skin in the game" when it comes to defense.

On this one, Trump is absolutely right. Europeans need to strongly commit to NATO. It is not a one-way street. If it is to continue to be a strong alliance, there is no stronger message it can send to its enemies than having all members pay their fair share and push forward together. Short of this, how do you think your enemy reacts? Well, let me tell you, they say: "These countries are not even willing to pay their share or meet the guidelines of the alliance in times of conflict on the Eastern border of Europe. This means they are not committed to the transatlantic alliance and we can break it from within." Every single member of NATO should be sticking to the guidelines, especially in these times of high risk. Moreover, Europe needs to do more to develop its own defense infrastructure to complement the transatlantic alliance. Pulling its own weight and not viewing the US as a savior but as a true, reliable partner is the way forward for European defense strategy.

By the admission of many US policymakers, US foreign policy has sometimes adopted too muscular an approach and at others displayed complete weakness. The right balance needs to be found. This balance can only be struck when a committed partner is able to have its voice heard and propose proper strategies and responses.

Moreover, thinking that defense is only about military preparedness is a huge mistake. The need to be prepared extends to energy requirements and other global supply chains that are of national importance. Germany, for example, which vehemently criticized Trump's comments, had grown completely dependent on Russia for its energy supplies. So how do we explain this contradiction? On the one hand, we have a US presidential candidate accused of threatening to abandon Europe to Russia. On the other hand, Germany became totally dependent on Russia for its energy needs. This makes no sense.

The same important questions that apply to energy also apply to other key sectors such as pharmaceuticals, along with more basic ones such as agriculture. It is too easy to place the burden of the alliance and its future on a single member, and to blame Trump for everything. The fact is he is delivering the right message, the bottom line of which is if you believe in this alliance, you need to commit to it fully.

While we all understand that this outrage is more about the US presidential election in November, and European leaders indirectly showing support for Biden, there is an absolute need for Europe to establish a true deterrence force and impose respect. This will only come from a strong European military force anchored within the transatlantic alliance. Short of this, Europe will remain freeloaders with conditions.

How and why Russia snatches Ukrainian children

Andreas Umland

pied areas of Ukraine.

Ukrainian officials have made numerous appeals to Russia. In March 2023, Ukraine's Vice Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk asked Moscow to "immediately hand over the lists of all [Ukrainian] orphans and children deprived of parental care" and under Moscow's control. Since 2022, Ukrainian criticism has become increasingly targeted at international organizations tasked with preventing and reversing forcible transfers of children. Oddly, instead of preventing and reversing forcible transfers, the Belarusian Red Cross Society, until recently a member of the International Federation of the Red Cross (ICRC) has facilitated them. As child deportations continue until today and only very few of them have been reversed, the Ukrainian government has

change. National and transnational actors must move from intervening with words to result-oriented action. The RCHR has suggested that, instead of merely mentioning Russia's mass deportation of children in generic humanitarian or political declarations, official documents specifically demanding the repatriation of Ukrainian children should be issued. The United Nations General Assembly, further international organizations, and as many national parliaments as possible should do so.

Furthermore, the RCHR has suggested that agreements between Ukraine and willing partners should be concluded on cooperation in repatriation, the list of sanctioned Russians involved in deportations should be expanded and means of influencing already sanctioned figures be extended, new arrest warrants modeled on those against President Vladimir

A range of Russian governmental bodies participate in the deportation and adoption process, with children's rights commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova - wanted by the International Criminal Court - coordinating. Dozens of Russian federal, regional and local officials are implementing the government's displacement and russification program. They are engaged in logistic coordination; fundraising; providing supplies; managing children's camps; as well as promoting the Russification campaign within Russia and the occupied areas of Ukraine. Ukrainian officials have made numerous appeals to Russia.

launched various initiatives including the Child Rights Protection Center and the Bring Kids Back UA program, advocating for or managing the return of deported children. However, only around 400 of the so far almost 20,000 officially registered displaced or deported children have been returned to government-controlled territory within Ukraine.

International public awareness of Russia's mass deportation of children has risen only slowly. On July 1, 2022, global human rights organizations called for a moratorium on inter-country adoptions of Ukrainian children in line with the Ukrainian government's approach and international law. By early March 2023, this appeal had been signed by 43 NGOs. In September 2022, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling upon Russia and its allies to stop the forced transfers and adoption of children, repeal all legislation that facilitates this process, and "immediately" provide information about the children's whereabouts. In a February 2023 resolution, the Parliament went further and stated that transferring children from one group to another constitutes the crime of genocide. On June 1, 2023, International Children's Day, 23 foreign diplomatic missions in Ukraine issued a joint statement on Russia's forced deportation of Ukrainian children which concluded: "We will hold Russia accountable for its illegal and barbaric actions in Ukraine!"

Despite comprehensive condemnation, thousands of unaccompanied Ukrainian minors remain in Russia or Russia-occupied territory without their legal guardians. The longer they stay away from their homes and families, the more painful, complicated, and questionable their future repatriation becomes. Until more responsible governments come to power in Russia and Belarus, huge multilateral and multidirectional action is needed to create swift and tangible

Putin and Lvova-Belova should be issued by the ICC, new crimes should be added to those listed in the existing warrants, and frozen Russian assets should be confiscated and repurposed for the needs of children who have become victims of illegal deportation and forced displacement.

Limitations on Russian officials involved in the deportation and assimilation of Ukrainian children should become a prominent feature in EU sanctions packages. EU sanctions related to the deportation and assimilation of Ukrainian children should be extended to Russian NGOs, companies, schools, universities, professional organizations and so on participating - often openly and even demonstratively - in the deportation and russification efforts.

A complicated challenge that remains is how to alert still largely ignorant parts of the international community to the scale, gravity and tragedy of Russia's child removal policies. While many interested academics, politicians and diplomats in the West are well-informed about this scandalous situation, awareness among ordinary citizens of European and other countries remains limited. This gap needs to be closed with a particular focus on nations in the Global South where Kremlin narratives about the Russo-Ukrainian War are popular. Journalists and editors could be provided with incentives like fellowships to inform the public about what is going on.

Russia's child removal policy is important as it illustrates Moscow's plan for a demographic conquest, not just a geographical one. The Kremlin's war is a national-cultural and not only military-political project. Disclosing details of Moscow's horrendous child displacement and deportation policies in Ukraine since 2014 can help to better understand the nature of Russia's genocidal attack and why it is necessary to stop it as soon as possible.

The Moscow Times

Responsibility of Israel’s arms suppliers to stop war in Gaza

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

THE appeals court in the Netherlands ordered the government on Monday to block all exports of F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel. It said: "It is undeniable that there is a clear risk the exported F-35 parts are used in serious violations of international humanitarian law."

The court gave the Dutch government seven days to comply. The government did not argue on the merits, but said it would appeal to the Supreme Court, arguing that it should be up to the executive branch to set foreign policy, not a court. The appeals court considered the government's concerns but ruled that they did not trump the clear risk of breaches of international law. And it pointed out that it was likely the F-35s were being used in attacks on Gaza, leading to unacceptable civilian casualties.

The court dismissed the Dutch state's argument that it did not have to do a new check on the permit for the exports. The court order came at a critical time when Israel is gearing up for a likely catastrophic attack against the southern city of Rafah, where around half of Gaza's population is sheltering after Israel forcibly pushed them from other parts of the Strip.

Its ruling also coincided with the circulation of a transatlantic statement, in which more than 800 serving officials in the US and Europe have signed a statement warning that their own governments' policies on the conflict could amount to "grave violations of international law." The statement has been signed by civil servants from the US, the EU, and 11 European countries including the UK, France, and Germany. They warned that their governments risked being "complicit" in "one of the worst human catastrophes of this century."

Human rights organizations have welcomed the Dutch court's ruling and the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell made a reference to it on Monday while calling for a cut in arms supplies to Israel. The court order, if carried out, could spare the Netherlands the charge of being party to the atrocities being committed in Gaza.

Arms suppliers to Israel risk being held legally responsible for Israel's grave breaches of international humanitarian law. This has been more pertinent since the International Court of Justice ruled in January about the likelihood of acts of genocide being perpetrated there. The Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade Geoffrey van Leeuwen was correct in noting that the Netherlands was not alone in supplying arms to Israel.

He said: "We are part of a big consortium of countries that are also working together with Israel. We will talk to partners how to deal with this." But such a defense could hardly absolve his country from responsibility.

It has long been established in the application of the Geneva Conventions and other instruments of international humanitarian law that states are accountable for the actions of their partners in an armed conflict. That partnership does not have to be active military involvement, but could include a wide range of activities, including training, arming, equipping, funding, providing intelligence, or partnered operations. Such states are in a unique position to influence the behavior of their partners, but with the capacity to influence comes a greater responsibility and opportunity to ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

By continuing to provide military

assistance to Israel in its war on Gaza, countries such as the UK, Germany, Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands, effectively become partners in the conflict and are seen by many as complicit in the actions committed by Israeli forces. This is especially the case for the US, which has not only continued its military support for Israel but has increased it and accelerated the delivery of arms used in the war.

The obligation to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law is set down in Article 1, common and identical in each of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, plus the first and third Additional Protocols. It is also an article of faith in customary international law. Accordingly, there is an obvious obligation to refrain from encouraging or assisting violations. There is also a positive obligation to take feasible measures to influence the parties to the conflict and bring them to an attitude of respect for international humanitarian law.

This means that no support may be provided that would encourage, aid, or assist violations by other states, regardless of the providing state's subjective intention. In fact, according to the authoritative Commentary on the Geneva Conventions by the International Committee of the Red Cross, states must not provide support to a party to an armed conflict where there is an "expectation, based on facts or knowledge of past patterns," that such support would be used to violate international humanitarian law. As responsible members of the international community, states currently providing material support for Israel should a duty to restrain it also - the greater the support the more exten-

sive the measures required on the part of the supporting state will be.

There is an infinite array of possible actions, many of them very pragmatic, for supporters of Israel to exercise their influence to stop its violations, starting with an arms embargo and gradually withdrawing or suspending other forms of support when needed. In addition to efforts to stop occurring violations, the ICRC's Commentary points out that the obligations under the Geneva Conventions require that states must take measures to "prevent" breaches before they occur. Here too there are many measures that states supporting Israel could take in Gaza to prevent atrocities and reduce their responsibility for them.

A relatively simple and costless measure would be to enable, protect, and empower the UN and other international organizations to carry out their duties in Gaza without hindrance. An equally effective measure would be for these states to dispatch their diplomatic, security, or humanitarian staff to Gaza. Their mere presence could deter breaches.

If supporters of Israel continue their military aid, enabling it to carry on violating international humanitarian law, and if they fail to take the measures required to fulfill their Geneva Conventions' obligations, they could find themselves in a situation similar to Israel's before the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, or their domestic courts, as the Dutch government did. Any of these courts could find Israel's partners liable for its action by virtue of materially supporting its actions and failing to take measures to prevent breaches of international humanitarian law by Israeli forces.

Arab News

In Rafah, the final - and most deadly - stage of this genocide is upon us

Ghada Ageel

FOR many years, every time I travelled to Gaza to visit my family, I passed through the Rafah crossing, the border between the besieged Gaza Strip and Egypt. And every time I took a breath in the border city of Rafah, I was reminded of my sister Taghreed's words: "I am inhaling the scent of the history of my land." Her eyes would glow with pride every time she talked of Rafah, and I share the sentiment.

The history of this corridor spans thousands of years, a testament to the rich history of Palestine and its people. For millennia, Rafah has been a resting place and a trade hub for caravans from across Palestine travelling towards the Sinai Peninsula and onwards to Egypt and Africa. Today, a genocide is unfolding in this ancient, precious city. As I witness this genocide from afar and fear what the threatened Israeli invasion would mean for the hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians forced to take shelter there, I feel like I am one of those powerless souls who recognised what was happening in Srebrenia or the Warsaw Ghetto, tried to raise the alarm but couldn't do anything to avert the tragedy as the world had already decided to turn a blind eye to the impending massacre of innocents.

Since the beginning of this latest war on Gaza, every new phase in the Israeli onslaught has inflicted more suffering, pain and death on the civilian population. Displaced many times over, those who are now in Rafah have nowhere else to go. The invasion of Rafah would thus be the last, and the most deadly phase of this genocide - the first

genocide in human history that has been broadcast live to the world. Sadly, this is not the first time beautiful Rafah has become the background to crimes against humanity. The border city's recent history is a wound kept open by constant violence. The majority of Rafah's residents, like most cities in Gaza, are the descendants of those displaced during the 1948 Nakba while others are the survivors of a 1956 massacre and the many other Israeli aggressions that came after.

My 89-year-old aunt Rayya, a refugee from Barqa village, which was destroyed by Israel in 1948, has been witness to decades of massacres, violence and oppression in this city. In 1956, during the tripartite aggression involving Britain, France and Israel, also known as the Suez Crisis, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip for about four months, perpetrating horrifying massacres in both Khan Younis and Rafah.

On November 2, when the Israeli military occupied Khan Younis and ordered males aged 16 and older to come out and present themselves at points across the city, my aunt was there visiting family. Then a 22-year-old newlywed, she witnessed the Israeli military line those men and boys up against walls and massacre them over the course of two days. My aunt eventually decided to leave the family home with her sister's family in search of safety. They walked to the beach in Khan Younis and sought refuge under the trees. They ate anything they could find and dug holes in the ground to sleep, find clean water and use as a toilet. Despite the surrounding danger and

the continuous sound of bombardment, Rayya, fearing for the safety of her husband, made the difficult decision to continue her journey on to Rafah.

Upon her arrival, Rayya realised that there had been yet more executions across Rafah. She could not find her husband anywhere. For days, she grappled with the harrowing uncertainty of his fate. Fortunately, her husband had survived that particular wave of violence. He later died during the occupation of Gaza in 1967, killed by the Israeli army while travelling along the beach from Khan Younis to Rafah. After her husband's murder, Rayya found herself alone, a single mother, tasked with raising five children in the hardship and destitution of the Rafah refugee camp. In the 1970s, she was forced to seek employment in Israel's agriculture sector, labouring in the fields collecting tomatoes to provide for her family. During the first Intifada in 1987, Rayya lost an eye while trying to rescue her youngest son from the hands of Israeli soldiers. She was struck in the eye by the butt of a rifle while trying to prevent soldiers from taking her child.

At the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000, one of her grandchildren, 13-year-old Karam, was shot in the back of the head as he was running away from an Israeli army post after throwing stones at soldiers. The unconscious child was rushed to al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, but doctors said he had no possibility of survival beyond a few hours. Rayya and her daughter in law, Karam's mother, were presented with an agonising choice:

Stay at the hospital and accompany Karam in his final hours of life, or return to Rafah before checkpoints were closed to mourn his death at home with their loved ones. Uncertain whether they would be allowed to move between cities in the coming days, they eventually decided to go home without Karam's body.

This is the moment for every member of the global civil society, everyone who believes in human rights, justice and freedom for all, to speak up against the deafening silence of their political leaders and take a stance for the long suffering Palestinian people. As the threat of a catastrophic Israeli invasion looms on the horizon in Rafah, we cannot continue to ignore the plight of Palestinian refugees, displaced many times over, sick, hungry and forced to resist a blatant ethnic cleansing campaign with nothing but their fragile bodies.

No one can claim ignorance about what's happening today in Rafah, in Gaza, across Palestine. The truth is evident in the testimonies of the children living through the genocide, in the work of brave journalists on the ground documenting their own slaughter, in the carefully researched and sourced reports of experts, academics, human rights defenders and international institutions. Rafah is the final opportunity for the international community to come together for peace and dignity in Palestine. It's time for Rafah to finally be truly safe and prosper. It is time for lifelong refugees like my aunt Rayya to find permanent safety and security. It is time for a ceasefire, and a free Palestine.

Aljazeera

Govt urged to reconsider recent hike in gas tariff

ISLAMABAD (APP): Trader bodies on Saturday urged the federal government to reconsider its decision to hike in gas tariff to address concerns of the business community.

President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and President, Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Iftikhar Ahmed Sheikh made the demand during a meeting held here, said a news release.

They have shown concerns over the federal cabinet's approval of a 67 per cent increase in gas tariffs as it would increase production costs, reduce industrial activities, and badly hurt exports.

During a meeting, they urged the government to take solid measures and

ensure competitive energy tariffs for the industry to boost industrialization and exports.

President ICCI said that the economy of Pakistan is in deep trouble as the manufacturing sector is still struggling to recover, textile sector exports declined by around 3 percent during July-January 2023-24, and foreign exchange reserves of US\$ 8 billion are insufficient to cover only 6 weeks of imports.

He said Pakistan needs US\$ 22 billion in external financing during 2024-25 to meet its financing needs.

To cope with these challenges, Pakistan urgently needs to boost industrialization and exports. However, the repeated hikes in electricity and gas tariffs have made the cost of doing business very high

which is hurting production activities and making exports uncompetitive in the international market.

President KCCI said that the industry of Karachi is demanding a reduction in gas tariffs to improve industrial activities and the increased gas tariffs would create more problems for the industry that would slow down the economic growth of the country.

He urged that the new government in consultation with the private sector should fix the utility tariffs for the next 10 years to enable better growth of business activities and revive the economy.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG stressed that the government should privatize all loss-making utility compa-

nies to reduce their burden on the national exchequer and improve their performance.

Both Chambers called for political stability in the country, which is the key requirement to achieve economic stability.

They urged that the new government should give top priority to promoting ease of doing business to make Pakistan a hub of business and investment activities and enable it to emerge as a strong economy.

Both chambers agreed to work in close cooperation to address the key issues of the business community and create a conducive business environment.

Muhamad Ejaz Abbasi former President ICCI, Maqsood Tabish, Khalid Chaudhry, and others were present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people visiting an auto show organized by Centaurus Mall in partnership with HAC Hazara Automotive Community.

CDB issues loans for logistics sector

BEIJING (APP): China Development Bank (CDB) said it had issued over 40 billion yuan (about 5.63 billion US dollars) of medium and long-term loans in 2023 for the logistics sector.

These funds are mainly aimed at supporting major logistic projects located in cities serving as the national logistics hubs or backbone cold-chain logistics bases, the bank said.

The CDB added that it will continue to provide high-quality and efficient financial services for building a modern logistics system.

China's logistics industry reported steady expansion in 2023, with the average prosperity index increasing 3.2 percentage points from 2022 to 51.8 percent, according to data released by the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.

CBD geared up to complete road upgradation project

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Chief Executive Officer of Central Business District Punjab, (CBD Punjab), Imran Amin chaired a review meeting on Saturday to assess the progress of the Walton Road Upgradation Project. The meeting emphasized clear directives to expedite the project's completion before the onset of the monsoon season.

During the session, Imran Amin, CEO CBD Punjab alongside Technical Executive Director Riaz Hussain, Director Construction Asif Babar, Director Architecture Sameer Aftab, Project Director NESPAK Jamshed Janjua, and senior officials of NLC participated. Imran Amin issued clear instructions to the technical team of the CBD Punjab, NLC officials, and contractors to ensure the project's completion before the upcoming monsoon season. NLC

and the contractors are instructed to work collaboratively with all machinery and workforce resources available.

Executive Director Technical, Riaz Hussain, briefed on the project's progress, indicating that backfilling work is ongoing after conduit excavation and concrete pouring. Additionally, roadworks have commenced alongside backfilling. Backfilling is expected to conclude in the next few days, after which work on ADA Nullah upgradation will commence. The work on Major Ishaq Shaheed Flyover Piles Caps is ongoing.

To ensure smooth traffic flow during construction, alternative routes have been provided along Walton Road. The completion of the Walton Road Upgradation Project will address sewage and traffic issues on a permanent basis.

The ongoing projects by the CBD Punjab include

continuous day and night work on the flyovers at the CBD Punjab Boulevard Walton Railway Crossings. All 164 girders for the flyovers have been casted, and the construction of abutment walls, piers, and transoms is completed. The concrete pouring of the transoms for both flyovers has been completed, with 45% of the MSC wall is also completed and the process of placing girders will commence shortly.

CEO CBD Punjab, Imran Amin, stated that both flyovers are being constructed with a special design, considering all technical aspects. Efforts are being made to expedite the completion of this project. Work is also ongoing on the approach roads, while asphalt work on Boulevard Punjab is nearing completion.

CBD Punjab has also started pile load and soil tests for the Rustam E Zaman Great Gama Crossing.

Gold rates increase by Rs.800 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.800 and was sold at Rs.213,200 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs. 212,400 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased from Rs.686 to Rs.182,785 from Rs.182,099 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.167,553 from Rs. 166,924, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs.30 to Rs2,550 whereas that of ten gram Silver went down by Rs.25.72 to Rs.2,186.21

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$9 to \$2,034 from \$2,025, the Association reported.

China's road logistics price index dips in January

BEIJING (APP): China's road logistics price index edged down 0.1% year on year in January 2024, industry data showed.

The index came in at 103.9 last month, according to a survey jointly conducted by the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing and the Guangdong Lin'an Logistics Group.

Specifically, the figure for full-truckload logistics, which mainly measures bulk commodity and regional transportation, climbed 0.35 percent from the same period last year to 104.

China's road transportation market was generally active in January, said the survey, attributing this trend to positive factors in production and consumption fields as well as the stimulative effect of holidays.

Due to extreme weather, such as rain and snow, the index fell slightly last month, according to the survey.

China's Shaanxi sees record surge in foreign-invested firms in 2023

A total of 408 new foreign-funded enterprises were registered in northwest China's Shaanxi Province in 2023, marking a record high over the past two decades, with a year-on-year increase of 29.9 percent, according to the province's commerce department.

Cement exports increase 49.70%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of cement witnessed an increase of 49.70 per cent during the first seven months of the financial year 2023-24, as against the exports of the corresponding months of last year.

The cement exports from the country were recorded at US \$150.652 million during July-January (2023-24) against the exports of US \$100.635 million during July-January (2022-23), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In terms of quantity, the exports of cement also surged by 88.98 per cent going up from 2,061,713 metric tons to 3,896,206 metric tons, according to the data.

Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the exports of cement witnessed a nominal decrease of 1.98 per cent during the month of January 2024 as compared to the same month of last

year.

The exports of cement from the country during January 2024 were recorded at US \$15.025 million against the exports of US \$14.728 million in January 2023.

On a month-on-month basis, exports of cement also dipped by 32.83 per cent during January 2024 when compared to the exports of US \$21.927 million in December 2023, the PBS data revealed.

Yields, dollar rise after US PPI data

NEW YORK (Reuters): US Treasury yields rose and the dollar edged up against the yen after data showed US producer prices increased more than expected in January, adding to the view that any interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve are not imminent.

US stocks ended lower, while the MSCI global stock index dipped slightly.

The producer price index for final demand rose 0.3% last month after declining by a revised 0.1% in December, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics said.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the PPI rebounding 0.1% following a previously reported 0.2% drop. Market expectations the Fed will start cutting rates in June were dialed back, with CME's FedWatch Tool now showing a 69.9% chance for a cut of at least 25 basis points, down from the nearly 90% in the prior session.

"A number like this, it definitely pushes off the Fed for another month or

two," said Tom di Galoma, co-head of global rates trading at BTIG in New York. A US consumer prices reading earlier this week was also stronger than expected.

The yield on the benchmark US 10-year Treasury note climbed 5.3 basis points to 4.293%, down from an earlier high of 4.33%, and was on pace for its second straight weekly gain. The greenback also gained after the data.

Against the Japanese yen, the dollar was last up 0.23% at 150.26. The dollar index was last up just 0.02% to 104.29, while the euro was up 0.02% at 1.0773.

Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda said on Friday that monetary policy would most likely remain accommodative, even after ending negative interest rates, echoing recent reassurances from BOJ officials that have weighed on the yen. On Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial Average (.DJ), opens new tab fell 145.13 points, or 0.37%, to 38,627.99, the

S&P 500 (.SPX), opens new tab lost 24.16 points, or 0.48%, to 5,005.57 and the Nasdaq Composite (.IXIC), opens new tab lost 130.52 points, or 0.82%, to 15,775.65. US markets will be closed on Monday for the Presidents' Day holiday.

MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe (.MIWD00000PUS), opens new tab fell 0.31 points, or 0.04%, to 750.24, while Europe's STOXX 600 (.STOXX), opens new tab index rose 0.62%.

Earlier on Friday, Japan's benchmark Nikkei (.N225), opens new tab rallied to a 34-year high and was on the cusp of eclipsing the all-time peak reached during the heyday of the nation's bubble economy in the 1980s.

Figures on Thursday showed that Japan and Britain slipped into recession at the end of last year.

Gold eased early on Friday and was set for a second straight weekly fall, but spot gold was last up 0.4% on the day at \$2,012.86 per ounce.

FRIA seeks need for raising country's export base

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Raising serious concern over the constant falling trend of Pakistan exports the Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) has said that the country's exports declined by around 2.99 percent during the first seven months of July-Jan of the current fiscal year and stood at \$9.738 billion compared to \$10.038 billion during the same period of 2022-23.

The FRIA Senior vice chairman and PIAF EC member Shahbaz Aslam advocated the need for raising the country's export base so that tax-to-GDP ratio improves from current poor level. He urged the trade officers to explore opportunities to diversify exports of goods and services in their respective areas, asking them to meet the challenges faced by Pakistan in European markets. He also suggested the ministry to

devise strategies for promotion of Pakistani products, calling upon trade officers to take advantage of opportunities offered by China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Shahbaz Aslam said that the country's overall exports during July-January 2023-24 totaled \$17.778 billion (provisional) against \$16.481 billion during the corresponding period of last year showing an increase of 7.87 percent.

The exports in January 2024 were \$2.792 billion (provisional) as compared to \$2.822 billion in December 2023 showing a decrease of 1.06 per cent over December 2023 but increased by 24.81 percent as compared to \$2.237 billion in January 2023. The data on exports and imports released by PBS revealed that on a month-on-month basis, textile exports registered 3.98 per cent growth in January 2024 and stood at \$1.455 billion compared to \$1.399 billion in December 2023.

On a year-on-year basis, textile exports increased by 10.10 per cent in January 2024 when compared to \$1.321 bil-

lion in Jan 2023.

Cotton yarn exports increased by 49.04 per cent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year as it stood at \$669.824 million compared to \$449.418 million during the same period of the last fiscal year.

On a year-on-year basis, cotton yarn exports registered 19.78 per cent growth and stood at \$81.295 million when compared to \$67.873 million in January 2023, while on a MoM basis, it registered 14.65 per cent negative growth when compared to \$95.252 million in December 2023.

Rice exports increased by 95.26 per cent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year and stood at \$2.115 billion when compared to \$1.083 billion during the same period of the last fiscal year.

Food group exports increased by 57.66 per cent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year and stood at \$4.267 billion when compared to \$2.706 billion during the same period of

the last fiscal year.

The main commodities of exports during January 2024 were rice others (Rs108,803 million), knitwear (Rs102,331 million), readymade garments (Rs93,462 million), bed wear (Rs70,662 million), cotton cloth (Rs44,773 million), towels (Rs26,930 million), rice basmati (Rs25,055 million), cotton yarn (Rs22,789 million), vegetables (Rs20,449 million) and petroleum products (Rs19,362 million).

Shahbaz Aslam said that Pakistan has remained a potential market for foreign investors, who still have plans to make fresh investment in the country, but they have continued to wait for the return of economic stability. He highlighted uncertainty in the rupee-dollar parity as one of the major concerns of foreign investors. He said a slowdown in the economy had badly impacted business confidence. It is must for the authorities concerned to first create an enabling environment for the local businessmen desiring to make new investment.

Court Notice

In the Court of Fazal Gul ADJ-IV Kohat. Appeal No. CA-30/13. Date of hearing 04-03-2024. Titled Muhammad Iqbal Vs. Jahanzaib (etc). Notice against (2) Ihsan Ullah Son of Jahanzaib presently R/o Industrial Area No. 32, Zone No. 57, Building No. 06, Accommodation Building Ground Floor Room No. 9, DOHA QATAR +9744779623) (Respondent) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a Appeal against you Respondent in which date of hearing 04-03-2024 is fixed for your appearance. Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Respondent is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 04-03-2024 otherwise Court shall be proceeded in accordance with law. Order issued on 12-02-2024 (Court of ADJ-IV Kohat).

Court Notice

In the Court of Jauhar Ali Safi Civil Judge-I/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar, Suit No. 12/1. Institution 11/1/2024. Date of hearing 21/12/2023. Sher Afzal Khan Vs. Pervesh Khan etc. Notice to No. 2. Sher Shah S/o Yafsal Khan resident of Koz Shammal Tehsil Chaghorzai [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 21/12/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Disposable Food Packaging Association (DFPA) has said that the new government will have to face challenges in securing consensus to pursue difficult but necessary reforms, including revenue raising measures.

These views were expressed by DFPA President Ahsan Shahid, stating that this observation is unlikely to resonate with domestic political and economic pundits for one simple reason: the Special Investment Facilitation Council staffed by federal and provincial members of the executive and senior

most civilian and military personnel has shown ample capacity to deliver on all politically challenging pledges to the International Monetary Fund under the ongoing Strand-By Arrangement – a capacity that may overtly be seen as decisions that have been taken by the caretaker cabinet but without the full support of SIFC members such decisions would not have been possible.

Ahsan Shahid said that Moody's conclusion that overall uncertainty around Pakistan's ability to quickly negotiate a new IMF program after the current one expires in April 2024 remains very high has been

a mitigating factor in securing an IMF program loan in the past, before SIFC was established in late June 2023.

However, one would have to agree with Moody's observations that there is "uncertainty around the extent of public protests because they may challenge the legitimacy of the new government. Social tensions may increase which would likely constrain the government's ability to undertake reforms."

DFPA President said that there is no doubt that sustained high rates of inflation, hovering around 30 percent per month during the past year and a half

have been fueled by: (i) an inexplicable massive rise in domestic borrowing by the caretakers (not part of the IMF condition) as well as by the 16-month-long Shahbaz Sharif-led government that crowded out private sector borrowing with a consequent negative impact on private sector borrowing and domestic output leading to factory closures and unemployment; and the (ii) administrative measures to meet the IMF-stipulated objective of full-cost recovery and the recent rise in gas prices is a component of that pledge to the IMF.

Simmering public discontent with poverty levels

as high as 40 percent was already evident pre-elections, discontent that was not backed by any political party, however in the event that protests become more organized under a political banner then one may be compelled to heed warnings by Moody's.

It may be recalled that former Finance Minister Ishaq Dar challenged Moody's rating downgrade on 6 October 2022, the same day he announced an unbudgeted 110 billion rupees subsidy for exporters, in violation of the then ongoing IMF program.

Ahsan Shahid noted that neither Moody's nor the other two international rat-

ing agencies - Fitch and Standard and Poor's – have upgraded Pakistan's rating since then which, in turn, is the reason why the 6.1 billion dollars budgeted by Dar for the ongoing year under the head of borrowing from external commercial banks and through incurring debt equity (issuance of Sukuk) has not materialized to-date.

The successful first review staff level agreement reached on 15 November, claimed by the caretaker finance minister as an accomplishment, was not followed by any upgrade by the rating agencies, as used to be the case in the past.

New govt to face challenges in securing consensus to pursue reforms: DFPA



In brief

Erin Holand 'thrilled' to be back in Pakistan

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Australian television personality and cricket presenter Erin Holand is back in Pakistan to present Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 9 as the exciting tournament kicks off at the Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore. The celebrity is a well-known figure across the globe but is widely adored by Pakistanis as well for the way she carries and styles the local attire during her time in PSL. Erin, who is the wife of Australian cricketer Ben Cutting, regularly participates in the cricketing event in Pakistan and clearly enjoys it too. To mark her presence at the PSL this year as well, the 34-year-old model and singer dropped three pre-show pictures of herself at the Gaddafi Stadium, which is currently hosting the opening match between 2023 champions Lahore Qalandars and Islamabad United. Erin sported a subtle white chikankari suit, paired with a chiffon dupatta having similar embroidery and a pair of strapped, beige heels to complement the outfit. She let her hair down in loose curls to give a perfect beachy-waves look to her brunette locks with a touch of blonde. For make-up, Erin went with nude shades all over her face. "Absolutely thrilled to be back," she captioned the post with a white heart emoji and credits to the outfit designer. The post garnered over 2,500 likes and hundreds of comments praising the celebrity.

Jaiswal ton puts India's lead over England past 300

RAJKOT (Agencies): Yashasvi Jaiswal retired hurt after hitting an attacking century to extend India's lead over England to 322 after the tourists' batting collapse in the third Test on Saturday. India reached 196-2 in their second innings at stumps on day three in Rajkot with Shubman Gill (65) and night-watchman Kuldeep Yadav (three) batting at the close of play. India have been left with 10 players to bat and bowl after Ashwin departed the match late Friday due to a family emergency. Devdutt Padikkal came in as substitute fielder. Jaiswal, struggling with his back, retired hurt on 104, and the next man Rajat Patidar was out for a duck from 10 balls. Fast bowler Mohammed Siraj led the bowling charge with figures of 4-84 to help bowl out England for 319 after the visitors collapsed from 299-5. Skipper Rohit Sharma departed early on 19, but the left-handed Jaiswal stood strong to build the innings along with Gill before the opener changed gears. Jaiswal smashed veteran pace bowler James Anderson for a six and two fours on successive balls and kept up the charge against opposition spinners with his sweep and reverse sweep. He raised his third Test ton in just his seventh match with a boundary off fast bowler Mark Wood as he jumped, roared and blew kisses to an applauding crowd. The 22-year-old, who hit a match-winning 209 in the previous Test, leads the series batting with 435 runs after his 155-run stand with Gill. Rohit, who hit 131 in the first innings, missed a sweep off part-time spinner Joe Root and England successfully reviewed the decision after the on-field umpire denied the call. Earlier Ben Duckett hit 153 and skipper Ben Stokes made 41 in his 100th Test but their innings came to a quick halt in the second session.



LAHORE: An attractive view of fireworks at the opening ceremony of the Pakistan Super League(PSL) Twenty 20 Cricket matches at Gaddafi Stadium.

Kiagaoge Kang bags ITF World Jr title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Hamza Roman lost to Kiagaoge Kang of China in boy's singles of the ITF Pakistan Khawar Hyat Khan Memorial World Junior Championship Leg-I here at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex on Saturday. Kiagaoge outplayed Hamza by 6-4, 6-4 and won the ITF Leg-I Championships. In the girl's singles final, Kira Kalinowskaya (BLR) beat Katsiaryna Dubik (BLR) by 6-1, 6-3.

In the boy's doubles final, Dong Hyeon Euom (KOR), Jiwan Park (KOR) beat Bilal Asim, Ahmed Nael Qureshi (PAK) 6-4, 6-4. In girl's doubles final, Gyuree Nam (KOR), Chaewon Whang (KOR) bt

Paramee Takaew (THA), Jungke Yan (CHN) 6-0, 6-0

A total of 45 players boys & girls from Kazakhstan, Turkey, USA, Hongkong, China, Russia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, South Korea, Romania, Switzerland, Sri Lanka, and Thailand participated in the Championships. As many as 27 Pakistani boys & girls featured in the Championships.

Nageen Hyat wife of Khawar Hyat Khan and their children Daniyal Hyat Khan, and Sadia Hyat Khan were the Chief Guests at the Closing Ceremony. Senator Salim Saifullah Khan and Iftikhar Rashid were the Guests of Honor at the Closing Ceremony.

The closing ceremony

was also attended by Col. Gul Rehman (R), Mansoor Ahmmad Khan DDG-PSB, and a large number of players, coaches, parents, media persons, and tennis lovers.

Senator Salim Saifullah Khan President PTF praised the services and untiring efforts of Khawar Hyat Khan for the promotion of tennis in Pakistan, which will not be forgotten. The Ex-President of PTF thanked the media for the wide coverage of the event.

The Championships was supervised by Arif Qureshi, ITF White Badge Referee. The main draw of the ITF Pakistan Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial Junior Championships Leg-II would be held on Monday.

Alcaraz moves into Argentina Open semi-finals



BUENOS AIRES (Agencies): Reigning champion Carlos Alcaraz moved into the semi-finals of the Argentina Open with a straight-set win over Italy's Andrea Vavassori. The Spanish world number two, 20, won 7-6 (7-1) 6-1 in the quarter-finals against the 152nd-ranked Italian.

Top seed Alcaraz will face Chilean third seed Nicolas Jarry in the semi-finals in Buenos Aires on Saturday. Jarry, 28, advanced after Argentine Tomas Martin Etcheverry had to retire from their quarter-final with injury.

Sixth seed Etcheverry, 24, took the first set 6-4 but injured his right leg during the second - which

Jarry won 7-5 - and was forced to withdraw before the decider.

Earlier on Friday, Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner advanced into the semi-finals of the Rotterdam Open. He was 7-6 (7-4) 1-1 ahead when opponent Milos Raonic had to retire during the second set because of a right hip injury. Sinner had saved two set points in the 10th game before taking the opening set tie-break and it was level in the second set when former Wimbledon finalist Raonic pulled out to hand Sinner his 200th win on the ATP Tour.

Italian Sinner, who will go third in the world rankings if he wins the indoor tournament, faces Tallon

Griekspoor of the Netherlands on Saturday. "He is for sure one of the toughest opponents to play against," said Sinner of Raonic in his post-match interview. "From the past two rounds I was struggling a little bit to find myself on the court. I felt like he was playing better than me the first set.

"This is not how you want to win this match. He had so many injuries throughout his career and hopefully he will have a speedy recovery." The second semi-final in the Netherlands will be between Australian Alex de Minaur and Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov, who beat Andrey Rublev and Alexander Shevchenko respectively. There is guaranteed to be a home finalist in the Argentina Open as the second semi-final is between Facundo Diaz Acosta and Federico Coria.

Alcaraz is the firm title favourite at this stage, and after beating Vavassori he said: "In the first set he played at such a high level with his serve and he was really tough to return in really challenging conditions with the wind. "I played better in the second set and his level went down a bit and I took my chances."

Wait ends as PSL 9 glittering opening ceremony kicks off

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The long wait of the cricket fans has finally ended as the star-studded opening ceremony of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 kicked off here at Gaddafi Stadium.

The glittering opening ceremony of this year's extravaganza embarked with renowned artist Natasha Baig singing the national anthem of Pakistan. Following the national anthem, folk singer Arif Lohar delivered an energetic performance to ignite the passion of the attendees.

Following this, iconic singer Ali Zafar alongside Aima Baig, who performed this year's PSL anthem Khul Ke Khel, will be performing the anthem live in the PSL 9 opening ceremony.

Furthermore, several other artists including the likes of Noori will also perform in the opening ceremony. The spectators can also witness fireworks and an enthralling laser show.

The PSL 9 will be played in four cities - Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi - with the final of the six-team tournament taking place at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on 18 March.

Over the course of the 34-match tournament, Karachi will host 11 matches, including the Qualifier, two Eliminator and the final. Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium and Rawalpindi's Pindi Cricket Stadium will each host nine matches, while fans in Multan, the city of saints, will witness five matches. In the curtain raiser, defending champions Lahore Qalandars will take on two-time champions Islamabad United.

The two sides locked horns 17 times in the PSL history with the United boasting a dominant record with nine victories. But the Qalandars have an upper hand in their home ground against the United while possessing a perfect record in the last five faceoffs.

CCPO reviews PSL security arrangements

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana Saturday chaired a meeting at his office to review security arrangements for peaceful conduct of matches of Pakistan Super League-9 (PSL-9).

It was informed in the meeting that nine matches under the PSL-9 would be played in the provincial capital. More than 7,000 policemen have been deputed for security of the matches. The CCPO said Lahore police would ensure comprehensive security for the matches. Lahore police are providing foolproof security to national and international players as well as enthusiasts, he added.

The CCPO ordered continuous coordination with the line departments and implementation of the security plans for cricket stadiums, accommodation of players, and routes, ensuring thorough checking of every individual entering the stadium and women spectators to be checked by lady police.

Pakistan Super League 9 Islamabad United beat Lahore Qalandars by eight wickets



LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): An astounding third-wicket partnership between Shadab Khan and Salman Ali Agha steered Islamabad United to a comfortable eight-wicket victory over holders Lahore Qalandars in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 opener.

Set to chase 196, the United comfortably chased down the target for the loss of just three wickets and 10 balls to spare, courtesy of Shadab and Agha's unbeaten half-centuries.

The visitors had a decent start to their run chase and Alex Hales-led opening stand yielded 41 runs. But Colin Munro's dismissal in the fifth over halted the flow of runs for the United and Hales, as a result, made desperate attempts to go big until he fell victim to youngster Salman Fayyaz in the eighth over.

He scored 36 off 28 deliveries, laced up with five boundaries and a six.

Agha then joined his skipper Shadab in the middle with the scoreboard reading 62/2 in 7.2 overs.

The pair, unfazed by a slow start, soon took the game away from the hosts with strike rotation and punishing the bad deliveries.

Shadab and Agha added 138 runs for the third wicket and guided the United over the line in the penultimate over when

the former heaved Fayyaz for a six over the long-on.

Shadab top-scored for the United with a 41-ball 74 that featured six boundaries and five sixes while Agha made 64 in just 31 balls, hitting seven boundaries and three sixes.

For the Qalandars, Zaman Khan and Fayyaz could pick up a wicket apiece.

Put into bat first, the Qalandars had a flying start to their innings, courtesy of a solid opening partnership between Farhan and Fakhar Zaman.

Farhan dominated the majority of the opening stand, scoring 70 per cent of the runs by scoring boundaries at regular intervals.

Meanwhile, Fakhar, who was finding it hard to keep going, perished in the seventh over after a run-a-ball 13. But Farhan kept going and dominated the United bowlers and brought up his maiden PSL half-century in just 29 deliveries.

He smashed eight boundaries and a six on his way to a 36-ball 57 before falling victim to Tymal Mills in the 11th over.

Following his departure, Abdullah Shafique and Rassie van der Dussen took charge of Qalandar's batting expedition.

The pair made sure to retain the momentum, provided by Sahibzada Farhan, stitching a 73-run partnership for the third wicket which came off just 42 deliveries.

With Shafique and van der Dussen piling runs, the Qalandars appeared in complete control to breach the 200-run barrier but Mills once again provided the breakthrough to the United by casting the former in the 18th over. Shafique scored 28 off 22 deliveries with the help of three sixes.

Rassie van der Dussen carried his bat all the way through and bolstered the Qalandars' total at the backend with clean hitting. He remained unbeaten on 71 off just 41 deliveries, hitting four boundaries and three sixes. Mills led the bowling attack for the United in their PSL 9 campaign opener with 2/45, followed by Shadab Khan and Naseem Shah, who bagged one apiece.

'Big fan' Vivian Richards pins high hopes on Sarfaraz



KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former West Indies batting icon and mentor of Quetta Gladiators Sir Vivian Richards expressed high hopes for wicketkeeper batter Sarfaraz Ahmed to 'prove his worth' in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9.

Richards, while interacting with the media after joining the Gladiators' camp ahead of their campaign opener against Peshawar Zalmi, commented on a shift in the 2019 champions' leadership and asserted that it would ease the pressure from Sarfaraz.

"I'm a big fan of Sarfaraz Ahmed. I'm sure the appointment of a new captain will take the pressure off Sarfaraz. I have asked him to prove his worth with the bat in PSL 9," stated Richards.

The legend of the game also acknowledged the team's recent struggles and termed the change a need of the hour. "Quetta has not been able to do well over the past few years which is why the changes could be

good for the side. I think we have formed a good team for PSL 9," he said.

Sir Vivian Richards also commented on the "classy" inclusion of Mohammad Amir to Quetta Gladiators and showered praise on the experienced left-arm pacer. "I have always praised Mohammad Amir and I'm happy to see him play for Quetta Gladiators. Amir will be a classy inclusion for Quetta," Richards said.

The Gladiators' mentor, however, refrained from drawing a comparison between Amir and Naseem Shah's pace and instead emphasized on experience the former possesses.

"I don't know if Amir will have pace similar to Naseem Shah but we are happy that an experienced player is part of the side," he further added. It is worth mentioning here that Quetta Gladiators will play under a new captain this season as Rilee Rossouw took the reigns from Sarfaraz Ahmed, who led the side for eight seasons.

Australia thump South Africa inside 3 days

PERTH (Agencies): Australia sealed an innings-and-284-run win over South Africa with a day to spare in the one-off Test in Perth.

Resuming on 67-3 - needing a further 432 to make Australia bat again - Delmi Tucker and Chloe Tryon offered some resistance with 64 apiece at the Waca. But South Africa lost their last six wickets for 59 runs, including their last three for two runs, as they were bowled out for 215 after tea.

Victory gave Australia a 12-4 win on points in the multi-format series.

The first women's Test between the sides came after Australia won the T20 and one-day series 2-1, which included South Africa's first victories over Australia in those formats.

Australia's mammoth 575-9 declared in reply to South Africa's first-innings 76 was built around Annabel Sutherland's 210, the fourth-highest score in a women's Test.

The 22-year-old claimed 2-11 in the second innings for match figures of 5-30, making her the first woman and only the fourth player to score a double century and take at least five wickets in a Test. West Indies' Denis Atkinson, England's Ted Dexter and Pakistan's Mushtaq Mohammad achieved the feat in men's Tests.

Salah scores on return as Liverpool beat Brentford

LONDON (AFP): Mohamed Salah returned in style with a goal in Liverpool's 4-1 rout of Brentford as the Premier League leaders survived a rash of injuries to step up their title charge on Saturday.

Salah came off the bench to replace the injured Diogo Jota in his first Liverpool appearance since their win over Newcastle on New Year's Day. Having returned from the hamstring injury he sustained on Egypt duty at the Africa Cup of Nations, Salah made up for lost time with his first goal for the Reds since the Newcastle game.

The 31-year-old's 19th goal in all competitions this term put Liverpool on course for a sixth win in their last seven league games. The much-maligned Darwin Nunez had given Jurgen Klopp's side the lead with a sublime chip late in the first half at the Gtech Community Stadium.

Alexis Mac Allister doubled Liverpool's advantage after the interval with just his second goal this season.

Ivan Toney got one back for Brentford, but Cody Gakpo netted in the closing stages as Liverpool moved five points clear at the top. Second placed Manchester City and third placed Arsenal, who play later on Saturday against Chelsea and Burnley respectively, can reduce the gap to Liverpool, who are chasing a first title since 2020.

While the victory was valuable for Klopp, it came with a downside as first half injuries to Jota and Curtis Jones added to Liverpool's increasingly packed treatment room.

Nunez didn't come back out for the second half either, although whether that was tactical or due to injury was unclear.

With the League Cup final against Chelsea looming on February 25 and Liverpool also competing in

the FA Cup and Europa League, the injuries could derail Klopp's hopes of a trophy-filled farewell season. Conor Bradley, back from compassionate leave after his father's death, started at right-back for Liverpool in place of the injured Trent Alexander-Arnold.

Back in the groove Bradley had impressed prior to his absence and the youngster nearly gave Liverpool an early lead when he burst into the area for a shot that Mark Flekken pushed away for a corner. Brentford boss Thomas Frank this week labelled Liverpool "the best offensive team in the league".

Klopp would have appreciated the compliment and Liverpool underlined why Frank rates them so highly in the 35th minute.

Virgil van Dijk's high clearance from deep inside his own half looped towards Jota, who rose tenaciously above Sergio Reguilon to nod a header



Mohamed Salah of Liverpool shoots to score their side's third goal during the Premier League match.

into the path of the unmarked Nunez.

The Uruguay striker accelerated into the area and deftly chipped a fine finish over Flekken for his 13th goal this season.

Nunez's goal was marred by the injury to Jota that led the Portugal forward to be stretchered off after he collided with Mac Allister and landed awkwardly. That brought Salah into the fray

and missed a chance immediately, letting Luis Diaz's cross bounce off his leg with the goal at his mercy. Salah misfired again with a woeful finish after he took Van Dijk's header

and sprinted clean through on goal. The Egyptian made amends for his mis-cues with a superb pass that picked out Mac Allister's run into the area.

Taking a clever touch to elude Brentford defender Ben Mee, Mac Allister snapped up the chance with a clinical finish to double Liverpool's lead after 55 minutes. Salah was back in the groove and he killed off Brentford in the 68th minute.

Gakpo flicked on Caoimhin Kelleher's long clearance and Salah showed poise and power as he worked just enough space to guide a composed strike into the far corner.

Toney fired home from close-range after Reguilon's shot was saved by Kelleher in the 75th minute. But Liverpool landed one last blow in the 86th minute when Nathan Collins' comical miscued clearance allowed Gakpo to score with a precise low finish.



In brief

Death anniversary of Shabnam Romani observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The fifteenth death anniversary of prominent Urdu poet, writer and columnist Shabnam Romani was observed on Saturday. Shabnam Romani's original name was Mirza Azim Baig Chughtai. He was born on December 30, 1928 in Shah Jahanpur. After the partition, his family settled in Karachi. Shabnam Romani was a prominent poet and writer of literary circles of Karachi. His collections, 'Musnavi Sair Karachi', 'Jazeera', 'Harf-e Nisbet', 'Tohmat' and 'Dosra Himala' became popular. Shabnam Romani also wrote a literary column in the daily newspaper 'Mashriq' under the title 'Hyde Park' for a long time. A collection of his newspaper columns was also published under the same name. In 1989, Shabnam Romani also published the literary journal 'Aqdaar' which was well-received in literary circles. Shabnam Romani died on February 17, 2009, in Karachi and was buried in Azizabad Cemetery.

3-days sports festival concluded

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 3-day sports festival organized by the Pakistan Army in Neelum Valley concluded successfully in Athmakam, Neelum District, Azad Kashmir, on Saturday. According to a private news channel, the festival featured a range of traditional and regional sports competitions, including cricket, tug-of-war, and javelin throw, among others. Participating in the event were 20 teams from various educational institutions, showcasing their talent and sportsmanship. The purpose of organizing this sports festival was to promote healthy activities and find new talent in the area. The students took an active part in this sports festival, thanked the Pak Army and said that holding such tournaments would give rise to new players. The Commandant Officer presented gifts to the students on behalf of the Army, encouraging their continued involvement in sports and healthy activities. Addressing the ceremony, the Commandant Officer emphasized that sports events serve as an excellent platform to engage youth in positive activities and steer them away from negative influences. The closing ceremony was attended by dignitaries including the Deputy Commissioner, Senior Superintendent of Police, officials from the local administration and security forces, as well as numerous guests from diverse backgrounds, including residents.

Cold, dry weather expected

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mainly cold and dry weather is expected in most parts of the country during the next twelve hours. However, partly cloudy weather with rain-wind, thunderstorm and snowfall is likely at isolated places in Gilgit-Baltistan, upper Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir and adjoining hilly areas. Gusty winds are likely in coastal areas of Balochistan, according to Met office. Temperature of major cities recorded this morning, Islamabad, Gilgit and Muzaffarabad eight degree centigrade, Lahore eleven, Karachi fifteen, Peshawar ten, Quetta six, and Murree three degree centigrade.



ISLAMABAD: People enjoy peacock dance during their visit to Bird Aviary at Lake View Park. —APP Photo

ANF recovers 363 kg drugs in nine operations; arrests 13 accused

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 363 kg drugs and arrested 13 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday.

He informed that 5 kg Ice and 3 kg ketamine drug were recovered from a parcel at a cargo office at Jinnah Airport while an accused was also arrested.

504 grams heroin was recovered from the possession of a passenger going to

Bahrain at Peshawar Airport.

In the third operation, 84 kg opium and 120 kg hashish were recovered from two suspects arrested at Ravi Motorway Toll Plaza Lahore.

54 kg opium and 48 kg hashish were recovered from 3 suspects netted on Kot Abdul Malik Motorway Lahore.

In the fifth operation, 17 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of 2 suspects arrested near Sangjani Toll Plaza Islamabad while 5.5 kg heroin, 9 kg hashish and 1.5

kg suspicious material were recovered from Zakhakhel Khyber area.

In two different operations conducted near M-1 Islamabad, 14 kg hashish was recovered from three drug smugglers.

208 grams hashish and 343 grams hashish oil were recovered from the possession of an accused nabbed on Ferozepur Road, Lahore.

Separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

Six of family killed in road mishap in Muridke

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least six members of a family were killed and three others were wounded in a road accident in Muridke on late Friday night.

According to police, the accident occurred at the Grand Trunk (GT) Road in Rayanpur area of Muridke where a rashly driven mini-truck collided head-on with a car, killing six people on the spot and injuring three others, a private news channel reported.

The police and rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the dead and injured to a nearby hospital.

The deceased reportedly included a woman and three children.

Three suspects held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Three suspects were apprehended in injured condition, while their accomplices managed to escape during a police encounter at a check post in the jurisdiction of Westridge Police Station in Rawalpindi on Saturday.

The incident occurred when cops on suspicion signalled a group of six suspects riding two motorbikes to pull over.

The police opened fire when they tried to escape the scene, a private news channel reported. During the police encounter, three of the suspects identified as Jabir, Abrar, and Qadeer, were arrested in an injured condition.

The initial investigation suggested that the arrested individuals were involved in robberies.

The police have launched an operation to nab the fleeing accomplices.

Commissioner Rawalpindi suffering from mental illness, says Amir Mir

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Punjab Caretaker Minister for Information Amir Mir condemned the allegations levelled by Rawalpindi Division Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chatha about elections fraud, saying that he is suffering from the mental illness.

The similar remarks were given by PML-N Punjab President Rana Sanaulah.

The caretaker government, the rival parties of the PTI and the Election Commission of Pakistan strongly reacted to the allegations of the Rawalpindi Division Commissioner

Liaquat Ali Chatha.

The reaction came after Rawalpindi Division Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chatha said that he committed rigging due to immense pressure from different quarters. He alleged that Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja and Chief Justice were also involved in putting pressure for rigging.

He said he wanted to suicide this morning after Fajr prayer, and he surrendered himself before the police.

The Election Commission of Pakistan strongly rejected the allega-

tions levelled by Rawalpindi Commissioner against the chief election commissioner.

In a statement, a spokesperson of the election commission said no official of the commission gave any instruction to the Rawalpindi commissioner for change in the election results.

The spokesperson clarified that the commissioner of any division has no direct role in the conduct of the election. The commissioner is not made DRO, RO or the presiding officer.

The spokesperson said that this matter will be investigated.

Police arrest 18 kite sellers, bootleggers with 326 liquor bottles, 700 kites

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were conducting raids in different areas and making efforts to control kite flying and aerial firing, said a police spokesman here on Saturday.

He informed that Civil Lines Police in their ongoing operation against the lawbreakers on Friday night managed to net 18 kite sellers, bootleggers and recovered 326 bottles of liquor, 700 kites, 23 kite flying string rolls, a Mehran car and other items.

He said that City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani while appreciating the police team directed to continue operation and take strict action in accordance with the law against the lawbreakers.

The spokesman said that the Divisional

Superintendents of Police had also directed all the SHOs to gear up operations against kite sellers and flyers.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi said that strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against the rules violators and they would be sent behind the bars.

188 kite seller held in grand operation: Police arrested 188 kite seller and recovered thousands of kites, strings, liquor, weapons, and sound systems from their possession within two days.

During this year 356 kite sellers, and kite flyer were arrested and 48,000 kites and 800 strings were confiscated.

In Potohar Town, Police have arrested 147 kite sellers and recovered more than 5300 kites, 200 strings, 326 bottles of liquor, 02 pistols, and

sound system from their custody.

In Rawal Town, police held 18 kite sellers and confiscated 438 kites and more than 15 strings from their possession.

Similarly, Sadder Division Police arrested 23 kite sellers, and kite flyer and recovered 630 kites and 18 strings from their possession.

CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani said an effective and integrated strategy was evolved to prevent kite flying and aerial firing. The monitoring was done from the roofs of high buildings at different places in the city to trace the kite flyers.

The modern techniques have also been used in different areas for surveillance against kite flying, he concluded. Strict action will be continued against the elements involved in a dangerous game, he added.

PTA cracks down on illegal SIMs activation, unlicensed ISPs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Offices in collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) conducted several raids against franchises involved in the illegal activation of SIMs and illegal internet Service Provider (ISPs) on Saturday.

56 suspicious SIMs were confiscated in the Sukkar, and during the raid in Kasur, 26 active SIMs were

confiscated. The accused individuals have been apprehended by the FIA and First Investigation Reports (FIRs) have been lodged against them, said a news release.

Moreover, two raids were conducted to target illegal ISP setups in Chichawatni.

During the raids, a significant amount of equipment was recovered at different locations in Chichawatni which included 12 Optical line terminals

(OLT), 04 dish antennas, 01 UPS, 2 batteries, 350 meter OFC cable, 01 Optical Network Terminal, 01 OLT charger, and a manual billing book.

Additionally, an illegally erected tower carrying numerous dish antennas was dismantled by the FIA team. Ongoing investigations are in progress.

These raids are part of the PTA's ongoing efforts to eradicate the illegal issuance of SIMs and illegal ISPs.

2-Day inclusive education capacity building training held at AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) and Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan) jointly organized a Two-Day Inclusive Education Capacity Building Training from February 14-15, 2024, at AIOU, Islamabad.

According to AIOU, over 25 participants from various stakeholders, including IDEA, UNHCR, CAR, CWSA, FGEI, FDE, DGSE, AIOU and NCRC, actively participated in this training.

The purpose of the training was to better understand the concepts of inclusive education, including the role schools and school leaders play in ensuring schools become more inclusive, and a demonstrated commitment to learn more about the KIX research project and scaling activities, currently underway in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Nepal.

The AIOU Project team, in collaboration with the CW4WAfghan team, con-

ducted an activities-based training for key education sector stakeholders in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Training experts from AIOU, CW4WAfghan, Sightsavers, and NCRC shared their expertise, knowledge, and best practices to enhance the output of the GPE/KIX project. Notably, the project stands out as a unique initiative where three countries collaboratively developed an open course on inclusive education, applying the NICs (Networked Improvement Communities) approach through course facilitators.

Participants, including school leaders from UNHCR schools in Peshawar, FDE, and schools under the Department of Schools, Government of Punjab, appreciated the approach. The three-country project team plans to share the final reports with major stakeholders in their respective countries to further scale up the project's outputs and achievements.

10 nabbed for carrying illegal arms

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 10 illegal armholders, and drug dealers and recovered arms, ammunition from their possession during a crackdown here on Saturday. According to a police spokesman, Rawat Police held Akram and recovered 12 bore rifle from his possession.

Similarly, Wah Cantt police nabbed Asad, Haq Nawaz, and Moin besides recovering 03 pistols of 30 bore from their custody While, Civil Lines Police recovered 01 pistol of 30 bore from Ihtesham and 01 pistol of 30 bore from Abdul Rehman.

Following the operation, Sadiqabad police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Shehzad. Gujjar Khan police recovered 01 pistol 30-bore from Khabib. Kahuta police recovered 20 liters of liquor from Jahanzeb. Sadder Wah police recovered 510 grams of charas from Hanif.

Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. Divisional SPs appreciated the performance of police teams and said that strict action against those possessing illegal weapons are being accelerated.

Nature-based solutions help better adapt, protect more lives: Speakers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The speakers Saturday called for integrating anticipatory disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) approaches with climate science to make sure that more lives are protected from climatic disasters.

Speaking at a panel discussion organized at the World Social Forum in Kathmandu on Saturday by Pakistan's leading think tank 'Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Oxfam in Pakistan, the speakers said that the incidence of climatic hazards and disasters are increasing which plunged communities into vulnerability to disasters and are causing losses and damages, said a press release.

Speaking on the occasion, globally acclaimed climate justice expert Harjeet Singh said that the temperatures are the determining factor of climate change which calls for analyzing science for better adaptation and preparing communities against climatic hazards and disasters. He called upon the humanitarian sector to keep in mind the future warming levels and slow on-set disasters while designing humanitarian programmes.

He said the communities know much about the impacts of climate change such as glacier melting, changing cropping patterns, and water availability but they do not know why this is happening. He said that science gives the 'why' answer.

He said while climate change is creating new poor with more marginalities, there is a need to opt for nature-based solutions for adaptation. He called for integrating humanitarian approaches with science.

The Deputy Executive Director of SDPI Dr. Shafqat Munir said that climatic hazards are now putting cities and towns at risk urging the need for risk-sensitive urban planning through applying both Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) strategies. He said preparedness and anticipatory DRR approaches can better equip vulnerable communities at local levels to cope with ensuing disasters/climatic hazards.

The localization of DRR-CCA strategies and implementation plans can help to save and protect more lives. He called for taking urgent collective action to achieve the Paris Agreement's objective on the Global Goal on Adaptation and Sendai Framework for DRR.

Oxfam's regional humanitarian coordinator Mr. Jermaine, from the Philippines, said that effective climate action requires a balanced approach, considering both adaptation and mitigation efforts. Similarly, there is a need to ensure equity, right, and justice in line with the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) framework that prioritize fairness and equitable adaptation strategies, he added.

Quoting from Cyclone Hayan

2013, he said due to inappropriate early warning messaging, the communities could not prepare against the Tsunami. He said that there is a need to train communities on DRR and early warning messaging should be clear.

Programme Manager ARTS Foundation, Saira Falak narrated the losses and damages that occurred in Pakistan during the floods in 2022. She mentioned about the plight of women and girls saying that during the emergency, the women lost their livelihood and plunged into further poverty. She said that there is a need to build the capacity of women on disaster risks and preparedness. She spoke about the non-traditional losses that impact people and the economy badly.

Civil society expert from Nepal, Ram Sharan Sedhai said disaster creates, perpetuates, and aggravates poverty which renders people more vulnerable to disasters and weakens their coping strategies. Once hit by a disaster, the community needs resources, time, and patience to recover from the impacts.

Quoting from Nepal's 2015 earthquake, he said political will power and stability have far-reaching impacts on decisions regarding saving lives. He called for training the first responders, such as local youth, police, elected representatives, and government.

Doha to host meeting

KABUL (TOLOnews): In two days, Doha will be hosting a meeting with nearly 20 countries' representatives on Afghanistan, but the Islamic Emirate has yet to confirm its participation in the meeting. Representatives from Russia, China, Iran, India, Japan, Tajikistan, US, France, Germany, and the EU will take part in the meeting. The spokesperson for the UN General-Secretary has said that the UN chief is set to travel to Qatar today (Sunday) to participate in the meeting.

The Frontier Post

Shabaan 07, 1445 — Sunday, February 18, 2024

D. Line never be recognized

LOGAR (TOLOnews): The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate said that Afghanistan will never recognize the Durand Line as a border. Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai said that Afghanistan's territory is still on the other side of the line. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the requirement of visas and passports to travel "to Afghanistan" is not acceptable to the Afghanistan people.

CASA-1000 to be resumed: World Bank

KABUL (TOLOnews): The World Bank said in a statement that the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000) in Afghanistan will be resumed at the request of the three other countries participating in the project.

According to the statement, the construction of CASA-1000 in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan, has nearly been completed.

"At the request of the three neighboring countries participating in the project, the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000) in Afghanistan will be resumed. CASA-1000 is a \$1.2 billion regional project to bring clean energy from Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic to Pakistan via Afghanistan. Construction in the other three participating countries is nearly complete and these countries

have requested that CASA-1000 activities in Afghanistan resume to avoid the risk of the project becoming a stranded asset. The project in Afghanistan will resume in a ring-fenced manner to ensure all construction payments and future revenue are managed outside of Afghanistan and do not involve ITA systems," the statement reads.

This project will transfer power from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan. Through this project, 1,000 megawatts of power would be supplied to Pakistan and 300 megawatts to Afghanistan.

"Afghanistan can benefit from the internet line that passes over the power lines from the CASA-1000 project in addition to electricity. In total, the project is for 15 years, and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will sell electricity to Pakistan," said Amanullah Ghalib, the for-

mer head of Breshna Sherkat.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economy said that the Islamic Emirate is ready to start work on CASA-1000.

"CASA-1000 is an important project. The Islamic Emirate is ready to support this project with all its power. We request that donor institutions support this project and I hope the work on this project will start as soon as possible," said Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy.

This comes as Reuters reported that the World Bank Group said on Thursday its executive board endorsed a new approach to aiding Afghanistan that will deploy some \$300 million from the bank's International Development Association fund for poor countries through United Nations agencies and other international organizations.

AI urges meeting to end human rights abuse

KABUL (Khaama Press): Deprose Muchena, Senior Director at Amnesty International, emphasized the crucial opportunity presented by the upcoming UN-convened meeting in Doha, Qatar, on February 18-19 to address the culture of impunity and the human rights abuses of the Taliban.

He stresses the need for unified action to safeguard the rights of all Afghan citizens, particularly women and girls, and to address the culture of impunity enabling the Taliban's human rights abuses.

Amnesty International, alongside nine other organizations, wrote to the UN Secretary-General on February 7, 2024. They urged ensuring Afghan civil society, including women human rights defenders, participate fully in the Doha meeting, prioritizing women's rights in discussions.

"The upcoming Doha meeting is a significant opportunity for a unified and concerted action to protect the rights of all Afghan people, particularly the rights of women and girls. The culture of impunity that enables the Taliban's ongoing grave human rights violations needs to be addressed urgently," Muchena said.

He said that the Taliban in Afghanistan disregard international law, severely limit freedoms, and intensify discrimination against women and girls.

He also added, "The Taliban as the de facto authorities in Afghanistan have shown a complete disregard of the country's obligations under international law having severely restricted the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and access to justice in the country. The Taliban's discriminatory restrictions on the rights of women and girls, with the apparent aim of completely erasing them from public arenas, has also intensified in recent months."

meanwhile, he urged the International community to demand Taliban reverse restrictions on women's rights and release arbitrarily detained individuals.

"The international community cannot continue to take a 'business as usual' approach vis-a-vis the human rights situation in Afghanistan. In Doha, the UN Secretary-General, senior United Nations officials, and all Special Envoys attending the meeting from the region and beyond should insist that the Taliban immediately reverse all restrictions curtailing the rights of women and girls and release all those arbitrarily arrested and unlawfully detained," he urged.

On February 18 and 19, 2024, the UN-convened meeting of Special Envoys and Representatives on Afghanistan will gather in Doha, Qatar.

It aims to discuss the path forward on Afghanistan's independent assessment mandated by Resolution 2679.

The Taliban's strict dress code enforcement has intensified, further oppressing women and girls.

Their discriminatory measures escalate, targeting dissenters with torture, imprisonment, and disappearance, potentially constituting crimes against humanity.

Two huge projects: Afghan invest signs contract with IEA



KABUL (Ariana News): The "Afghan Invest" company officials say they have signed two huge project contracts with the Islamic Emirate in which tens of millions of dollars will be invested in both projects.

The transfer of 500 KV line from the north to the center and the extraction of lead mine in Tulak district of Ghor province are these two big projects, the company officials said.

They stated that preliminary work on these two

projects has been started.

Shirbaz Kaminzada, head of Afghan Invest, stated that he has contracted with a Chinese company to purchase the necessary line for the transmission of 500 KV electricity from Sheberghan to the center, which will reach Afghanistan soon.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce Spokesman Abdul Salam Jawad Akhundzada meanwhile said that efforts are underway to provide more

investment facilities for investors in the country because there is a high capacity for investment inside Afghanistan.

"The Ministry of Industry and Commerce provides all facilities to all domestic and foreign investors who want to invest in Afghanistan," said Akhundzada.

"We ensure that we provide all facilities for distributing licenses for investment and import of raw materials and machinery,"

he added.

According to economic experts, if the government facilitates investment in the country, Afghanistan can accept billions of dollars of investment.

Experts also added that the start of the official engagement of Islamic Emirate with the world and the complete end of banking sanctions on Afghanistan will open a new window for investing billions of dollars in the country.

Mujahid: Afghanistan's security, roads, ports facilitate int'l transit

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Islamic Emirate said that they have provided facilities for transit trucks of neighboring and regional countries.

The spokesperson for the caretaker Afghan government told TOLOnews that the security and operations at the ports and highways are the main facilitators for transit trucks to drive inside Afghanistan.

"All the highways that connect Afghanistan with the region have been secure and transit trucks can easily reach their destinations.

Second, at all ports of the country, facilities have been

provided for transit trucks. Third, traffic is properly managed by teams if problems occur. Afghanistan is now a good direction for transit," said Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesman for the Islamic Emirate.

In the meantime, officials at the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said that being landlocked and lacking extended railways costs the Afghan traders large amounts of money to import goods.

A member of the board of ACCI, Khan Jan Alokozay, said that existing issues at Karachi port is one

of the biggest challenges for Afghan traders in terms of transit.

"Our transit imports are too expensive. For example, if we import from Russia and China, we are doing it through Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and other countries, which is very costly. The ports, Chabahar and Bandar Abbas have their own problems. Through Pakistan's Karachi, we cannot call it a transit for being too expensive," said Khan Jan Alokozay, a boardmember of the ACCI.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance said that transit

is a key source of income for Afghanistan which injects direct and indirect revenue to the country.

"Transit is one of the important parts of trade in Afghanistan, which generates direct and indirect revenue to the government's treasury. Transit creates employment because cars operate which need oil. We are trying to provide further facilities for transit," said Ahmad Wali Haqmal, spokesman for the ministry of finance. According to ACCI, 500 loaded trucks of Afghan traders worth 1.5 billion USD are still stuck in Karachi port.

UN's Kanni Wignaraja visits Afghanistan



KABUL (Ariana News): UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Regional Director for Asia Pacific, Kanni Wignaraja, has arrived in Afghanistan.

Discussions on livelihoods, women's economic empowerment, climate resilience, basic services, inclusion and engagement with Afghan communities

are on the agenda of Wignaraja, UNDP Afghanistan said on X.

She will also meet development partners and private sector, it added.

This comes as US special envoy for Afghan women, Rina Amiri, has met with UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammad. Amiri said on X that

they discussed the importance of supporting Afghan women and human rights.

"Concurred that the extreme policies against Afghan women pose a threat to women's rights in the region & beyond," Amiri said. The meeting comes ahead of a UN conference on Afghanistan that will start in Doha on Sunday.

What will agenda be for UN-Doha meeting?

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations meeting for Afghanistan, scheduled for Sunday and Monday this week, is among the most important meetings for the country.

The agenda of this meeting includes issues regarding aid and continued international assistance for the people of Afghanistan, appointing a special representative from the United Nations for Afghanistan, and increasing engagement with the Taliban.

It's said that China, Russia, and the Taliban oppose the appointment of a special representative. However, countries like the United States advocate for an UN-appointed special representative for Afghanistan.

It's still unclear who the final special representative for Afghanistan will be, but if a final agreement on the

representative isn't reached, the possibility of appointing or extending a special coordinator exists, with Feridun Sinirlioglu currently being considered.

Meanwhile, civil society organizations, human rights activists, and women's rights activists are opposing any engagement with the Taliban or recognition of their authority. This opposition stems from the Taliban's history of suppressive policies and gender apartheid.

More than 60 Afghan civil society organizations and groups penned an open letter to the United Nations ahead of the Doha Conference in Qatar, expressing concerns about their exclusion from the event.

The letter coincides with the Doha conference on Afghanistan, scheduled for Sunday and Monday of this

week. It emphasizes the lack of opportunity for Afghan voices to participate in discussions crucial to the nation's future. The letter highlights key issues such as the non-recognition of the Taliban regime, gender apartheid, women's education and employment, and the protection of human rights from Taliban abuses.

Deprose Muchena, Senior Director at Amnesty International, underlines the importance of the upcoming UN-convened meeting in Doha, Qatar, on February 18-19. He emphasizes the need to address the culture of impunity and human rights abuses perpetrated by the Taliban.

Muchena stresses the necessity for collective action to protect the rights of all Afghan citizens, especially women and girls. He highlights the urgency of addressing the culture of impunity that enables the Taliban's violations of human rights.

The meeting in Doha tomorrow aims to discuss the next steps regarding Afghanistan's independent assessment, as required by Resolution 2679.

Kyrgyz president asks US to unfreeze Afghan assets

ATLANTA (Pajhwok): The Kyrgyz president has underlined terrorism, weak economy and drug smuggling as major problems facing Afghanistan.

Sadyr Japarov, speaking at a meeting in Bishkek on Friday, called on the US to unfreeze the assets of Da Afghanistan Bank.

TASS reported security officials from Iran, China, India, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan attended the Sixth Regional Security Dialogue. The participants discussed recent developments in Afghanistan, drug smuggling and the arising threats they posed.

According to Kyrgyzstan's Kabar News, President Japarov told regional security officials about the current situation in Afghanistan.

Japarov believed such discussions were useful at a time when Afghanistan was going through a difficult situation and facing many a host of challenges.

He identified terrorism, smuggling of drugs and a weak economy as major problems of Afghanistan.

However the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has repeatedly rejected claims about the existence of militant groups in the country and says poppy cultivation has been banned. The Kyrgyz leader expressed his pleasure over timely measures, coordination and cooperation among regional countries on preventing armed conflict in Afghanistan.

UN study warns recognizing IEA to intensify crisis

KABUL (Ariana News): A United Nations study revealed that approximately two-thirds (67%) of women in Afghanistan fear the rights crisis would intensify if the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) is recognized by the international community.

"Women expressed dread and anxiety when asked to consider the possibility of international recognition of the DFA (de facto authorities)," according to the report jointly pre-

pared by U.N. Women, the International Organization for Migration, and the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

"Under the current circumstances, it could exacerbate the women's rights crisis and increase the risk that the DFA would reinforce and expand existing restrictions targeting women and girls," the report said.

The findings are based on interviews the U.N. agencies conducted online

and in-person with 745 women across the 34 Afghan provinces between January 27 and February 8.

The U.N. report said that women requested the international community not to recognize the IEA unless they reverse the restrictions.

The interviewees stated that the best way for the world to improve the rights situation in Afghanistan was to link international aid "to better conditions for women, and to facilitate opportunities

for women to talk directly with the Taliban (IEA)."

Amnesty International also demanded Friday that the Doha meeting must mark an end to impunity for human rights abuse under the IEA.

The watchdog group noted in its statement that "discriminatory restrictions on the rights of women and girls, with the apparent aim of completely erasing them from public arenas" have intensified in recent months.

IEA spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said that the United Nations is not following its principles over the issue of recognizing the Afghanistan government.

"The issue of recognition also has its own principles in international laws. Interviews with a few people cannot be used as a criterion for recognizing or not recognizing a government. Unfortunately, the United Nations, without considering its own principles, is dealing differently

with Afghanistan in this regard, and it is putting pressure from all sides," Mujahid said.

He added that UN is used as a tool by some powerful countries.

The UN report on women comes ahead of Sunday's UN-convened conference in Qatar, where member states and regional organizations' special envoys on Afghanistan will discuss the global engagement approach with the IEA.

Public participation vital for prosperity: President

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that public participation holds key importance for development and prosperity of country. He said that Pakistan being the fifth populous country in the world, possessed immense potential to excel in every field of life.

The president while addressing an awards distribution ceremony of annual Invitational Golf Tournament held at Margalla Greens Golf Club on Saturday said that the people were vital driving force for making contributions in the overall progress of a country.

Dr Arif Alvi said, "About 250 million people of Pakistan with their collective efforts can make the difference; they can transform and rebuild Pakistan by utilizing their potential and intellect." Under the 'Sports Diplomacy' initiative, Serena Hotels had hosted the tournament in collaboration with the Margalla Greens Golf Club, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf, golfers, diplomats and a large number of sports buffs attended the event.

Addressing the participants, President Alvi further underscored the significance of promoting active lifestyles and outdoor pursuits, emphasizing the positive impact on national well-being and betterment of communities. Congratulating the organizers, he said that the event was enjoyable amidst the natural verdant atmosphere.

He observed that due to the modern lifestyle, people were accustomed to the latest facilities and moving away from hectic physical activities which were not beneficial for health. The human bodies responded to different exercises on daily basis and they continue to decline with the passage of age if no proper physical activity was adopted, he added.

The president further said that during Covid 19, Pakistan emerged as the third most successful performing country in the world due to the collective efforts by all the institutions and compilation of data. He said that precedent could be taken as guiding event which could help overcome different issues being faced by the country, adding that about 26 million children were out of school besides, the

numerous issues of malnutrition and stunting being faced in the health sector.

Dr Arif Alvi stressed that they should also learn from the experiences of different developed countries that wade through diverse challenges. "Things in Pakistan will turn around, I have firm belief as the people have huge potential," he opined.

Speaking on the occasion, CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani said that they would continue to utilize sports as a platform to connect with people from different segments of society to foster stronger relationships and cultivate a spirit of teamwork. In the closing ceremony, the president gave away prizes to the winners and runners-up across all four categories.

Golfers from a diverse range of categories, including diplomatic, government and the armed forces officials, corporate and women participated in the event. With approximately 110 golfers in attendance, including a notable contingent of women players, the competition showcased an impressive display of skill and technique across the course.



LAHORE: Police officials arresting PTI workers during protest against alleged rigging in election.

Maryam provided CM's security

F.P. Report

JATI UMRAH: PML-N nominee for chief minister's slot in Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, has been provided with CM security cover. A number of security personnel have been deployed at the residence of Sharif family at Jati Umrh.

Two bulletproof vehicles have also been made available for the Punjab chief minister nominee. There were earlier reports that Maryam Nawaz had received a briefing on various development projects in Punjab after she was nominated by her party for the chief minister's slot.

Punjab Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman briefed the PML-N stalwart in a meeting following her nomination. The chief secretary went to Jati Umrh on Thursday to brief Maryam on the current situation in Punjab. Zaman, during the meeting, briefed about the ongoing development works as well as the law and order situation in the province. Health Secretary Ali Jan also attended the meeting.

Former PM to retain Mianwali seat

F.P. Report

MIANWALI: Former prime minister Imran Khan would retain the Mianwali seat, party leader Ali Muhammad Khan said on Friday. In a post on X, he wrote that Ali informed about his decision while meeting him in Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi. He was accompanied by party leader Latif Khosa.

"Khosa told Khan that he owed his Lahore seat to him. On this, Khan said no and added that he would come [be part of assembly] on Mianwali seat," he wrote. The former prime minister won elections from Lahore and Mianwali. Khan is imprisoned in Adiala Jail in the cypher case, but he has been calling the shots.

Ali wrote that Khan wanted to have the model of "Fatah Makkah" after coming to power and the party would not take any political revenge. The former prime minister also called for forming a truth and reconciliation commission like the one set up by former South African leader Nelson Mandela.

Murad to get Sindh CM slot

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Former foreign minister and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Saturday suggested the name of Syed Murad Ali Shah for the seat of Sindh chief minister at a meeting of senior party leaders held at Bilawal House in Karachi on Saturday.

Others whose names are under consideration for the slot are Faryal Talpur and Syed Nasir Hussain Shah. It has also been suggested at the meeting that initially, the provincial cabinet will consist of 20 members, while two to three women will also be included in it. Furthermore, it has been proposed that not only old faces, but some new faces will also be part of the cabinet.

One of the party leaders has suggested that Syed Nasir Hussain Shah should be given the portfolio of a senior minister in the cabinet.

US plans to send weapons to Israel

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The Biden administration is preparing to send bombs and other weapons to Israel that would add to its military arsenal even as the US pushes for a ceasefire in Gaza, the Wall Street Journal reported, citing current and former US officials.

The proposed arms delivery includes MK-82 bombs and KMU-572 Joint Direct Attack Munitions that add precision guidance to bombs, and FMU-139 bomb fuses, the Journal reported, adding that the value of is estimated to be "tens of millions of dollars."

The proposed delivery is still being internally reviewed by the administration, the report added, citing a US official, who said the details of the proposal could change before the administration notifies congressional committee leaders who would need to approve the transfer. The US State Department and Defense Department, Israel Defense Forces and Israel Defense Ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment on the report.

As of December 2023, the Biden administration had skipped congressional review of weapons sale to Israel twice. The Biden administration has faced criticism for continuing to supply arms to Israel as allegations pile up that American-made weapons have been used in strikes that have killed or injured civilians.

The war in Gaza began when Iran-backed Hamas sent fighters into Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and seizing 253 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's air and ground offensive has since devastated much of Gaza, killing 28,775 people, also mostly civilians according to Palestinian health authorities, and forcing nearly all of its more than 2 million inhabitants from their homes.

Blinken sees 'extraordinary' opportunity for Israel to normalize ties with neighbors: There is "an extraordinary opportunity" in the coming months for Israel to normalize ties with its Arab neighbors, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Saturday, while also emphasizing the need for the creation of a Palestinian state.

The top US diplomat said there were genuine efforts led by Arab countries to revitalize the Palestinian Authority so it can be more effecting in representing the Palestinians. "Virtually every Arab coun-

try now genuinely wants to integrate Israel into the region to normalize relations...to provide security commitments and assurances so that Israel can feel more safe," Blinken said during a panel discussion at the annual Munich Security Conference.

"And there's also, I think the imperative, that's more urgent than ever, to proceed to a Palestinian state that also ensures the security of Israel," he added. The Biden administration has been working to secure a mega-deal that will see ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel normalize. The Kingdom and other Arab countries are seeking the creation of a Palestinian state as part of the deal.

Washington is also working to achieve a deal to secure the release of Israeli hostages kidnapped by Hamas on Oct. 7 when the group crossed the border into Israel and mounted one of the deadliest attacks on the country in decades. Talks on the structure of Gaza when the war ends, and how the Palestinian Authority — which exercises limited self-rule in some areas of the occupied West Bank — needs to be reformed to potentially rule the densely populated enclave and identifying a pathway for a Palestinian state are all variables in the same equation, according to US officials.

Meanwhile, Israel will coordinate with Egypt before launching any military offensive in the southern Gazan border city Rafah, the Israeli foreign minister pledged. "We will operate in Rafah after we coordinate with Egypt," Israel Katz told journalists on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, where 180 dignitaries have gathered to discuss conflicts around the globe.

"Egypt is our ally, we have peace agreements with Egypt, and we will operate in a way that does not hurt the Egyptian interests," he said. Fears had been growing for the hundreds of thousands of people who have fled the north of Gaza to Rafah as Israeli troops advanced into the territory to wage war on Hamas.

But Israel is now planning a major operation in the overcrowded city. With the border to Egypt closed, nearly 1.5 million Palestinians are essentially trapped there. Katz underlined that US President Joe Biden would also be briefed on any military offensive, as he stressed his country's determination to push ahead with the operation to root out Hamas fighters.

After gains against Modi, Congress party slips

NEW DELHI: A little more than two months ago, the Congress party, India's biggest opposition force, seemed to be on a roll. Rahul Gandhi, the leader of what is the country's oldest political movement, the party of Mahatma Gandhi, had attracted large crowds on a nationwide march, rekindling hopes in the Congress that had been struggling for relevance after a series of political setbacks.

In May, the party won legislative elections in the southern state of Karnataka that is home to startup capital Bengaluru, unseating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party. And it was projected, in opinion polls, to win four out of five states — Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, Chattisgarh and Mizoram — that voted for their state assemblies in November.

Those predicted wins, party veterans said, would have provided the ballast for the Congress to take Modi on in the general elections that are now weeks away. Just the opposite happened. The opinion polls were wrong. The Congress won only Telangana.

"All opinion polls showed Congress was ahead by 2 percent votes in Madhya Pradesh elections, but we lost by 8 percent of votes. How did the final results go contrary to these opinion polls?" asks senior party leader, Digvijay Singh, former chief minister of the central Indian state. Answering that question and similar ones tied to the

gulf between the party's hopes and recent results, quickly could be central to the chances of the 138-year-old party as it prepares to lock horns with Modi in the coming national vote, say analysts and Congress leaders.

A strong showing in those state elections would have validated Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra (Uniting India March), which had seen him walk more than 4,000km (2,485 miles) over 150 days, from the country's southern tip, Kanyakumari, to Indian-administered Kashmir in the north. In most of the states that voted in November, the Congress was in a direct one-on-one contest with the BJP and was in the opposition, hoping to reap the benefits of anti-incumbency voter sentiment against the ruling government.

One Congress leader in Madhya Pradesh, who requested anonymity, claimed that he had warned the party leadership that it needed to concentrate mobilisation efforts around the state's 21 percent tribal vote, but that his attempts at persuasion failed.

"Congress was very complacent," the leader said. The BJP, he said, gained, focusing on tribal communities, and securing their votes. Many of the seats that the Congress had won in the 2018 assembly elections flipped to the BJP. The same script played out in Rajasthan and Chattisgarh where the BJP also won the bulk of seats where tribal votes dominate, reversing what had happened in 2018.

Party insiders also accuse leaders of arrogance, in spurning the offers of smaller regional parties like the Samajwadi Party, which is primarily based in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, but also has a small presence in Madhya Pradesh. Some, like former chief minister Singh, see a more nefarious plot unfolding: he alleged that the rigging of electronic voting machines and a mechanism to keep a paper trail of voting had allowed the BJP to buck opinion polls in the recent elections.

But there is little hard evidence of systematic rigging in those elections, and critics of the Congress point out that it is quick to accept results when it wins using the same processes that it criticises while losing. Many Congress leaders do not agree with Singh's assertion. One of them said that in Madhya Pradesh, it was clear that the party was losing — not because of any foul play but because of poor "both management", a reference to the practice of party workers ensuring that their voters come and vote at every polling station.

The Congress has tried to revive its fortunes by embracing regional parties in a national coalition called the INDIA alliance. That move forced the BJP to rethink its own strategy. But since then, the BJP has successfully chipped away at the INDIA alliance: Nitish Kumar, the chief minister of the northern state of Bihar has broken away and joined the BJP-led NDA coalition. — Aljazeera

Sit-in added miseries of people, says Achakzai

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Caretaker Minister for Information Jan Achakzai said on Saturday that politics of sit-in had added to the miseries of people.

In a statement, he said that people of the province had rejected the public meeting of four parties alliance, adding that people of the province wanted progress, prosperity and stability in the province.

He said that people of the province gave their verdict on February 8, adding that Election Tribunal was there to redress the complaints with regard to recent polls. He said, "Leaders of four parties allowance should realise the hardships being faced by the people of the province", adding that politics of sit-in had added to the miseries of people.

CM opens dispensary in KP House

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister, Justice Retired Arshad Hussain Shah on Saturday inaugurated dispensary in KP House Islamabad. Addressing the inauguration ceremony, caretaker CM said that the dispensary is a proof of the provincial government commitment to provide basic facilities of health to people.

He said that health department is also endeavoring to improve healthcare delivery for betterment of people adding that improvement of health system was among priorities of the government.

7 members of a family die in mishap

F.P. Report

MURIDKE: Seven members of a family died in a road crash at GT Road here, while three persons were seriously injured, police reported on Saturday.

Rescue officials said that a car carrying deceased and a truck collided at Ravi-Ryan U-turn owing to over speeding. The passengers of the car were traveling from Multan to Gujranwala. All deceased were family members, identified as Zaheer Ahmed, his wife Irum, sons Ayman and Abdul Wahab, rescue officials said. Two relatives Shehbaz and Iman were also died in the road crash.

Three of the four persons injured in the accident namely Shamim, Naseem and Khadeeja, said to be in a precarious condition. The dead bodies and injured were shifted to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Muridke. Later the injured were transferred to Meo Hospital.

The Gujranwala family with other relatives was traveling from Multan back to Gujranwala after attending a wedding ceremony. The truck driver ahead of the car at Muridke GT Road suddenly applied brakes and the car went down to the truck. Motorway Police said the truck driver's mistake was resulted in the accident. Police has taken the truck in custody and searching for driver who fled from the scene after the accident.

Houthis fire missiles at British oil tanker

SANAA: Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group has claimed a new missile attack on Western interests amid Israel's war on Gaza, this time on a British oil tanker that the United States identified as a Panamanian-flagged vessel carrying crude oil bound for India. Yahya Saree, the group's military spokesperson, said in a televised statement on Saturday that a "large number of appropriate naval missiles" were used to target the Pollux tanker in the Red Sea in "accurate and direct" hits.

"The Yemeni armed forces will not hesitate to implement and expand their military operations in defence of beloved Yemen and in confirmation of continued practical solidarity with the Palestinian people," he said. Saree did not say how much damage the tanker sustained, or provide further details.

Late on Friday, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) confirmed an incident at 13:31 GMT about 70 nautical miles (130km) northwest of al-Mukha (Mocha), a port city southwest of Yemen's capital, Sanaa. The "vessel was attacked by a missile and reports an explosion in

close proximity. Military authorities are responding," it said, adding that the crew and vessel were reported to be safe.

The US Department of State said on Friday that the Pollux, which it identified as a Panamanian-flagged oil tanker bound for India, was struck on its port side by a missile fired from Yemen. "This is yet another example of the lawless attacks on international shipping which continue after numerous joint and international statements calling the Houthis to cease," a State Department spokesperson was quoted as saying by the Reuters news agency.

The Houthis have been disrupting trade through the Red Sea since mid-November, promising their attacks will continue until Israel's war on Gaza is halted and aid reaches besieged Palestinians. The latest Houthi missile strike comes as British Foreign Minister David Cameron asked China to take action.

The UK Foreign Office said in a statement that Cameron asked his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi at the Munich Security Conference on Friday to use Beijing's influence on

Iran to pressure the Houthis over their Red Sea attacks. Houthi assaults have spread to warships and vessels belonging to the US and UK after the Western allies started bombing multiple governorates across Yemen earlier this year.

The US has also been separately launching attacks from fighter jets and warships on Yemen to attack Houthi positions, with the US Central Command (CENTCOM) calling them "self-defence strikes". Its latest announced attack came on Thursday, when the US military claimed strikes on three mobile antiship cruise missiles that it said were being prepared for launch against ships in the Red Sea.

"These actions will protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for US Navy and merchant vessels," it said. Washington is preparing to send thousands more bombs and weapons to Israel even as it has opposed Tel Aviv's plans for a ground invasion of Rafah in southern Gaza, where more than 1.4 million Palestinians have been forcibly displaced. — Aljazeera



LAHORE: Women activists of Jamat-e-Islami holding a protest against Israel attack on Gaza.

Ukraine troops withdraw from front-line city

KYIV: Ukrainian troops have withdrawn from the front-line city of Avdiivka, the new army chief announced, after months of heavy fighting and little progress in repelling Russian forces in the country's eastern front.

"I decided to withdraw our units from the town and move to defence from more favourable lines in order to avoid encirclement and preserve the lives and health of servicemen," Oleksandr Syrskii said on Saturday, days after taking the helm of the Ukrainian military in a major shake-up. The battle for the industrial hub, less than 10km (six miles) north of the Russian-controlled city of Donetsk, has been one of the bloodiest of the two-year war. Many compare it with the battle for Bakhmut, in which tens of thousands of soldiers were killed.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Saturday that pulling out troops "was a professional decision that will save many Ukrainian lives". "Our actions are limited only by the sufficiency and length of

range of our strength," he added, pointing to the situation in Avdiivka. Russia has been trying to capture the city since October and has surrounded it on three sides, leaving limited resupply routes for Ukrainian forces.

Avdiivka had about 34,000 inhabitants before the Russian invasion. Most of the city has been since destroyed but an estimated 1,000 residents remain, according to local authorities. Videos on social media showed a town left in rubble. "In a situation where the enemy is advancing over the corpses of their own soldiers with a 10-to-one shelling advantage, under constant bombardment, this is the only right decision," said Oleksandr Tarnavsky, the army's commander of the Avdiivka area.

Before issuing orders to pull out of Avdiivka, Tarnavsky on Friday said several Ukrainian soldiers had been captured by Russian forces. The city has important symbolic value and Moscow hopes its capture will make Ukraine's bombing of Donetsk more difficult. The withdrawal

comes ahead of Russian presidential elections scheduled for March in which incumbent Vladimir Putin is set to win a fifth term, allowing him to continue leading the invasion of Ukraine.

Avdiivka lies in the Donetsk region of Ukraine, which the Kremlin has claimed to be part of Russia since a 2022 annexation that remains unrecognised by nearly all United Nations members. At the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, Zelenskyy pushed for countries to give Ukraine longer-range weapons and more air defence systems.

"Unfortunately keeping Ukraine in the artificial deficit of weapons, particularly in deficit of artillery and long-range capabilities, allows Putin to adapt to the current intensity of the war," Zelenskyy said in Germany. "The self-weakening of democracy over time undermines our joint results." He also promised "to surprise Russia" later this year with new drone systems and electronic warfare. — Aljazeera